

Check against delivery

66th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women



Statement by
Mr. Orest Nowosad
Chief, Groups in Focus Section
Human Rights Treaties Branch
Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division

Geneva, 13 February 2016

Distinguished members of the Committee,
Colleagues and Friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you for the opening of the **sixty-sixth session** of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to welcome you on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

Membership

I would especially like to extend a warm welcome to the new members of the Committee who will assume their duties today, namely: Mr. Gunnar BERGBY [*Norway*], Ms. Marion BETHEL [*Bahamas*], Ms. Rosario MANALO [*Philippines; was already a member from 1999 to 2006 and former CEDAW Chair*], Ms. Bandana RANA [*Nepal*], Ms. Wenyan SONG [*China*], and Ms. Aicha Vall VERGES [*Mauritania*].

I also congratulate the re-elected members of the Committee who today are commencing a new term: Ms. Nicole AMELINE [*France*], Ms. Hilary GBEDEMAH [*Ghana*], Ms. Nahla HAIDAR [*Lebanon*], Ms. Dalia LEINARTE [*Lithuania*] and Ms. Theodora Oby NWANKWO [*Nigeria*].

Implementation of the SDGs

On taking his oath in New York on 12 December, Secretary-General Guterres outlined his reform agenda. He emphasized that one key element of that agenda is United Nations support to Member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Secretary-General committed to reforming the UN development system by bringing the humanitarian and development sides closer together from the very beginning of a crisis to support the women and men affected and stressed that humanitarian response, sustainable development and sustaining peace are three sides of the same triangle. Also at his oath ceremony, the Secretary-General pledged his personal commitment to respect gender parity in all his senior management appointments and to reach full gender parity by the end of his mandate at the Under Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels, including special representatives and special envoys.

From the outset, CEDAW has been an advocate of mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets. I am pleased that

following an invitation by the ECOSOC President, you intend to prepare a gender-specific contribution on the theme of “eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world” for the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which will meet in July. I am equally impressed by your continued efforts to refine the methodology for 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”), in close partnership with our Office and UN Women. Your decision to incorporate questions composing this indicator into your lists of issues, starting with the Pre-sessional Working Group in March, will enable you to reinforce the linkages between the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President of the 71st session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, acknowledged this link in his SDG implementation strategy briefing to Member States in November 2016, when he stated that human rights for all, as well as gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, can only be realized through the effective implementation of all 17 SDGs and that, in turn, sustainable development can only be achieved through the full realization of human rights. He stressed that while Governments have the primary responsibility for meeting the 2030 Agenda, the UN has a central role in support of implementation. The three-track implementation strategy of the President of the General Assembly embraces raising global awareness of the importance of SDG implementation; strengthening momentum in the implementation of each of the 17 SDGs, including by convening key actors on SDG 5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”) in the margins of the 2017 Commission on the Status of Women; and supporting the UN and related agencies in making their maximum contribution to SDG implementation at all levels.

Today as we look to 2030, the large-scale movements of migrants and refugees around the world arising from conflicts, disaster and other push factors add to the challenges that States and the UN are facing in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Such situations of instability exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women and girls, exposing them to an increased risk of violations of their human rights, including higher levels of gender based violence, such as the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, early and forced marriage, other harmful practices, and denial of women’s sexual and reproductive health rights. It is in such grave times that respect for the principles underlying the CEDAW

Convention become all the more relevant and this Committee's advice to State parties, all the more critical.

Linking the 2030 Agenda to the Convention that is nearly universally ratified with 189 States parties and provides comprehensive protection of women's human rights has great potential to support States in implementing the SDGs and, at the same time, strengthen their accountability for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Treaty Body Strengthening Process

In August 2016, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the first biennial report on the status of the treaty body system which shows that the measures taken under General Assembly resolution 68/268 have allowed the treaty body system to address some of its most pressing challenges. It also notes that further progress could be made in harmonizing treaty body working methods. In response to the report, the General Assembly, in December, reconfirmed its approach to the treaty bodies as a system, adopting, by consensus, a resolution (A/RES/71/185) on the treaty body system that brings the sponsors of traditional individual treaty resolutions under one umbrella when it comes to procedural and managerial matters.

