

**Fourteenth Meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Discrimination against Women
23 June 2006**

**Opening statement
Ms. Carolyn Hannan
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Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

It is my honour to address the fourteenth meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to extend a warm welcome to you today. I am pleased to present a brief synopsis of the work accomplished by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women since the last States parties' meeting, on 5 August 2004.

Since the 13th meeting, six States have ratified or acceded to the Convention, bringing the number of States parties to 183, with Brunei Darussalam being the latest State to accede to the Convention on 24 May 2006. Sixteen additional States parties have become party to the Optional Protocol bringing the total to 79 States parties. There were four additional acceptances to the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Committee's meeting time, bringing the total to 48.

As at 5 June 2006, reports by 104 States parties were overdue, amounting to a total of 184 overdue reports. Of these, 36 States had reports that are more than five years overdue. 28 States parties had overdue initial reports. At the end of the 35th session of the Committee (2 June 2006), the reports of 60 States parties were awaiting consideration. So far, in calendar year 2006, 9 States parties have submitted reports. In 2005, 29 States parties submitted reports.

Since the last election, the Committee has held four sessions, and considered the reports of 32 States parties to the Convention, some of which were significantly overdue. The Committee twice submitted a request to the General Assembly for extension of meeting time, which the Assembly approved in December 2005. As a result, the Committee will hold three annual sessions in 2006 and 2007, and also will meet in parallel working groups during some of these sessions. This extension of meeting time will enable the Committee to increase significantly the number of reports of States parties considered annually.

The Committee adopted a number of statements, including in regard to the gender aspects of the tsunami disaster that took place in South-East Asia in December 2004; a

statement on the occasion of the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was brought to the attention of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2005; a statement on the situation of women in Iraq; and most recently at its 35th session, a statement entitled “Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system”, as its contribution to the reform discussion of human rights treaty bodies (available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/35sess.htm#stmts>).

The Committee’s Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol has so far held seven sessions. It has registered eleven communications, and the Committee has completed the proceedings on three of those: two were declared inadmissible, and on one, the Committee found violations of several provisions of the Convention. The Committee also continued to implement its mandate under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the inquiry procedure.

Work has also progressed on two general recommendations, on women migrants; and on article 2 of the Convention.

The Committee continuously and consistently kept its working methods under review in an effort to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness, and to strengthen coordination and harmonization with other treaty bodies. The Committee has successfully used country task forces for consideration of periodic reports, enhanced the role of country rapporteurs, and further refined its concluding comments. It regularly meets with non-governmental organizations wishing to present country-specific information. It also meets with representatives from the United Nations system, and has prepared new guidelines to enhance the usefulness of their contributions to its work.

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The Committee held its fifth informal meeting from 2 to 4 May 2006 in Berlin, at the invitation of the Government of Germany. The Committee used this opportunity to prepare its working methods for its meetings in parallel chambers as well as for an in-depth discussion of the proposal of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for a unified standing treaty body.

The Committee is thus fully prepared for the thirty-sixth session, scheduled to take place from 7 to 23 August 2006, when it will meet for the first time in parallel chambers for the purpose of considering periodic reports of States parties. The Committee held a meeting with States parties on 1 June in order to brief them about the working methods, composition of chambers and criteria used for their establishment.

The Committee has continued to coordinate with other human rights treaty bodies the harmonization of working methods, and to exchange views and experience on other matters of common interest. The Committee’s Chairperson and other experts have

consistently participated in the Inter-Committee and Chairpersons' meetings, including most recently last week. One of the Committee's experts chaired the technical working group consisting of one representative each from the seven treaty bodies that completed the harmonized guidelines for reporting under the human rights instruments.

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I would now like to review briefly the technical assistance and advisory services activities that the Division for the Advancement of Women, as the substantive and technical Secretariat of the Committee, has undertaken in support of States parties' efforts to implement the Convention, including their reporting obligations.

The Division implemented two workshops in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: a round table of national human rights institutions and national machineries for the advancement of women, in Ouarzazate, Morocco, in November 2004; as well as a sub-regional workshop on follow-up to concluding comments/observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in Cairo, Egypt, in December 2005.

In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Division organized a regional training seminar on the Convention and a judicial colloquium in Santiago, Chile, in May 2005.

The Division has continued to place special emphasis on supporting countries emerging from conflict in their efforts to strengthen adherence to their treaty obligations. We have worked in particular with Sierra Leone and Liberia, where we have completed high-level consultations on the implementation of the Convention, first in October 2004 and again last week. In the case of Sierra Leone, we have conducted two follow-up training workshops. We hope to implement follow-up training workshops in Liberia later this year, as well as to realize an initial high-level consultation in Afghanistan which had to be postponed from 2005.

All these activities have benefited from the contributions of experts of the Committee. Their expertise, insights and hands-on experience have greatly enhanced the impact and usefulness of our technical cooperation activities. The Division is also grateful to those States parties who have made financial contributions allowing us to implement these activities. We have also benefited from the collaboration of entities of the UN system, in particular UN field offices and the regional commissions.

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Article 28 of the Convention provides that the Secretary-General shall receive and circulate to all States parties the text of reservations made at the time of ratification or

accession. It also provides that the Secretary-General shall inform the States parties of any reservations, declarations, objections and notifications of withdrawal of reservations to the Convention. In this respect, you have before you document CEDAW/SP/2006/2.

Mr. Chairperson,

The purpose of this meeting is the election of 12 members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in accordance with Article 17 (1) of the Convention. I would like to bring to States parties' attention the recommendation of the eighth meeting of the persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, which states that "States parties to the treaty bodies should refrain from nominating or electing to the treaty bodies, persons performing political functions, or occupying positions which were not readily reconcilable with the obligations of independent experts under the given treaty". They may also wish to take into account the recommendation made by Chairpersons that consideration be given to the importance of experts in areas related to the mandate of the treaty body, the need for balanced geographical composition, and desirability of an appropriate gender balance, as well as the nominee's availability in terms of time to discharge the responsibility of treaty-body member.

The names and curricula vitae of the candidates are contained in document CEDAW/SP/2006/3, and addenda 1 and 2.

I extend my best wishes for a successful meeting to both States parties and the candidates.

Thank you.