

CLOSING REMARKS  
BY  
Ms. Naela Gabr  
Forty-fourth session of the  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women  
New York, 20 July-7 August 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We have thus come to the end of the forty-fourth 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 beginning of this session and assess our results. I must say that this session was marked by a heavy workload. We considered the reports of 11 States parties in parallel chambers and in plenary. Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Spain were considered in chamber A; Azerbaijan, Denmark and Japan in chamber B; and five States parties, namely, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Switzerland, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu were considered in plenary. We adopted decisions on 3 cases under the Optional Protocol. We held an informal meeting with the entities of the United Nations system, national human rights institutions and non governmental organizations. We also attended several lunchtime briefings organized by non governmental organizations. The Committee must be pleased by the high level of attendance of NGOs, which once again made a significant contribution to the work of the Committee.

The Committee also is thankful to those UN entities which provided us with detailed information, and I encourage both the UN entities and NGOs to deepen their advocacy for the promotion and protection of women's human rights and the implementation of the Convention.

During this session, we have held very fruitful meetings with Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division of the Advancement of Women, Ms. Ines Alberdi, Director of UNIFEM. We also met with Ms. Gay Mc Dougall, Independent Expert on Minority Issues and Ms. Felice Gaer, member of the Committee against Torture.

We also met with NGOs and UN entities to discuss elements which could be included in the draft GR recommendations on Older women and on economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution.

In addition to adopting concluding observations on these eleven States parties, we have also discussed cases under the Optional Protocol, continued our discussions on the draft general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention and adopted new methods of work, including guidelines for the follow-up procedure to our Concluding Observations.

We also discussed a statement on climate change, and papers **on Parliaments and NGOs**. We further continued our discussion on ways to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of the Optional Protocol which take place this year. Once again I would appeal to States parties to consider possibility to provide their support to these important anniversaries. In this regard, we very much hope that the Secretary-General and other high level guests will be able to honour us with their participation in this event.

May I take this opportunity to extend my appreciation and congratulation to the States parties that engaged in the excellent constructive dialogues with the Committee, especially those who presented their reports for the first time, namely Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu. All States sent high level delegations many of which were headed by Ministers or Senior Government officials. This allowed us to examine in great details the current status of implementation of the Convention in their respective countries. We identified gaps and challenges and in all instances Committee experts together with representatives sought to identify strategies for further action and to find 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. In all cases, we recommended that the Convention form the basis for the States parties' efforts aimed at achieving gender equality. We had an opportunity to review two States parties that had been before the Committee in 2006 and 2007, approximately (2 and 3 years ago) namely: Azerbaijan and Denmark. Many Committee experts therefore had personal and direct recollections of the discussions that had taken place at that time.

Dear Colleagues,

During our constructive dialogues with the 11 States parties' delegations, we have been informed about revisions of marriage and family laws, protection of women's

rights in employment, new initiatives to enhance women's and girls educational opportunities and achievements, the elimination of discrimination and stereotypes and the participation of women in public life. We have also heard of the significant steps which States are taking to address violence against women including domestic violence, and strengthen support services for women victims of violence. At the same time, the Committee had found continuing discrimination against women in relation to the many substantive provisions of the Convention. 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. In all cases, we recommended that the Convention be fully integrated in their domestic legislation. All States need to check the compatibility of their legislation with the Convention, especially after the ratification of the Optional Protocol. In many States the CEDAW Convention should be rediscovered and used as a central legally binding instrument for the development of policies for the advancement of women, as the elimination of discrimination against women. It is also important to connect the implementation of CEDAW Convention with the implementation of other human rights treaties as well as with other complementary policy documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals and the Security Council resolution 1325. Our Follow-up procedure which we adopted is also very important in this regard. I would like to urge the States parties to ensure that their concluding observations are discussed in Parliament and that the preparation of the next periodic reports, as well as reports in the context of our follow-up procedure, are made available to parliament and all ministries.

Dear Colleagues,

Before I conclude, may take this opportunity to sincerely thank all experts for the hard work accomplished during the past three weeks, in particular the country rapporteurs who have greatly contributed to our discussions during the dialogues with the representatives of the States parties. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the Bureau for their wise counsel and advise on the many issues that we have tackled. I hope that with our joint efforts, and with the support of the Secretariat, we are giving States parties clear guidance on the implementation of the Convention and with that, we as a Committee is making a difference in the lives of many women that are victims of discrimination.

I would also like to extend the Committee's appreciation to the Director of New York Office Ms. Jessica Neuwirth, for her support, to our work. Many thanks goes to Ms. Jane Connors, our Acting Secretary Ms. Natacha Fourcard and all staff

members that supported us, to the interpreters, précis- summary-writers, conference officers and all others who made this session successful.

I wish you all a safe journey home and I look forward to seeing you in January next year 2010, at the forty-fifth session

Thank you very much.