

**COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION

**Opening statement by
Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director**

**Division for the Advancement of Women
7 August 2006**

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished Experts of the Committee,
Colleagues and Friends

It is a great pleasure for me to warmly welcome you to the thirty-sixth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Since the close of your last session, the number of States parties to the Convention has increased by one. Brunei Darussalam acceded to the Convention on 24 May, bringing the total number of States parties to the Convention to 183. I am also pleased to report that one additional State has become party to the Optional Protocol, namely: Antigua and Barbuda on 5 June, bringing the total to 79 States parties. There were no additional acceptances of the amendment to article 20; paragraph 1.

This will be the first time that the Committee will meet in parallel chambers for purposes of considering periodic reports. The Committee held an in-depth discussion on the working methods to be used at its informal meeting in Berlin in May, as well as at the 35th session. You also met with the States parties on 1 June to brief them on the procedures. I am therefore confident that the best possible preparation for this challenge has been undertaken by the Committee. The Secretariat held a technical briefing with reporting States in preparation for the session.

Let me assure you that the Division for the Advancement of Women will do its utmost to provide the Committee with the support necessary so that it can make the most of the opportunities provided to you by the General Assembly when it approved the extension of your meeting time. I am sure that you are already feeling the demands on your time in your personal and professional lives. Your extra efforts in this respect, including your work in parallel chambers during this and upcoming sessions in this biennium will, however, significantly reduce the backlog of reports that are awaiting consideration.

Mme Chairperson,

I join Ms. Mayanja in expressing my heartfelt congratulations to current experts who were re-elected at the 14th meeting of States parties on 23 June, namely Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani, Ms. Coker-Appiah, Mr. Flinterman, Ms. Gabr, Ms. Patten, Ms. Saiga, and Ms. Simonovic. I also extend my congratulations to the newly elected members, namely Ms. Ferdous Ara Begum, Ms. Saisuree Chutikul, Ms. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Ms. Violeta Neubauer and Ms. Hazel Gumede Shelton. We look forward to meeting the new members and supporting them in their work on the Committee.

I wish to express our warm and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Ms. Gnacadja, Ms. Morvai, Ms. Khan, Ms. Popescu, and in particular to you, Mme Chairperson, for your commitment and contributions to the work of this Committee and the promotion of women's enjoyment of their human rights. To you, Mme Chairperson, we also extend our gratitude for the leadership of this Committee over the last two years.

Mme Chairperson,
Distinguished Experts,

Allow me to update you on the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women since your last session, which adjourned just over 2 months ago.

The Division has initiated preparations for the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Planning for an expert group meeting is underway on the priority theme of the Commission – the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. We are working closely with our colleagues in UNICEF on this meeting and the UNICEF Innocenti Centre will host the event at the end of September.

The Division stands ready to support this Committee in any contribution it may wish to make to the session of the Commission on the priority theme, as well as in regard to the Secretary-General's report on the advisability of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women, which the Committee discussed in a preliminary manner at the last session.

I am pleased to report that the Division has completed its work on the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/185. The study will be before the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, under the item on the advancement of women.

As part of our programme of technical cooperation activities to support countries emerging from conflict, the Division organized a high-level consultation mission to Liberia on the Convention from 12-15 June 2006. The high-level consultations were designed to increase awareness and visibility of the Convention at the highest political levels, as well as provide an opportunity for assessment of the current status of national

implementation of the Convention for the formulation of recommendations for priority action by Government and non-governmental organizations.

Four experts on the Convention held consultations with high-level officials from eight ministries, members of parliament, the truth and reconciliation commission, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country team. The experts also met with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who pledged her full support for the mission and the Division's efforts to improve national implementation of the Convention in Liberia. The consultations will be followed by a comprehensive report including recommendations for enhanced implementation of the Convention. We are grateful to Ms. Dorcas Coker-Appiah of this Committee, as well as Dr. Charlotte Abaka, Ms. Elize Delpont and Professor Joe Oloka-Onyango for participating in the mission.

Our ongoing efforts to support implementation of the Convention in Sierra Leone continued since the last session of this Committee. Following the preparation of a draft of Sierra Leone's report under article 18 of the Convention, the Division convened a three-day workshop in Freetown from 20-22 June 2006. The workshop was attended by 30 government officials from various ministries, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities. Building on our previous capacity-building events in Sierra Leone, the workshop provided an opportunity for national dialogue on the shortcomings and gaps in the data contained in the draft report, as well as in relation to implementation of the Convention. The workshop discussed strategies to ensure that the preparation of the report results in the development of priority action plans for implementation of the Convention by all relevant Government ministries and sectors. The workshop also examined opportunities for increased coordination and collaboration in follow-up to the consideration of the report and the concluding comments of the Committee. The draft report is being revised following the discussions and recommendations of the workshop and will in due course be submitted for consideration by the Committee. We thank Ms. Dorcas Coker-Appiah and Ms. Shanthi Dairiam of this Committee for facilitating the discussions at the workshop.

Mme Chairperson,

Let me now turn to the work of your session. The Committee will consider the reports of fifteen States parties, namely Cape Verde (in Plenary); and the following period reports in Chamber A: Chile, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Mauritius, Philippines, Uzbekistan. Chamber B will consider: China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Ghana, Jamaica, Mexico, Republic of Moldova. You will continue your important work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

As well as being briefed on the outcome of the fifth Inter-Committee meeting and eighteenth meeting of Chairpersons of treaty bodies and follow-up action required, you will receive a report on the brainstorming meeting that took place in Malbun. You may wish to make further inputs to the reform proposals on the treaty body system. The Committee will also continue its work on a general recommendation on the theme of women migrants and on article 2 of the Convention.

In accordance with Committee decisions and established practice, you will meet with representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to hear information about the countries that are reporting at this session, this afternoon, as well as on 14 August. Representatives of the UN system will meet with the Committee later this morning.

At the last session you stated your interest in having an opportunity to be briefed and to discuss further the ongoing reform in the United Nations. Arrangements are being made for such discussions.

I wish you every success in your important work this session. We look forward to a very intense and successful 36th session. I again pledge the full support and commitment of the Division for the Advancement of Women in facilitating your task in every way possible to ensure the smooth completion of your heavy workload.

Thank you.