Position Paper SSUNS 2016

Committee: UN General Assembly: Commission on The Status of Women

Country: Albania

Topic 1: Women and Sustainability

Recently Albania has undergone economic progress, yet malnourishment and poverty are still prevalent issues for a large portion of the population. Agriculture is a major industry for Albania as 47.8% of the population is employed with an agriculturally focused profession. However, nearly 25% of people in Albania fall under the poverty line of two American dollars a day. This large percentile is due to the low employment rates and incomes. However, this especially applies to Albanian women as their educational and employment opportunities are altogether lacking. Albania realized this discrimination was detrimental to their economic and social progress and passed the National Business and Investment development strategy for 2014-2020 to encourage women being incorporated into agriculture. Presently, only 7% of Albanian women manage agricultural land, but this number is set to increase to 35% by 2020. In general Albania plans to improve the economic welfare for women as well as eliminate gender discrimination in the workforce. Prime Minister Edi Rama says gender equality is “at the centre of [his] agenda.” Albania recognizes the increasing problems of malnutrition and introduced the National Action Plan on Food and Nutrition (NAPFN) 2013-2020. This plan was development in correlation with the United Nations Joint Programme on Nutrition. Albania recognizes the issue of food security and believes supporting farmers to increase sustainable agriculture is the solution to this issue.

Topic 2: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence

A recent survey showed 53% of Albanian women experienced domestic violence in the last year. The probability of an incident also depended on certain factors such as education, employment, age and marital status. Some parts of Albania still adhere to the old adage that a wife is her husband’s property. In addition to domestic violence, child marriage rates in Albania are up to 10%. Poverty is the main cause for child brides, however, there are many causes for the family’s financial state, including lack of education, trafficking and adherence to traditional social norms. Child marriage is a gross violation of human rights and sacrifices girls’ futures, health and childhoods and unfortunately opens the gateway to domestic abuse, both sexual and physical as well as forced pregnancies. Albania has successfully implemented The Family Code that minimizes the legal marital age as 18, however, this can be abandoned ‘for matters of importance’ making the code ineffective. Currently Albania believes stricter policies should be upheld to end the practice of child marriages while also protecting girls rights so they gain the autonomy to control matters relating to their sexuality. Albania signed the UN Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage that promotes their ideals.

Topic 3: Women in Education and Employment

Albania has one of the lowest per capita GNP of Europe, averaging only $5,316 USD. In addition the government only allocates 3% of their budget to education. However, 49% of school aged girls do not attend school. Additionally, the country’s child labour rates are extraordinary, as 30% of boys and 20% of girls work before the legal age. The average level of education in Albania seldom surpasses secondary as only 19% of Albanians enrol for higher learning education. Women are also discriminated against in education, not outrightly so in the learning process, but in the stigmas and mentalities of the population. Girls are not encouraged to pursue higher education but instead are expected to drop out after receiving ‘enough education’. However, it’s been proven the more extensive a girl’s education the lesser the possibility of poverty, unemployment, and a healthier life for herself and her children. To lessen the number of children out of school Albania mandated 9 compulsory years of schooling in 2008.

Gender inequalities are present in the workplace as well, with women declined any pertinent positions of power. There is also a significant wage gap in Albania, however, it did decrease from 36% in 2005 to 17.63% in 2008 but is still one of the highest in Europe. Additionally, women at 38.3% have a very low employment rate compared to men at 60.1%. This puts women at a disadvantage as they are often unable to provide for their families and consequently live in poverty. Albanian government initiated the UNDP Gender Equality Programme to promote women rights and empowerment. In accordance with this campaign the number of women political officials in Albania at the national level grew from 16.4% in 2009 to 20.7% in 2014. Albania supports propositions to include more women in positions of power in the workplace and encourages all people, man or women, to become more educated.

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