

Closing remarks

By

Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

at the

Thirty-fourth session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished members of the Committee
Representatives of the United Nations system
Ladies and Gentlemen

May I congratulate you Madam Chairperson, and all the members of the Committee on the successful completion of the work at your thirty-fourth session. You have once again shown your dedication and commitment to discharge effectively all the responsibilities entrusted to you under the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Madam Chairperson

You have successfully reviewed the reports of a diverse group of eight States parties - four initial reports, namely: Cambodia, Eritrea, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Togo and four periodic reports namely Australia, Mali, Thailand and Venezuela. You have studied voluminous materials submitted by the respective States parties, by United Nations entities and by non-governmental organizations. You have engaged in a constructive dialogue with representatives of the States parties where you have probed carefully and conscientiously to obtain a very precise picture of the status of implementation of the Convention. Your many diverse and sometimes difficult questions and comments not only reflected your detailed knowledge but also now provide a framework for better implementation of the Convention at the domestic level in the reporting States.

While conditions in the States parties examined at the present session differ greatly, there were a number of common concerns that the Committee identified in many or all of them. For example, the status of the Convention in the domestic legal system, and its application and enforceability; the continuing prevalence of many forms and manifestations of violence against women, sexual exploitation, trafficking in women, low levels of women's participation in public life, lack of data disaggregated by sex, persistence of stereotypical attitudes, women's disadvantages in the labour market, and in the educational field were some of the issues you highlighted. You have also given careful attention to the situation of vulnerable groups of women, in particular rural women or women belonging to ethnic or other minorities. In all instances, you have

provided detailed guidance to States parties on measures to be taken to eliminate discrimination, and accelerate realization of women's de facto equality, as required by the Convention.

Madam Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee

In addition to considering reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, you have discussed aspects of your working methods in your continuing effort to keep them as efficient and effective as possible.

You held a discussion with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the proposals of reform of the human rights treaty bodies, and you have discussed a draft of a general recommendation on migrant women. You have also given preliminary consideration to your working methods for the parallel working groups that you will use for consideration of periodic reports in August and again in 2007. I note with appreciation that the Government of Germany has extended an invitation to you to hold an informal meeting in May in Berlin, which will give you uninterrupted time to discuss these matters further. It will also be an opportunity to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Committee.

The consideration of reports submitted by States parties is complemented by your responsibilities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. I congratulate you on the work completed under the Optional Protocol at this session.

Your Committee has consistently reached out to the entities of the United Nations system so as to ensure that they not only contribute valuable information to the reporting process, but also that they use the Convention in their own programming and support implementation of the Convention and follow-up to your concluding comments at the national level. I am very pleased that you have adopted new guidelines on the contribution of UN entities to the implementation of the Convention, and I am sure that these new guidelines will further encourage and facilitate their engagement with the Committee.

Madam Chairperson and Distinguished Members of the Committee

Much as I would have liked to remain with you throughout the session, there were other commitments which required my attention. From 23-24 January 2006, I attended a meeting on gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals at the International Model United Nations Conference in The Hague, Netherlands, where I stressed in particular goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, on gender equality and the empowerment of women and highlighted the importance of renewed commitments to reduce gender gaps. I co-chaired the Biennial Workshop of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality from 30-31 January 2006, Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting focused on "Aid Modalities and the Promotion of Gender Equality." I noted in particular that in most countries the progress of women continues to be held hostage by deep and systematic

discrimination and social, political and economic exclusion embedded in cultural norms and often enshrined in national laws

Madam Chairperson Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Allow me to thank you and the entire Committee for the good work you are doing to promote the human rights of women all over the world. I also take this opportunity to thank you, Madam Chairperson for your leadership and the excellent manner in which you have conducted this session of the Committee. I would welcome any reflections that you may have on this session, so that I can better support you in the future.

For the eight members of the Committee who will remain to prepare the lists of issues and questions to be sent to those States parties presenting their reports at the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions in May and August 2006, I wish you well in your deliberations next week.

I wish you Madam Chairperson, and all members of the Committee a safe journey back home, and we look forward to seeing you once again back to New York in May.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.
