

CLOSING REMARKS

BY

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Forty-fifth session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Geneva, 18 January – 5 February 2010

Dear Colleagues,

We have thus come to the end of the forty-fifth 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. We considered the reports of eight States parties, namely Botswana, Egypt, Malawi, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Panama, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

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 was 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 the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ibrahim Salama, Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Division, Ms. Cecilia Moller, from the Women's Rights and Gender Unit, and Mr. Nicolas Fasel, from the Research and Right to Development Division.

We also met with NGOs to discuss elements which could be included in the Statement of the Committee on its relationship with non governmental organizations.

In addition to adopting concluding observations on these eight States parties, we have also continued our discussions on the draft general recommendation on older women and adopted new methods of work, including a methodology to assess States parties reports received under the Committee's follow-up procedure.

We also adopted a statement on the situation in Haiti, a statement on the inclusion of Afghan Women in the process of Peace building, Security and Reconstruction in Afghanistan, as well as a statement on the 15 year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At this session we also adopted a statement on our relationship with non governmental organizations, as well as a statement on our relationship with parliamentarians.

Given the responses provided by both the State party and the authors in relation to the two Austrian cases 5/2005 and 6/2005, the Committee considered unnecessary to pursue the consideration of those two cases under its follow up procedures and consequently closed the follow up procedure.

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 Botswana and the United Arab Emirates. 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.

Dear Colleagues,

During our constructive dialogues with the eight 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 Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1888. Our Follow-up procedure is also very important in this regard. I would like to urge 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 are 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 Ms. Karin Lucke, our Acting Secretary Ms. Natacha Foucard, and all staff members of the Secretariat who supported us, for their dedication and hard work, to the interpreters, précis- summary-writers, conference officers and all those who made this session successful. I would like to thank in particular, Ms. Sabine Tolaini for her valuable support to our work during the last two years and wish her well in her new functions. I wish you all a safe journey home and I look forward to seeing you in New York in July 2010, at the forty-sixth session.

Thank you very much.