

**Ms. Charlotte Abaka, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women 2001-2002**

**Statement at the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention
on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
by the General Assembly of the United Nations**

13 October 2004, United Nations New York

Madam Chairperson
Secretary General of the UN,
President of the 59th Session of the GA,
Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women,
Director of DAW,

I feel honoured to be part of this memorable event. I highly commend the CEDAW Committee and DAW for this memorable initiative. It is 25 years since women of the world through the implementation of CEDAW have been enjoying equal treatment and equal justice by their Governments and society at large. Nonetheless there remain concerns and obstacles in the full implementation of the Convention.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to relive the twelve years of a very exciting period of my life, and for the opportunity to be with life-long friends I made during that period.

The January 2001 session of the CEDAW Committee was the first after the entry into force of the Optional Protocol of CEDAW. The Committee having the additional mandate to operationalise the Optional Protocol, added to its agenda the establishment of a working group for the OP. The Committee was meeting at its usual Conference Room which was comfortably warm for the cold winter in New York. Then came the announcement that the Committee had to move to the cold Trusteeship Council Chamber. The move took place under protest and in fact one expert had to cover her head most of the time to avoid getting a cold. Nonetheless this challenge turned out to be a catalyst in the work of the Committee resulting in the establishment of a strong working group on the OP under the leadership of Ms Beate Schöpp-Schilling.

2001 was indeed a very important year in the life of the Committee. Prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and during the Conference, there was a debate on moving the CEDAW Committee to Geneva to join the 5 other human rights treaty bodies under the Secretariat of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee discussed this issue at length and presented its recommendations to the Secretary-General at a meeting which was also attended by Mr. Hans Correll, the Legal Counsel and Ms. Angela King, the Special Advisor to the SG on Gender Issues. On the 9th of April 2001, the Secretary-General announced his decision to keep the CEDAW Committee in New York. This decision was, amongst others, in full compliance with paragraph 322 of the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration.

The Committee, in constantly looking for ways and means of assisting Governments to implement the Convention more effectively and also to establish a more informal forum with States parties, decided to hold a meeting with all the States parties. This took place on the 17th June 2002. It was a well attended meeting and a very successful one indeed. In fact many delegates referred to the benefits of the meeting during their contribution at the General Assembly meeting in October 2002.

Again in June 2002, the first ever Inter-Committee meeting of the six human rights treaty bodies took place under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women in Geneva. The purpose for the meeting was to harmonize the working methods of the treaty bodies, taking into account the peculiarity of each treaty. It was a very productive meeting and a decision was taken to hold it once every two years. The Chairperson of CEDAW had the privilege of chairing this first meeting.

Distinguished delegates, invited guests, a climax of my term as Chairperson was when in August 2002 the Committee was able to hold an “exceptional (third) session” in one year. The Session enabled the Committee to clear all the backlog of States parties reports. This indeed was a very happy ending for me.

In conclusion Madam Chair, I wish to thank everybody, particularly my colleague experts, and the Secretariat of DAW, especially the Women Rights Section, then under the leadership of Ms. Jane Connors, for making my two-year- term a successful one. Thank you.

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