

**THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON CHILDREN  
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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

Madame Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

It is my honour and my privilege to address this Assembly on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which is entrusted with the task of supervising the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Madame Chairperson, for the opportunity granted to express the Committee's views on the matter that gathers us all – Children's Rights, their protection and promotion. On this matter, the Committee has adopted a statement that is available to you in full and which I will convey to you in a slightly abbreviated form.

In the document, the Committee recognizes the complementarity of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the importance of respecting, promoting and protecting women's human rights in the realization of a better future for children. The Committee therefore welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to hold this special session on children.

In the 11 years since the World Summit for Children, the Committee consistently supported efforts to promote and protect the rights of children and girls, in particular in the monitoring of reports of States parties and through the adoption of general recommendations. Since the Convention also applies to girls, the Committee has, on a regular basis, received information from UNICEF, specialized agencies and NGO's on the situation of women and girls in the reporting States. The Committee's work has clearly indicated that the situation of children, and of girls in particular, cannot be improved, unless the human rights of women are respected and promoted, and they are protected from discrimination and violence, and unless they are empowered.

Our work has made it clear that, in most countries, discrimination against girls, as well as exploitation and social and economic exclusion of children is based upon laws, policies and practices that discriminate against women and promote stereotypical views of the role and responsibility of women, particularly in the family. Children, especially girls, are often denied access to education, health and nutrition throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence because of entrenched discrimination against women in the family and the community.

On the other hand, early marriage, physical and sexual abuse in the family and the community, and commercial sexual exploitation through trafficking, a contemporary form of slavery, have emerged as widespread problems that result in girls and women, in many countries, being denied the human rights recognized by international human rights instruments.

The Committee has noted with concern that negative social practices, such as prenatal sex selection, infanticide, female genital mutilation, dowry, bride price and honour crimes, which may be legitimized by social custom, place girls at risk of violence and abuse, before birth and throughout their childhood and adolescence.

It has also noted that underdevelopment and poverty, combined with discriminatory social values, prevent children in general, and girls in particular, from acquiring literacy, thus depriving them of life chances.

In its concluding comments, the Committee has also observed that globalization has often had a negative impact on women. This has created further economic disparities and increased pressures on girls to participate in the informal sector, thus increasing the likelihood of their dropping out of school. The Committee has, therefore, requested States parties to introduce policies and programmes to reduce poverty, improve environmental and living conditions and provide equal access to education during a period of economic transformation.

The Committee's work has also indicated that nationality and birth registration laws in some countries continue to discriminate against women, and that this results in children being denied the nationality of the mother or a non-discriminatory birth registration certificate.

The Committee has constantly emphasized the concept of shared parental responsibilities for children, and the important role of men in both preventing and eliminating discrimination against women, and in respecting and promoting the human rights of women and children.

In its review of reports of several States parties, it has often stated that armed conflict has resulted in the denial of human rights of women and girls, and that they have been placed at a special risk of violence, including rape, abuse and trafficking. Furthermore, it has noted that economic sanctions and blockades have a negative impact on women and girls, with repercussions on the advancement of women and on their socio-economic well-being.

The Committee has, in its work, encountered many instances in which women's groups and activists have made a significant contribution to the realisation of the rights of children to development and protection from exploitation and abuse.

Convinced that sustainable human development and the best interests of the child cannot be realized in any society without commitment to the realization of women's human rights, and the rights of girls in particular, the Committee has made several proposals in its document that we reiterate:

- 1) that a strong gender perspective be incorporated in the outcome document, by referring to the need to eliminate discrimination against girls and to integrate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, which referred to the girl child as a critical area of concern, and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly into laws, policies and programmes;
- 2) that the outcome document contain references to the specific and critical problems of discrimination against girls, and the necessary interventions to ensure a better future for them: adequate focus should be given to the problem of sexual exploitation and violence connected to trafficking and armed conflict;
- 3) that the outcome document acknowledge that adolescent girls come within the scope of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- 4) that the outcome document make reference to the provisions of the Convention as they relate to adolescent girls, in particular to the provision of access to secondary education and proper health care, including reproductive health care, and protection against HIV/AIDS, and to the importance of realizing the participatory rights of girls, giving them full access to information and decision-making in matters that affect them;
- 5) that the outcome document acknowledge that women's groups are important partners in the realization of the rights of children;

6) that the outcome document clarify that the allocation of resources must be gender sensitive so as to ensure that adequate priority is given to realizing a better future for both women and children in general, and girls in particular;

7) that the outcome document recognize that specific programmes and policies should be developed to ensure that multilateral trade and financial systems do not increase gender disparities or impose greater economic burdens on women and girls.

