

CLOSING REMARK
by
Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic

**Forty-second session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Geneva, 7 November 2008

Dear Colleagues

We have thus come to the end of the forty-second session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It is customary for the Committee's Chairperson to sum up the work completed and offer some reflections on our proceedings.

Let me start from the end. This morning we have met Ms. Navi Pillay the new High Commissioner and exchanged views on issues relevant for the work of CEDAW Committee under the servicing of the OHCHR. We have discussed ways and means needed to strengthen the impact of the Convention and the work of the Committee at the national and the UN level.

If we go back to the beginning of this session and assess our results now at the end we must say that this session was marked by a heavy workload. We considered the reports and adopted concluding observations for 12 States parties from all regions of the world: Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Madagascar, Mongolia, Myanmar, Portugal, Slovenia and Uruguay.

I want to extend my appreciation and congratulations to all States parties that engaged during this session in constructive dialogues with the Committee.

We identified gaps and challenges and in all instances Committee experts together with representatives sought to identify strategies for further solutions to the challenges of persistent discrimination. These dialogues confirmed the importance of regular and timely reporting and

consideration so as to ensure a consistent monitoring of progress. This regular interaction strengthens the State's accountability for their compliance with its international treaty obligations.

As always, the Committee paid attention to a specific situation in each country and elaborated its concluding observations that include concerns and recommendations for narrowing and closing gender equality gaps. Our new follow-up procedure is also important in this regard.

We have also clarified in our concluding observations important role of the Parliaments in reporting process, and I would urge State parties to ensure that their concluding observations are discussed in Parliament and that the preparation of the next periodic report, as well as reports in the context of our follow-up procedure, are made available to parliament. After all, it is Parliament which makes the law, and takes decisions on budget allocation.

Dear Colleagues

We are also thankful for contributions provided by the representatives of United Nations entities, some of which had travelled from the field to provide relevant information on the States parties before us.

I would also like to express the entire Committee's gratitude to NGOs for their contributions during our regular informal meetings with representatives from NGOs but also during many lunchtime briefings from NGOs. I encourage them to deepen their advocacy for the promotion and protection of women human rights and the implementation of the Convention.

We have also had some inputs from national human rights institutions, with representatives of one travelling to brief the Committee on one of the States which was considered. Taking into account growing number of such institutions and their role for promotion and protection of human rights at the national level I urge all national human rights institutions to pay more attention to the Committee's work, particularly as they serve as a bridge between Government and civil society.

Dear Colleagues

In addition to adopting concluding observations for twelve States parties, we also considered several petitions under the Optional Protocol and discussed potential inquiries. We are happy to note that two States accepted the Optional Protocol during our session, thereby bringing the number of States parties to this important instrument to 94. Let me congratulate the two new States parties to that treaty, Mauritius and Mozambique and encourage others to follow their example.

During this session we have adopted our twenty-sixth general recommendation on migrant women workers. This General recommendation intends to contribute to the fulfilment by States Parties of their obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women migrant workers. The Committee acknowledged the contribution of the Committee on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families during the preparation of this general recommendation.

We have also adopted a programme for the elaboration of new general recommendations. We have started to work on the general recommendation on older women and on the economic consequences of divorce. We have planned the adoption of draft general recommendation on article 2 that is under elaboration during the next year.

We have also adopted a statement on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that provided a first significant step on the road towards equality between women and man. It states “There is no doubt that also in 2008 full equality, both formal and substantive, of women and man around the world has not yet been achieved. Nevertheless, the CEDAW Committee is convinced that the principle of equality of women and men in the enjoyment of all human right and fundamental freedoms does not only constitute a crucial treaty obligation, but is also emerging as a principle of customary international law.”

We have also considered our inputs to the Durban Review Conference which will take place in April 2009 and discussed follow-up instruments regarding the elimination of laws that directly or indirectly discriminate against women, but did not reach any decision on its preference for any option.

We also discussed ways to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of the Optional Protocol which take place next year and I would like to call State parties to consider possibility to provide their support for such important anniversary that could raise visibility and implementation of the CEDAW Convention and the Optional Protocol.

We have had a fruitful discussion with representatives of UNHCR to discuss ways of collaborating on issues relating to refugee and displaced women and other women of concern to UNHCR, in particular through a joint seminar which is planned for next year.

Dear Colleagues

Before my conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely and to extend my warmest appreciation to those experts whose terms on the Committee will end on 31 December 2008, namely: Ms. Mary Shanthi Dariam; Ms Françoise Gaspard; Ms. Hanna Beate Schopp-Schilling; Ms. Heishoo Shin; Ms. Glenda P. Simms; Ms. Anamah Tan; Ms. Maria Regina Tavares da Silva and Ms. Tiziana Maiolo. Your contributions to the Committee have been remarkable and the Committee has been enriched by your work. I am certain that you will continue to support the Committee and that our paths will cross again.

I would like sincerely to congratulate all members of the Committee on the work of these three weeks. I would also like to extend the Committee's appreciation to the High Commissioner and her staff for their support to our work. I would particularly like to thank Ms. Philomena Kintu, our long-servicing and extremely valued secretary who retires this year. We will all miss her support and friendship. My thanks also goes to Ms. Jane Connors and all staff members that supported us, to the interpreters, precis-writers, press officers and conference officers and all others who made this session so successful.

Dear Colleagues

As a Committee, we have significantly increased our efficiency in past three years in 2006, 2007 and 2008 with holding three sessions per year. We have cleared a backlog and have also focused on non reporting

states. We have improved our concluding observations making them more concrete and user friendly and introduced a follow-up procedure to concluding observations as well as conducted a first follow-up visit to a State party. In addition, the transfer of our servicing to OHCHR from DAW has been smooth. I would like to express my appreciation to the entire Committee for its efforts in this context.

May I now take this opportunity to say that for me it was a great privilege and honour but also a challenge to chair this Committee for the past two years over its six sessions. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Members of my Bureau (Ms. Gaspard, Ms. Gabr, Ms. Simms and Ms. Dairiam). It will be standard for all the Committee's chairpersons starting from 2010 to preside over three annual sessions of the Committee. I have also represented this Committee at the Third Committee, CSW, ICM and Chairpersons meeting, as well as on numerous conferences but it was a privilege to represent the Committee with such rich history and substantive results for protection of human rights of women all over the world.

In closing, I wish you all a safe trip home, and I look forward to seeing those members of the Committee who will be with us, in a little over two months, in January 2009.

Thank you very much