

**OPENING STATEMENT
BY
Ms. Naéla Gabr
Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against
Women
at the
Forty-third session
18 January 2010**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very pleased to welcome you once again to the United Nations Office at Geneva, and to the forty-fifth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It is also a great pleasure for me to welcome Ms. Navanethem Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights.

While there remain 186 States parties to the Convention, I am delighted to report that two States accepted the Optional Protocol thereby bringing the number of States parties to this important instrument to 99. Let me congratulate the two new States parties to that treaty, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea Bissau, and encourage other States to follow their example.

Currently, also, there are 55 States which have accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Committee's meeting time. Acceptance by two thirds of the membership, corresponding to 124 States parties, are required before the amendment enters into force.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Five months have passed since our forty-fourth session in New York and I would like to report on the activities I have undertaken in my capacity as a Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee during this period, and other issues that may be of interest to the Committee.

On 12 October, I attended the 64th session of the General Assembly. In my statement, I reiterated that the Committee has taken a consistent interest in the question of the United Nations reform pertaining to its gender equality architecture and, in this regard, I congratulated the General Assembly on its recent decision to create a new gender entity. I also indicated that the Committee will discuss ways and means to ensure that its interaction with the new entity is effective for a better implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I also thanked the General Assembly for granting, through its resolution 62/218, an extension of its meeting time from 2010 to three annual sessions of three weeks, each preceded by a one-week working group. I recalled that the extended

meeting time granted by the Assembly over the past three years has allowed the Committee to alleviate the backlog of States parties' reports awaiting review. I reaffirmed the Committee's intention to continue its efforts to ensure that incoming reports are considered in a timely manner and monitor the implementation of the Convention in States parties with long overdue reports.

I further informed the Assembly that the collaboration between OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women had allowed a smooth transition and that the High Commissioner for Human Rights had also ensured that the strong links between the Committee and the intergovernmental machinery responsible for the promotion of gender equality have been maintained. I highlighted that the Committee has taken full advantage of the opportunities provided by OHCHR, interacting regularly with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and her Deputy and other senior staff, and welcoming opportunities for discussion with special rapporteurs and independent experts of the Human Rights Council on issues of mutual concern. Finally, I indicated that close relationships have also been forged with individual treaty bodies, in particular, through the establishment of a joint working group composed of members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

From 30 November to 2 December, I attended the tenth Inter-Committee Meeting, with Ms. Pimentel and Ms. Zerdani. As indicated by the High Commissioner, the tenth inter-committee meeting

recommended to establish a working group on follow-up, with the composition of both the rapporteurs on follow-up to concluding observations and the rapporteurs on follow-up to individual communications of each treaty body, if applicable, or the members responsible for follow-up activities. It also recommended that the working group be divided into two sub-groups, one on follow-up to concluding observations and inquiries/visits, and one on follow-up to individual communications, and that the sub-groups meet in parallel once per year for a period of two days. The ICM also recommended that other thematic working groups be established as decided and that the practice of establishing such thematic working groups be reviewed after two years. The meeting further recommended that the follow-up procedure of each treaty body should be undertaken in a transparent manner and therefore be considered as a public procedure, and that all the information received from States parties and correspondence between States parties and the treaty bodies should be made publically available, including information received from other stakeholders such as United Nations entities, national human rights institutions and civil society, including non-governmental organizations. These recommendations will be presented to the next Meeting of Chairpersons in July this year. They are indeed timely for our Committee as we will adopt at this session modalities on the assessment of follow-up reports.

On 3 December, I attended the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the CEDAW Convention in New York, together with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. On this occasion, I recalled that since it began its work of translating the

groundbreaking approach of the Convention from aspiration to practice, Committee members have worked with competence, dedication, integrity and imagination. I also highlighted that through its practical approach during dialogue with States parties, in concluding observations after consideration of reports and analysis of petitions and inquiries, the Committee has become recognized as the legitimate and internationally respected voice for the human rights of women and girls. Finally, I stressed that the Committee has regarded the Convention as a living instrument which must remain relevant to the emerging concerns of women in all parts of the world.

In spite of this progress, we know that more needs to be done, more efforts are needed from all stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of the Convention if we want to see results on the ground and in the lives of individual women. The Committee should seize the occasion of the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake in March this year, to contribute to the sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals.

Also, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should find ways to strengthen its efforts to increase its support to the Committee by allocating additional human and financial resources, as well as providing technical assistance for reporting and the

implementation of recommendations to States parties that request such assistance.

As you are aware, we have a full, but interesting agenda during this session. The Committee will consider six periodic reports namely from Egypt, Malawi, the Netherlands, Panama, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, and two initial reports namely from Botswana and the United Arab Emirates respectively. The Committee will also consider cases under the Optional Protocol to the Convention and discuss various issues, such as a draft general recommendation on older women, as well as a methodology under its follow-up procedure. We will also meet with many non-governmental organizations, representatives of national human rights institutions and parts of the United Nations family. I would like to pay particular tribute to these stakeholders who contribute valuable information to our work.

Colleagues and friends,

As we begin our session, I am happy to take any questions you may have before we meet in closed session to organize our work.

Thank you very much for your attention.