Later this year, the General Assembly will discuss and decide on whether or not it will grant the necessary resources for the amended meeting time in 2018-2019 which results from changes in the system's workload. A re-calculation of the meeting time for 2018-2019 was presented to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on the basis of the mathematical parameters that the General Assembly outlined in resolution 68/268. One positive aspect is that, if and when the General Assembly acts on its own formula, it will confirm a quasi-automatic mechanism for the funding of the treaty body system, based on the objective criteria of incoming reports and communications.

Such a mechanism, which allows for adaptations of the meeting time every biennium, is a novelty in the UN system and carries the advantage that ad-hoc resolutions are no longer needed. As you may recall, the mathematical formula in resolution 68/268 has a built-in margin of meeting time to allow treaty bodies to deal with their backlog of State reports. The mathematical formula, however, stipulates that this margin should drop from 15 to 5 percent starting from 2018. As a result of the reduction of the backlog margin, CEDAW will return

to its previous annual meeting time of 14 weeks in the next biennium, subject to the General Assembly's approval of the budget for the amended meeting time in 2018-2019.

This readjustment will have an impact not only on your capacity to continue reducing the reporting backlog, which currently stands at 40 reports, but also on your time-consuming work on inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. However, we are committed to seeking a solution to provide you with the necessary support to effectively undertake your work on this mandated activity, despite budgetary constraints. In this regard, I would like to inform you that following the two-day inquiry workshop organised by OHCHR in collaboration with the Geneva Academy on 6 and 7 October 2016 to harmonise the practices of the different treaty bodies in relation to their inquiry procedures, a dedicated extranet page has been developed which will serve as a repository for a set of templates and guidelines that can be used by all treaty bodies to facilitate their work on inquiries.

Recent developments

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

Security Council

On 5 December 2016, the Security Council held an Aria formula meeting on the "Synergy between CEDAW and Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security" in New York, in which your colleague Ms. Pramila Patten participated. This was unprecedented being the first time that a treaty body member addressed the Security Council. It was the result of calls by high-level reviews of UN peace operations to enhance system-wide accountability, coordination and coherence to accelerate the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. Ms. Patten briefed the Security Council on how the use of General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations could improve Member States' monitoring of the implementation of SC resolution 1325 (2000) and other Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Several Member States expressed support for a resolution or a Presidential statement to call for more synergies between CEDAW and the Security Council.

General Assembly

On 19 December 2016, the General Assembly adopted the following resolutions without a vote: “Trafficking in women and girls”; “Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation”; “Intensification of efforts to end obstetric fistula”; “Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: prevention and elimination of domestic violence”; and “Child, early and forced marriage”.

Resolution A/RES/71/175 on “child, early and forced marriage”, in the preamble, refers to the CEDAW Convention and recalls the human rights obligations of States to prevent and eliminate the practice of child, early and forced marriage. The operative paragraphs call on States to address gender stereotypes that contribute to the acceptance and continuation of this harmful practice and to amend laws in order to repeal provisions that enable perpetrators of rape, sexual abuse or abduction to escape prosecution and punishment by marrying their victims. It also urges Governments to ensure victims’ access to justice, continued schooling and sexual and reproductive health, including the right to freely and responsibly decide on matters related to their sexuality.

The General Assembly also reaffirmed the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, when it rejected on four occasions proposals to defer consideration of, and action on, Human Rights Council resolution 32/2 which created the mandate. The Independent Expert, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, who started his term in November 2016, will present his first report to the Human Rights Council in June 2017, in which he will define priorities for protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and set out his vision for the mandate.

Your 66th session

During this 66th session, you will conduct dialogues with 8 States parties and meet with United Nations Country Teams, specialized agencies, other international organizations, NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions. You will informally meet with the Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, Ms. Beate Rudolf, to discuss NHRI engagement with 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 General Assembly resolution 68/268 on treaty body strengthening as well as its contribution to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

You will also elect a new Bureau today. I take this opportunity to thank your outgoing Chair, Yoko Hayashi, the Bureau that served with her, and the Members whose terms have concluded: Ms. Al-Dosari, Ms. Bailey, Mr. Bruun, Ms. Pimentel, Ms. Pomeranzi and Ms. Zou, for their wisdom, their efficient work and for the capability with which they have steered the Committee over the past two years.

As you have much work ahead of you, I stop here and wish you a most successful and productive 66th session.

Thank you.
