

Training Workshop for government officials on reporting under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

6 to 8 November 2002
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Bangkok, Thailand

Aide Memoire

A. Background Information

On 18 December 1979, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As of June 2002, the Convention had been ratified or acceded to by 170 States. The Optional Protocol to the Convention which entitles individuals or groups of individuals to submit claims of violations of the Convention's terms to the Committee, and provides the Committee with the power to inquire into grave or systematic violations of the Convention entered into force in December 2000, and now has 44 States parties.

The Convention provides a definition of discrimination against women, and comprehensively addresses women's right to equality and non-discrimination in the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural fields. It requires States parties to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, and to take all appropriate measures to eliminate such discrimination, whether committed by public authorities or by any person or organization.

Upon ratification or accession to the Convention, States parties assume specific obligations for the full implementation of the Convention at the national level. The Convention requires States parties to embody the principle of equality of women and men in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation, and ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle. States parties are also obliged to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination, to establish legal protection for women on an equal basis with men, as well as to provide effective remedies against acts of discrimination against women.

The expert body established to monitor implementation of the Convention in States parties, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), is particularly concerned with the status of the Convention in domestic legal systems. The Committee has advocated the incorporation of the Convention into national constitutions, as well as the implementation of the various rights in the Convention through legislation.

The Convention also obliges States parties to submit to the Secretary-General a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures that they have adopted to implement the Convention within a year after its entry into force and then at least every four years thereafter or whenever the Committee so requests. These reports, which may indicate factors and difficulties affecting implementation, are forwarded to the CEDAW for its consideration.

B. Objectives

The **sub-regional training workshop** will be conducted for government officials of Asian countries responsible for reporting under article 18 of the Convention. It will be directed primarily at those States whose initial reports have not yet been submitted.

The primary objective of the training workshop will be to enhance the capacity of government officials to prepare States parties' reports. This will lead to enhanced understanding of the legal obligations established in the Convention and thereby enhance opportunities for implementation of the Convention at the national level.

C. Participants

It is expected that up to 20 government officials from Bhutan, Cambodia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan will participate in the three day training workshop. The participants will include middle and upper level government officials. Government officials from East Timor and Afghanistan, which has signed, but not ratified the Convention, will also be invited.

Participants will also include observers from relevant parts of the United Nations system and may include observers from NGOs where appropriate.

D. Format

The training workshop will include an overview of international human rights law; the place of the Convention in international human rights law; ratification of the Convention (where appropriate); the Convention and its provisions; reservations to the Convention; reporting requirements, including the reporting guidelines of the Committee and its general recommendations; techniques of reporting; practical exercises with regard to reporting; the role of civil society in the preparation of the report; the Committee and the reporting process; the results of the reporting process and its impact at national level; the implementation of the Committee's concluding comments; the follow-up process.

The workshop will be facilitated by recognized experts, including treaty body experts.

E. Outcomes

The outcome of the training workshop will be the enhanced capacity of government officials to prepare States parties' reports and an increase in understanding by States parties officials of the legal obligations established in the Convention which, in turn, should assist implementation of the Convention at the national level.

F. Timing, Duration and Venue

The training workshop was held from 6 to 8 November 2002 at the United Nations Building, Bangkok, Thailand.

G. Working Language

The working language of the colloquium will be English and interpretation will not be provided with the exception of interpretation to and from Russian if necessary.