

Check against delivery

64th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women



Statement by
Ms. Kate Gilmore
Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

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Distinguished members of the Committee,
Colleagues and Friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you for the opening of the **sixty-fourth session** of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This is my first opportunity to engage with you following my appointment as Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 December 2015 and I am looking forward to an open and constructive exchange with you today and in the future.

First of all, I wish to **congratulate the members of the Committee who were re-elected** in June: Ms. Ameline [France], Ms. Gbedemah [Ghana], Ms. Haidar [Lebanon], Ms. Leinarte [Lithuania] and Ms. Nwankwo [Nigeria]. I also take the opportunity to thank the members who did not stand for re-election and whose term expires at the end of this year, Ms. Al-Dosari [Qatar], Ms. Bailey [Jamaica], Mr. Bruun [Finland], Ms. Pimentel [Brazil], Ms. Pomeranzi [Italy] and Ms. Zou [China], for their contribution to the Committee's work over the past years. I am aware that your strong and diverse expertise has enriched the Committee's work and will continue to enrich it during this and the next session.

Women's rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The adoption of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** was a milestone in articulating a transformative vision for development that is grounded in human rights. The 2030 Agenda places equality and non-discrimination at its heart. In addition to the specific focus on gender equality in Goal 5, it integrates a gender dimension in each of the other 16 Goals.

But what does it take to achieve a real transformation of our societies? To answer this question, we need to start with an honest **stocktaking** of how far we have come. Although some progress has been made towards the realization of equal rights for women and men, and 189 States have already committed to a transformative agenda by becoming party to the CEDAW Convention, it is shocking that we are not living in a more gender equal world:

- According to WHO, one in three women experience sexual or physical violence – most likely from their intimate partner;
- Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high – the vast majority of deaths resulting from pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications are entirely preventable from a medical perspective;
- In developing regions, one in nine girls are being married before the age of 15;
- Globally, women represent only 22.7 percent of Parliamentarians;

- The global percentage gaps between women's and men's labour force participation and average pay are each around 25 percent – or put differently, from 30 September until New Year's Eve, women work for free;
- And to boot, women spend 2.5 times more hours on unpaid and domestic work than men.

How can CEDAW and other human rights treaties contribute to the transformation promised in the 2030 Agenda? As I emphasized at the Human Rights Council's annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women on 16 June, these standards define what we are trying to achieve. **For each SDG, there is a corresponding human right**, or rights, that are relevant – and these must be read together. So I encourage you to continue making references to relevant Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda in your concluding observations and lists of issues.

To **achieve gender equality**, we must challenge and dismantle discriminatory gender stereotypes, combat notions of culture and tradition that legitimize violations of women's rights, and establish effective accountability mechanisms which go beyond mere data collection and ensure women's access to justice.

Data collection is nevertheless essential for measuring progress in achieving the SDGs. UN Women organized an expert meeting last month on SDG indicator 5.1.1 (“Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex”). Your colleague Barbara Bailey made a presentation on the role of CEDAW as a possible data source for this indicator, and Ms. Ameline and Ms. Haidar also attended the event. The meeting endorsed CEDAW as the principal legal framework to inform the follow-up and review of indicator 5.1.1 and devised a list of thematic questions to be recommended to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs for adoption as the methodological framework for measuring SDG indicator 5.1.1.

Linking the 2030 Agenda to CEDAW and other human rights treaties has great potential to strengthen State's accountability in delivering on their legal obligation and political commitment to achieve gender equality.

The Chairperson's meeting

The 28th **annual meeting of Chairpersons**, in which your Chair Yoko Hayashi participated, was held in New York from 30 May to 3 June. I understand that you shall discuss this in more detail during your meeting but in brief, the Chairs:

- Reiterated their support for strengthening of the treaty body system as reflected in GA resolution 68/268;
- Welcomed innovative ideas in light of the 2020 review of the treaty body system, while of course recommending consultation with treaty bodies on such ideas; and decided to hold the annual Chairs' meetings leading up to the 2020 review in New York to strengthen interaction with States there;
- Recalled the GA's encouragement of an enhanced role for TB Chairs in relation to procedural matters, to foster coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods;
- Reiterated the need for OHCHR dedicate sufficient resources necessary for treaty bodies;
- Recommended for all treaty bodies to use the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of treaty body members and the San José guidelines against intimidation and reprisals; and
- Adopted a statement on the anniversaries of human rights treaties in 2016.

Recent developments

Allow me to briefly update the Committee on some relevant developments from across the United Nations system since your last session:

In March, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted **General Comment No. 22 on the right to sexual and reproductive health**. This landmark document details the obligations of States parties regarding sexual and reproductive health and highlights how it is indispensable for women's rights to make meaningful and autonomous decisions about their lives and health.

On 2 June, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking for the first time briefed the UN Security Council on the occasion of its **open debate on conflict-related sexual violence** – calling on States contributing personnel to peacekeeping operations to immediately waive the immunity of peacekeepers as soon as indications of their involvement in human trafficking situations have been detected. At that same debate, the SRSG on sexual violence in conflict put forth a recommendation to consider a new resolution that would give the tools for a comprehensive and multi-dimensional response to conflict-related sexual violence.

On 16 June, the Human Rights Council held its **annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women** – with two panels, the first on “Violence against indigenous women and girls and its root causes”, and the second on “Women's rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: delivering on the promise to leave no one behind”.

On 17 June, the **Special Rapporteur on violence against women**, its causes and consequences, your former colleague Ms. Simonovic, presented a report on her vision of her mandate to the Council – highlighting her cooperation with CEDAW in updating General Recommendation No. 19 on VAW.

Last but not least, late last week, the Council adopted **resolutions** on:

- Preventing and responding to violence against women, including indigenous women, extending the mandate of the SR.
- Elimination of female genital mutilation” (but without referring to the joint 2014 CEDAW/CRC General Recommendation/ General Comment on harmful practices).
- The right to education by every girl, which asks OHCHR to prepare a report by June 2014.
- Women’s equal nationality rights, which recalls General Recommendation No. 32 and requests a workshop with treaty body experts.
- Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which regrets that many women and girls are disproportionately affected by this, and requests a panel discussion with treaty body experts.
- Elimination of discrimination against women - the resolution focuses on women’s health, inserts language from article 12 CEDAW and renews the mandate of the WG on discrimination against women in law and in practice;
- Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity – the resolution appoints an Independent Expert for a period of three years.

Regrettably but perhaps not unexpectedly, there was a **relatively high level of disagreement** among Member States on the issues of abortion and sexuality education as well as the extension of the mandate of the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice and the appointment of an Independent expert on SOGI, respectively. The latter resolution was adopted by a close vote.

Your 64th session

During this **64th session**, you will conduct dialogues with eight States parties; meet with UNCTs and specialized agencies, other international organizations, NGOs and NHRIs. You will hold thematic meetings on Amnesty International’s new sex workers policy and on promoting and protecting women migrant workers’ labour and human rights through CEDAW; and work on a host of other items related to follow-up, general recommendations, individual communications and inquiries under the Optional Protocol. The

Committee will also continue discussing the implementation of GA resolution 68/268 on treaty body strengthening as well as the gender dimension of the follow-up and review framework of the SDGs.

As you have much work clearly ahead of you I stop here and wish you a most successful and productive 64th session.

Thank you.