Madame Chairperson

On behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, I am grateful for the opportunity to convey the Committee's contribution to this Special Session on Children

Thank you

**Contribution of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women  
to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/56/38)**

1. The Committee recognizes the complementarity of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the importance of respecting, promoting and protecting women's human rights in the realization of a better future for children. The Committee therefore welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to hold a special session on children. The Committee endorses the decision to combine in the draft outcome document, a declaration and a plan of action with targeted goals and strategies, giving adequate priority to allocation of resources and monitoring progress on implementation.
2. The Committee has, in the 11 years since the convening of the World Summit for Children, consistently supported efforts to promote and protect the rights of children and girls, in particular in the monitoring of reports of States parties under the Convention, and through the adoption of general recommendations and other initiatives. Since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women also applies to girls, the Committee has, on a regular basis, received information from the United Nations Children's Fund, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations on the situation of women and girls in the reporting States parties. The Committee's work during this period has clearly indicated that the situation of children, and of girls in particular, cannot be improved unless the human rights of women are respected and promoted, and they are protected from discrimination and violence, and empowered.
3. The work of the Committee has clarified that, in most countries, discrimination against girls, and the exploitation and social and economic exclusion of children in general, is based upon laws, policies and practices that discriminate against women and promote stereotypical views of the role and responsibility of women in the family. Children, and especially girls, are often denied access to education, health and nutrition throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence because of entrenched discrimination against women in the family and the community.
4. Early marriage, physical and sexual abuse in the family and the community, and commercial sexual exploitation through trafficking, which has become a contemporary form of slavery, have emerged as widespread problems that result in girls and women in many countries being denied the human rights recognized by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments.
5. The Committee has noted with concern that negative social practices, such as prenatal sex selection, infanticide, female genital mutilation, dowry, bride price and honour crimes which may be legitimized by social custom, place girls at risk of violence and abuse before birth and throughout their childhood and adolescence.
6. The Committee has noted that underdevelopment and poverty in both the rural and urban areas of a number of countries, combined with discriminatory social values, prevent children in general, and girls in particular, from acquiring literacy, thus depriving them of life chances.
7. The Committee has observed in its concluding comments that globalization has often had a negative economic impact on women. This has created further economic disparities and increased pressures on girls to participate in the informal sector, and thus increased the

likelihood of their dropping out of school. The Committee has requested States parties to introduce policies and programmes to reduce poverty, improve the environmental and living conditions of women and children, and of girls in particular, and provide equal access to education during a period of economic transformation.

8. The Committee's work has also indicated that nationality and birth registration laws in some countries continue to discriminate against women, and that this results in children being denied the nationality of the mother, or a non-discriminatory birth registration certificate.

9. The Committee has often stated in its concluding comments that armed conflict has resulted in the denial of human rights of women and girls, and that they have been placed at special risk of violence, including rape, abuse and trafficking.

10. The Committee has constantly emphasized the concept of shared parental responsibilities for children, and the important role of men in both preventing and eliminating discrimination against women, and in respecting and promoting the human rights of women and children.

11. The Committee has in its work encountered many instances in which women's groups and activists have made a significant contribution to the realization of the rights of children to development and protection from exploitation and abuse.

12. The Committee, in its review of reports of several States parties, has noted that economic sanctions and blockades have a negative impact on women and girls, with repercussions on the advancement of women and on their socio-economic well-being.

13. Convinced that sustainable human development and the best interests of the child cannot be realized in any society without commitment to the realization of women's human rights, and the rights of girls in particular, the Committee proposes that the outcome document:

(a) Incorporate a stronger gender perspective by referring to the need to eliminate discrimination against girls, and integrating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, which referred to the girl child as a critical area of concern, and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly into laws, policies and programmes;

(b) Contain references to the specific and critical problems of discrimination against girls, and the necessary interventions to ensure a better future for them. Adequate focus should be given to the problem of sexual exploitation and violence connected to trafficking and armed conflict;

(c) Acknowledge that adolescent girls come within the scope of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(d) Make reference to the provisions of the Convention as they relate to adolescent girls. Reference should be made, in particular, to the provision of access to secondary education and proper health care, including reproductive health care, and protection against HIV/AIDS, and to the importance of realizing the participatory rights of girls, giving them full access to information and decision-making in matters that affect them;

(e) Acknowledge that women's groups are important partners in the realization of the rights of children;

(f) Clarify that the allocation of resources must be gender sensitive so as to ensure that adequate priority is given to realizing a better future for both women and children in general, and girls in particular;

(g) Recognize that specific programmes and policies should be developed to ensure that multilateral trade and financial systems do not increase gender disparities or impose greater economic burdens on women and girls.