

Check against delivery

**Closing remarks
by
Ms. Dubravka Šimonović
Thirty-eighth session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
New York, 1 June 2007**

Dear colleagues,

We have thus come to the end of the thirty-eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

We examined the initial reports of eight States parties, namely Serbia, Sierra Leone, Vanuatu, Pakistan, Mozambique, Syrian Arab Republic, Mauritania and Niger. After this session, these have now joined the States parties from which we expect timely reporting on progress achieved in the elimination of identified forms of discrimination against women.

As a Committee we have increased our efficiency. So far this year, we have examined 23 States parties in this calendar year. With the upcoming 39th session in July, we will examine the reports of a total of 38 States parties in 2007. This is an unprecedented number of States taken up by the Committee in one year, and I would like to express the appreciation of the entire Committee to the Member States for approving the extension of our meeting time. We look forward to their similarly positive response to our request for extension of meeting time for the future that we will be sending to the General Assembly this fall.

Let me express a word of congratulation to Vanuatu who acceded to the Optional Protocol on 17 May, on the eve of its constructive dialogue with the Committee, bringing the total number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to 87. I hope that this well-timed action will be an inspiration for the States parties who are scheduled to present their reports in July/August of this year.

Dear colleagues,

This session was special as for the first time in a very long time, the Committee considered only initial reports, or combined initial and periodic reports. I want to stress the significance of this fact, as the submission of the initial report soon after ratification is indeed a critical step in a State party's efforts towards the practical realization of the principle of the equality of women and men, as required under article 2 (a) of the Convention. It is of course also an obligation of States under article 18 of the Convention.

But we must put the reporting process also in its practical context: preparation of the initial report is a unique opportunity for a State party to establish the baseline for its compliance with the Convention. It allows the State party, in a consultative process that involves and mobilizes many different stakeholders, to highlight how the Convention is not an abstract legal obligation, but a very concrete and practical tool for the State party as a whole to promote the rights of women. Preparation of the initial report is an incentive for gathering data, for reviewing legislation, policies and programmes, for identifying gaps and challenges. Parliament, different ministries and different levels of the administration, the judiciary, civil society – all have a contribution to make to this assessment process.

Many of the States that came before the Committee at this session indeed informed us about their participatory consultative processes. In addition, we had representatives from national NGOs from all States that reported at this session. With our concluding comments that we have adopted, and the momentum gathered in the process of preparation of the State party reports and the shadow reports, all these stakeholders now have a strong basis for the next phase of Convention implementation – it is of critical importance that this opportunity is used to the maximum extent.

I call on the entities of the UN system, and the international community in these eight reporting States to provide their full and effective support to all efforts of follow up and implementation. We look forward to receiving strong progress reports in a few years.

Dear colleagues,

During this session, we discussed and made some further progress on the two general recommendations under preparation, namely on migrant women, and on article 2. I am confident that we will indeed be able to progress expeditiously

on both from here on and provide important guidance to States parties on their obligations under the Convention.

I am also very pleased with our systematic effort to encourage States parties with long overdue initial reports to submit those so that the Committee can indeed offer its support to the State party with recommendations on how to move forward with implementation. At our last session, we invited four States with initial reports that are more than 20 overdue to prepare those by March 2008. This time, we are inviting four more States parties with initial reports outstanding for 10 years or more to submit those by the end of 2008, namely the Bahamas, Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles. I encourage all entities of the UN system to offer their support to these States parties so that these reports can be prepared in a timely manner, and in a consultative process.

This year, the Committee celebrates its 25th anniversary. We have decided to mark the occasion on 23 July, the opening day of our 39th session. We very much hope that the Secretary-General and other high level guests will be able to honour us with their participation in this event.

Dear experts,

Thank you very much for your hard work during this session. I am especially grateful to my colleagues in the Bureau for their wise counsel and advice on the many issues that we have tackled. I hope that with our joint efforts, and with the strong support from our Secretariat we are giving States parties clear guidance on the implementation of the Convention and with that, we as a Committee are making a difference in the lives of many women that are victims of discrimination and violence.

My appreciation also goes to our Secretariat, to Ms Mayanja, Ms Hannan, Ms Brautigam, Ms Kintu and the entire team that has supported us over these past three weeks, with a special thanks to the interpreters. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights during this session.

I wish you all a safe trip home, and I look forward to seeing you on 23 July here at United Nations Headquarters.

Thank you very much.