



United Nations Nations Unies

DIVISION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

12TH Floor, 2 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA

Telephone: +1 212 963 1896/ 7218 Facsimile: +1 212 963 3463

Internet location: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>

AIDE MEMOIRE

Training workshop on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Implementation and Follow-up to Concluding Comments

Bangkok, Thailand, 6-9 November 2006

**Venue: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok,
Thailand**

Introduction

On 18 December 1979, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention). As of August 2006, the Convention had been ratified or acceded to by 184 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 on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the expert body which monitors compliance with the Convention, now has 80 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. All branches of Government – executive, judicial and legislative – are responsible for implementation of the State's international obligations under the Convention. In its constructive dialogue with States parties and its concluding comments, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) urges all branches of Government to participate in efforts to implement the Convention and the preparation of the report. Consequently, efforts to fully implement the Convention and to ensure effective follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments should involve a range of

stakeholders, including the legislature, the executive and civil society. The international community can also effectively support such endeavours.

Following on a sub-regional workshop held in Bangkok, Thailand in 2002 on the reporting process, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) will hold a regional capacity-building workshop on follow-up and implementation of the concluding comments of the Committee in Bangkok, Thailand, from 6-9 November 2006. The workshop will bring together participants from 7 countries in the Asia-Pacific region including government officials, parliamentarians, non-governmental organisations and members of the United Nations country teams (UNCT). Their participation is expected to encourage the development of coordinated strategies and will enhance a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to achieve gender equality.

The Division's mandate for these capacity building efforts is drawn from the outcomes of several conferences and reviews which call for enhanced efforts to promote gender equality, and especially implementation of human rights standards which particularly pertain to women. These include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (2000).

Background and rationale

Following the consideration of a State party's report submitted under article 18 of the Convention, the Committee produces concluding comments on the status of implementation of the Convention. The concluding comments contain the Committee's principal areas of concern and recommendations for further action to more effectively implement the Convention. States parties put considerable effort into preparing the report, including undertaking mobilization and coordination efforts and ensuring the involvement of many ministries and non-governmental organisations. Non-governmental organisations also prepare shadow reports and support is often provided by the United Nations system. Having presented a report to the Committee provides an opportunity to put in place systematic measures of follow-up by various branches of Government and by other stakeholders. The Committee also supports ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and encourages approval of its terms.

Objective and expected accomplishment

The objective of the workshop is to enhance implementation of the Convention through more effective follow-up to the concluding comments of the Committee. The workshop also aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, including through ratification.

Participants

It is expected that approximately 35 participants from the following seven countries will attend the workshop: **China, Georgia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, The Philippines, Turkmenistan, and Vanuatu.** These are selected countries that presented their reports in 2005 or 2006 or will be presenting in 2007.

Participants in the workshop will include:

- Two representatives from each Government; (14)
- One representative from Parliament from each country; (7)
- One representative from a non-governmental organisation in each country; (7) and
- One representative each from the UNCT in each country (7).

Representatives of the Division for the Advancement of Women, ESCAP, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Committee experts and selected others will also be present at the workshop.

Format and content

The workshop will be held over three days, and will comprise plenary presentations on international human rights law and various aspects of the Convention. There will also be smaller working groups dealing with practical exercises on implementation and follow-up to concluding comments. The workshop will focus on ways to better implement the provisions of the Convention, especially to encourage collaboration and creation of a more permanent and sustainable institutional framework to support effective follow-up to, and implementation of concluding comments.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention is open to signature, accession or ratification by countries who are party to the main treaty. It contains an individual complaints procedure and an enquiry procedure. As four out of seven countries have not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the workshop will also review ratification and the use of the Optional Protocol for enhanced accountability of States for women's enjoyment of women's rights.

The participants will have an opportunity to meet in country-based groups to identify and analyze challenges to implementation, in particular as reflected in concluding comments, within their own countries and determine strategies for an effective response to and action on all recommendations made by the Committee. This will provide an important opportunity for government officials, NGOs, members of Parliament and of the UNCT to engage in a dialogue about putting in place coordinated plans of action at the national level to implement the Convention and the concluding comments of the Committee. The participants will also have an opportunity to meet in the four sectoral groups represented at the workshop to discuss their respective role and responsibilities, as well as on strategies for implementation in the relevant sector.

Specific topics that will be examined during the plenary session include:

- Background and specific obligations in the Convention, including the general recommendations of the Committee;
- Reporting requirements and guidelines, including the harmonised reporting guidelines;
- Follow-up to the concluding comments of the Committee, including good practices;

- The role of coordination and collaboration with civil society in the implementation of the Convention, including institutional set-ups;
- The exercise of oversight and lawmaking powers of legislatures to support implementation of the Convention;
- The role of the Optional Protocol in enhancing women's rights; and
- Synergies between the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

The workshop will be facilitated by recognized experts, including experts of the Committee.

Expected accomplishments

The expected accomplishments at the end of the workshop are:

- Increased capacity to follow-up, and implement the concluding comments of the Committee in countries of the Asia-Pacific region.
- Greater awareness and understanding of the Optional Protocol and the opportunities provided by it for the realization and enjoyment of women's human rights and accountability of States parties.
- The development of timelines and points of action for each State party.

A report on the proceedings of the workshop, including keynote and working group presentations will be prepared.

Timing, duration and venue

The workshop will be held consecutively for three days in Bangkok, Thailand, from 6-9 November 2006.

Working language

The workshop will be conducted in English.