

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Thirty-fifth session**

**Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director, Division for the Advancement of Women**

Closing remarks 2 June 2006

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished experts,
Ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Ms Rachel Mayanja, I would like to congratulate the Committee on the successful completion of the work of the thirty-fifth session. You have dealt with difficult issues and a significant volume of work. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of all experts present, under the able stewardship of the Bureau, and guided by you Mme. Chairperson, the Committee has had a most productive session with many thoughtful discussions and important decisions.

You have held successful constructive dialogues with eight States parties, with all the hours of work that this entailed. Your questions and interventions, and the concluding comments that you have adopted on the basis of these dialogues, will provide a solid framework for enhanced implementation of the Convention in the reporting States. The Division for the Advancement of Women will work to ensure broad dissemination and utilization of these concluding comments.

Once again, the high level of attendance of non-governmental organizations, United Nations organizations and other observers during the session is an indication of the importance accorded to the Convention and the work of the Committee.

Madame Chairperson

I am pleased to inform you that since the opening of this session the number of States parties to the Convention has increased by one. Brunei Darussalam acceded to the Convention on 24 May 2006, bringing the total number of States parties to the Convention to 183.

Madam Chairperson

I congratulate you on the adoption of the outcome of the informal meeting that was generously hosted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in Berlin from

2 to 4 May 2006. You have already been able to share this outcome in an informal meeting with States parties to the Convention yesterday. This was an excellent opportunity to exchange views regarding the working methods to be used in the parallel chambers in August 2006, January 2007 and August 2008 for the consideration of periodic reports.

I am confident that the criteria that you have chosen to guide this work - such as a fair geographical balance of experts between the two chambers; seniority of experts on the Committee; assignment of experts who are nationals of a reporting State to the chamber that is not considering the report from that State party; and geographical balance, to the extent possible, of reporting States to be taken up in each chamber - will allow the Committee to continue its consideration of periodic reports of States parties with the same standard of excellence that it has done until now in plenary. As you, Mme. Chairperson, said during the informal meeting, "The August session will be a time for learning, both for the Committee and the reporting States" - and, while you have made careful preparations, you recognize the need for flexibility and adjustment.

Madam Chairperson

We are very heartened by the avid interest the Committee has shown in the United Nations reform processes as they pertain to gender equality and empowerment of women. Participation in on-going reform discussions, including in the General Assembly, was one of the reasons both Ms Mayanja and I were not able to be with you for the entire session. Ms Mayanja and I were very pleased that, despite your very heavy work schedule this session, there was an opportunity to brief you on this issue, in particular regarding the mandate review process and the work of the high-level panel on system-wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and environment. We will be pleased to continue this discussion at your next session.

I would also like to briefly inform you that the on-going high-level discussion on HIV/AIDS in the General Assembly have focused strongly on re-intensifying prevention programmes; ensuring access to information for youth to influence behavioural change; identifying financial bottlenecks; and enhancing the role of civil society groups. There is increasing recognition of gender inequality as a fundamental driver of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the particular vulnerability of young women and girls. In a high-level roundtable earlier this week, I had the opportunity to raise the importance of the Convention as a critical accountability mechanism for promoting women's human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Although the draft Political Declaration is not yet finalized, there are references to the increase in infection rates among women; the fact that gender inequalities increase the vulnerability of women and girls and need to be specifically addressed; the importance of sexual and reproductive health; the need to promote responsible sexual behaviour (including through the use of condoms – both male and female condoms); the importance of early treatment of sexually transmitted diseases; and the need for information,

counseling, treatment and services for pregnant women and women living with HIV, including to reduce mother-to-child transmissions.

The draft further contains a pledge to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based abuse and violence, including through provision of sexual and reproductive health; to ensure that women can exercise their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related their sexuality; and to create an enabling environment for women's empowerment and strengthen their economic independence. There is a commitment to strengthen the promotion and protection of women's human rights and eliminate all forms of discrimination. The importance of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality is also reiterated. Let us hope that the focus on women and gender equality can be maintained, and even enhanced, in the on-going negotiations.

Madame Chairperson

Allow me to thank you and the entire Committee for the excellent work in this session and your overall work to promote the human rights of women all over the world. I take this opportunity to thank you, Madam Chairperson and the members of your bureau for your continued strong leadership. Ms. Rachel Mayanja and I would welcome any reflection that you may have on this session, so that we can better support your future sessions.

I would also like to acknowledge the very hard work of the staff of the Women's Rights Section and other colleagues in the Division, as well as the contributions of staff from other parts of the United Nations, during this session.

Madame Chairperson
Members of the Committee,

I wish Members of the Committee who are seeking re-election at the 14th meeting of States parties later this month a successful outcome.

I also wish you Madame Chairperson, and the other Committee Members who will be attending, successful participation in the Chairpersons' Meeting and Fifth Inter-Committee Meeting, scheduled to take place from 19-23 June in Geneva.

I extend the appreciation of myself and of the Division for the Advancement of Women for the hard work and the dedication to the mandate entrusted to the members of the Committee during this very busy year. I wish you, Mme. Chairperson, and all members of the Committee a safe journey home. I sincerely hope that you will find time to rest and refresh before we will welcome you back to New York in August.

Thank you very much.