

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Thirty-seventh session
15 January to 2 February 2007

AGENDA ITEM 5: REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE THIRTY-SIXTH AND THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Distinguished colleagues,

As you begin this thirty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, I send my best wishes to all of you for successful deliberations. I extend an especially warm welcome to the new members of the Committee.

As I had mentioned to some of you already at the last session, I am unable to be with you today to present my report on my inter-sessional activities since the conclusion of the thirty-sixth session. I therefore send you this short written summary.

Since the adjournment of the session on 25 August, participation in my capacity as Chairperson of the Committee was required at one event, namely the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. It is a long-standing tradition that the Committee Chair addresses the Assembly, and this tradition was confirmed in resolution 60/230 of 23 December 2005, where the General Assembly extended an invitation to the Chairperson of the Committee to address the sixty-first and sixty-second sessions, under the item on the advancement of women. Unfortunately, shortly before my departure, circumstances beyond my control intervened and I was unable to travel. Due to the shortness of time, it was also not practically possible for one of the Vice-Chairs to replace me. As a consequence, Ms Carolyn Hannan presented my statement on my behalf to the General Assembly.

I wish to draw experts' attention to the letter I received from the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 11 October 2006, informing me of his conclusion that common objectives would be best served by the United Nations if responsibility for supporting the Committee were to be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and asking me to convey his decision to the members of the Committee. You will recall that I sent you this letter, with the assistance of the Secretariat, on 16 October. In my response to the Secretary-General, of 30 October, I highlighted that experts had provided extensive comments, and raised many and detailed questions and concerns among themselves by email in conjunction with this decision. I also pointed out that since the Committee was not in session, I was unable to convey at the time a Committee position on this matter. I did, however, note that experts had underlined their desire for an in-depth discussion of his decision and the implications at the next session, scheduled to convene on 15 January 2007.

As my membership on the Committee ended on 31 December 2006, I will no longer have the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's discussion on this issue. I wish you well in your deliberations on this critical issue, and encourage you to always be guided by the Committee's paramount purpose, namely to enhance women's enjoyment of their human rights.

Dear friends and colleagues,

Since adjournment of our last session, I had the opportunity to participate in several other activities on women's human rights and the implementation of the Convention, but not in my official capacity as Chairperson representing the Committee. Since I am aware of the many issues that you need to tackle today, I shall not go into the details of these very useful and important efforts in support of Convention implementation.

May I take this opportunity to express once more my sincere gratitude to all of you for the support, cooperation and friendship you have extended to me during my eight years as a member of the Committee, and in particular the two years as chairperson. I trust we will meet again.

Thank you very much.