

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

THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

**Opening statement by
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Madam Chairperson
Distinguished experts of the Committee,
Colleagues and Friends

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

Distinguished experts,

Since the close of your last session, the number of States parties to the Convention has increased by two. Oman acceded to the Convention on 7 February 2006 and the Marshall Islands acceded to the Convention on 2 March 2006, - bringing the total number of States parties to the Convention to 182. I am also pleased to report that two additional States have become party to the Optional Protocol, namely: Moldova, on 28 February 2006 and Maldives, on 13 March 2006, bringing the total to 78 States parties. There was an additional acceptance to the amendment to article 20; paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Committee's meeting time, namely: Moldova, which brought the total number to 48 States.

The General Assembly resolution 60/230 authorized the Committee to hold three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-sessional working group for each session, effective from January 2006 as a temporary measure. As a result, you are holding a session this month. Your extra efforts in this respect, including your work in parallel working groups during three sessions in this biennium will significantly reduce the backlog of reports that are awaiting consideration. I am sure that you are already feeling the demands on your time in your personal and professional lives. 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 this decision of the General Assembly has provided.

Mme Chairperson,

Allow me to update you on developments pertaining to the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women since your last session.

Let me start with the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which took place from 27 February to 10 March and 16 March 2006. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2002-2006, the Commission considered two thematic issues (1) Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work; and (2) Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels. The Commission adopted two sets of agreed conclusions with respect to these thematic issues - both make substantive references to the Convention, its Optional Protocol and the work of this Committee. We were also very grateful that one of the members of the Committee, Mme Françoise Gaspard, participated on the panel on theme 2.

The Commission adopted six resolutions, of which one again covered the question of the advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women. This Committee had provided its views on this question, which are reflected in the Secretary-General's report that was before the Commission. The Commission did not take action on the establishment of such a mandate and instead, has invited the Secretary-General to bring to your attention and other relevant treaty bodies his report on the "Advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women," in document E/CN.6/2006/8 - with a view to eliciting views on ways and means that could best complement the work of the existing mechanisms and enhance the Commission's capacity with respect to discriminatory laws. The Commission agreed to consider this question further at its fifty-first session. The Committee is invited to provide its views in accordance with the request of the Commission.

By a consensus decision, the Commission postponed consideration of its confidential communications procedure for another two years until its fifty-second session.

In view of the Committee's work on a general recommendation on women migrants, I would like to mention that the Commission considered "The gender dimensions of international migration" as an emerging issue and held a high-level panel discussion that provided the Commission with an opportunity to examine the multi-dimensional aspects of international migration from a gender perspective. The panel discussion emphasized the increasing recognition that gender biases exist in the migration process, resulting in women's experiences being different from those of men, including in relation to exit and entry and in countries of destination. The panel also emphasized that specific attention should be given to the empowerment of migrant women in migration policies and legislation. The Chairperson's summary will be submitted through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly for its high-level dialogue on international migration and development in the autumn.

The Commission adopted a resolution, to be approved by ECOSOC, on its future organization and methods of work. A number of important gains were made for the future work of the Commission. The Commission will focus on one priority theme per year, the outcome of which will be in the form of negotiated agreed conclusions. The Commission has invited all gender-specific United Nations entities and other relevant United Nations bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to contribute, where appropriate, to the discussion on the priority theme of the Commission. The Commission also decided that each year it would review progress on the implementation of agreed conclusions on a priority theme from a previous session. The review will result in a Chairperson's summary.

The Commission agreed on themes for the period 2007 to 2009.

- In 2007, the Commission will consider the priority theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" and will evaluate progress on the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the forty-eighth session of the Commission on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality".
- In 2008, the Commission will consider the priority theme "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" and will evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the forty-eighth session of the Commission on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding".
- In 2009, the Commission will consider the priority theme "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS", and will evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fiftieth session of the Commission on "The equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels".

In its future sessions, the Commission will continue to give enhanced attention to national level implementation. There will be increased opportunities to exchange experiences, good practices and lessons learned through interactive activities, with the participation of experts.

While the Commission's Bureau has not yet met to start preparations for the next session and the format in which various stakeholders will be invited to contribute, this Committee may wish to begin considering making a contribution. In this regard, the Division stands ready to support you in any way possible.

I am pleased to say that the Division has entered into the final stages of preparations of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/185, and to be submitted to its sixty-first session. The Division organized a multi-stakeholder dialogue on violence against women in conjunction with the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It focused on collaboration between Governments and civil society in addressing domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls. Two experts of the Committee

participated in this multi-stakeholder dialogue. The Division is continuing to organize panel discussions and other events on violence against women and the study, including a lunch time panel event in conjunction with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on the role of the criminal justice system in addressing violence against women. We will also participate in a panel discussion to highlight violence against indigenous women, to be held during the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Mme Chairperson,

Let me now turn to the work of your session. The Committee will consider the reports of eight States parties, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Guatemala, Malawi, Malaysia, Romania, Saint Lucia and Turkmenistan. You will continue your important work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

You will act on the outcome of the Berlin meeting - a topic that we will hear about from the Chairperson, and which will put in place the methods of work for your 36th, 37th and 38th sessions when you will meet in parallel chambers for purposes of considering periodic reports. The Committee will continue its work on a general recommendation on the theme of women migrants and on article 2 of the Convention.

You will also continue your preparations for the Fifth Inter-Committee meeting and Chairpersons' meeting, scheduled to take place from 19 – 23 June in Geneva, and your discussion of the treaty body reform.

In accordance with 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 22 May. Representatives of the UN system will meet with the Committee later this morning.

I wish you every success in your important work this 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.