

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

Closing comments by
Ms. Rosario Manalo, Chairperson of the Committee

Dear colleagues,

We have thus completed the work of the thirty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

I would like to start by thanking the experts and especially my colleagues in the Bureau for the support extended to the Chair during this session, and for the consistent spirit of cooperation, desire to move the work of this Committee forward and make a significant contribution to the promotion of the rights of women.

As Ms. Mayanja has said, we held constructive dialogues with eight States that are party to the Convention and examined the progress in their implementation of the Convention. I extend my sincere appreciation to these States for their reports, the responses to our lists of issues and questions, and for their willingness to hold a constructive dialogue with this Committee about the status of implementation of, and compliance with the provisions of the Convention. I very much hope that all eight States have found the process of preparation and presentation of reports an invigorating component in their ongoing and systematic implementation of the Convention. I hope that the concluding comments of the Committee will give renewed impetus at the national level to proceed more decisively towards realization of de facto equality for women. I strongly encourage all of them to use the concluding comments as the basis for concrete and comprehensive follow up. I invite these reporting States to publicize the Committee's concluding comments widely to the public at large, and to ensure that Government officials, parliamentarians and other officials in the country are made well aware of them and encouraged to take follow-up measures within their areas of responsibility.

I also encourage the non-governmental organizations who once again made a significant contribution to the proceedings of this Committee to intensify their efforts on behalf of the women in their countries. Likewise, I wish to emphasize the important role which the entities of the United Nations system can, and should be playing in supporting implementation of the Convention and realization of women's human rights in States parties. I encourage them to take the opportunity of the examination of reports by the Committee to offer their support and assistance to States parties concerned as they proceed with follow-up to concluding comments.

I thank Ms. Mayanja for highlighting some of the trends and common challenges which the Committee has identified in the course of the session. Let me add that in the spirit of a constructive dialogue which aims to enhance implementation, the Committee

always identifies positive aspects, followed by principal areas of concern. Each of these concerns is accompanied by recommendations to the State party that are intended to accelerate implementation of the Convention and achieve compliance.

The Committee has once again found that certain groups of women encounter multiple forms of discrimination, placing a particular responsibility on Governments to counteract and eradicate such patterns and violations of women's rights. Rural women and women belonging to ethnic or other minorities consistently have lower levels of education, employment, health and participation in decision-making than women in urban areas or who belong to predominant groups. The Committee is very much concerned with this reality and impresses on States parties the need for targeted action as the Convention must be implemented for the benefit of all women.

We have also found that the Convention remains insufficiently known to the legal profession in many countries. For example, there is very little evidence of a consistent use of the Convention in courts and judicial proceedings. While the Committee acknowledges the different forms of transformation of international human rights treaties into the domestic legal system, the Committee emphasizes the need for a comprehensive reflection of the definition of the Convention contained in its article 1, and including a prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination, in the Constitution or other appropriate legislation. The Committee therefore urges States parties to ensure that such a definition, and all the provisions of the Convention be reflected in domestic legislation, and that judicial officers, and the legal profession be fully familiar with the provisions of the Convention and the resulting obligations incumbent upon States parties. We have also called on States that are also part to the Optional Protocol to ensure that the procedures available under the Optional Protocol be made better known so that women may avail themselves of these international procedures for better enjoyment of their human rights.

Dear colleagues,

I wish to underline the important work the Committee has completed under the Optional Protocol at this session. I wish to thank the members of the Working Group for their diligent work, and for the conscientious preparation of discussions.

Dear colleagues,

As Ms Hannan has pointed out, the year had an auspicious start for the Committee. We will, for the first time, hold three sessions and essentially double the number of States examined under article 18 of the Convention. We will have an informal meeting in early May in Berlin. I would like to express the Committee's appreciation to the Government of Germany for this invitation, which will mark the 25th anniversary of the Committee, but in particular provide us with the time we need to discuss matters that we cannot accommodate within our regular sessions. The Berlin meeting will in particular allow us to prepare in a diligent manner the working methods for the parallel working groups, and to continue our discussion of a general recommendation on migrant women. We will also devote time to discuss the reform proposals of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights pertaining to the human rights treaty bodies. We are very appreciative to the High Commissioner for the time she spent with us at this session, but also emphasize that insufficient information is available to assess all the implications of her proposals not only for the functioning of the treaty bodies, but in particular for the full and effective implementation of treaty obligations at the national level. We look forward to her concept paper, and will give it careful consideration.

Dear colleagues,

With these few highlights, may I once again express my sincere appreciation to all of you for the hard work of this three-week session.

Thank you all very much.