

Check against delivery

58<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women



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Madam Chair,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you for the opening of the **fifty-eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** and to welcome you on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay.

First of all, I wish to congratulate the members of the Committee who were re-elected last week: Ms Acar, Ms Gabr, Ms Halperin-Kaddari, Ms Hayashi, Ms Jahan, Ms Patten, and Ms Schulz. I also wish to thank the outgoing members, Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla, Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani, Ms. Neubauer, Ms. Pires and Ms. Simonovic, for their contribution to the Committee's work over the past years. Your strong and diverse expertise has indeed enriched the Committee's work and will continue to enrich it during this and the next session.

I have the honour to inform you that following the unanimous approval by the General Assembly on 16 June 2014, the Secretary-General has formally appointed Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini of Jordan for a four-year term as the sixth High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini,

currently the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations in New York, will succeed Ms. Pillay, whose mandate ends on 31 August 2014.

### **Treaty Body Strengthening Process**

Following the adoption of resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system by the General Assembly on 9 April 2014, the treaty body strengthening process has entered its implementation phase. We will have the opportunity for a focused discussion on the implementation of this resolution later this morning.

For now, I would like to mention some aspects in this opening meeting. First, a Note verbale was sent to all the States parties to UN human rights treaties on 8 May 2014 reminding them of the word limits for initial reports, subsequent periodic reports and common core documents. States parties were also informed that reports received after 8 May which exceed the word limits will be returned to the State party concerned for shortening and/or re-formatting.

Currently, a draft calendar of meetings for 2015 is being finalized by OHCHR, in consultation with the UNOG Division of Conference Services, to accommodate the additional meeting time for treaty bodies. We hope to be able

to inform you of the 2015 calendar for CEDAW (including your extra weeks as a result of the treaty body strengthening outcome) before the end of this session.

I would also mention that last week, the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Chairpersons discussed the implementation of the TBS resolution in three distinct areas: the simplified reporting procedure; the alignment of methodologies for constructive dialogue with States parties; and a common format for short, focused and actionable concluding observations. The Chairs' discussion benefitted from the input provided by many Committee members, based on the three notes by the Secretariat that had been shared with all treaty body members in May this year.

At their 26<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, the Chairs reached agreement on *[include a paragraph on the outcome of the 26<sup>th</sup> Chairpersons Meeting]*. I understand that time has been set aside during your session to discuss the recommendations of the Chairs.

### **Women's rights and the post-2015 agenda**

Madam Chair,

The inter-governmental process aimed at elaborating sustainable development goals for the period after 2015 continues in New York. The General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals released a Zero Draft of proposed goals and targets on 2 June 2014. This draft includes some elements that highlight the centrality of women's rights and gender equality to the post 2015 development agenda. OHCHR and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung were pleased to hold a one day meeting last week to allow CEDAW members, civil society and other experts to share views on the Zero Draft and the way forward. We look forward to the imminent release of the next draft by the Open Working Group.

## **Security Council**

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I now turn to progress made by other UN bodies dealing with women's rights. On 25 April 2014, the **Security Council** held its open **debate on women, peace and security**. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General said that conflict-related sexual violence is a grave human rights abuse, "as destructive as any bomb or bullet". The Council discussed the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181), compiled

by his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, who also briefed the Council.

In a related development, the Government of the United Kingdom hosted the **Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict** in London from 10 to 13 June 2014. The meeting was co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary and Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It was the largest ever gathering on the subject, bringing together 1,700 delegates and 129 country delegations including 79 Ministers. The Summit launched a non-legally binding International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of Sexual Violence in Conflict and agreed on practical steps to tackle impunity for the use of rape as a weapon of war, and to begin to change global attitudes towards these crimes.

## **Human Rights Council**

### *Madame Chair*

The Human Rights Council held a high-level dialogue on combatting sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 25 March 2014. Your Vice-Chair Ms. Patten was one of the panellists. She recalled the Committee's concluding observations on the DRC, in which you had expressed serious concern about the shocking levels and the nature of the violence and sexual atrocities committed against women, mass rapes, sexual violence, and

sexual slavery, and about the failure of the authorities to prioritize the protection of civilians and the denial by key State officials of the extent of the violence committed against women. She also recalled your recommendations to the DRC to prevent gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, by State and non-State actors; prioritise the fight against impunity for sexual violence in conflict-affected areas; ensure access to justice for all women affected by sexual violence during the conflict; provide proper funding to military jurisdictions; ensure the protection of victims and witnesses from reprisals whenever they seek access to justice; and ensure the protection of victims and witnesses.

On 17 June 2014, during its 26<sup>th</sup> session, the Human Rights Council held its annual full-day discussion on women's human rights. The first of the two panels discussed "The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on the Recognition and Enjoyment of Women's Human Rights". Committee member Ms. Simonovic was among the panellists. She informed participants that Article 5(a) of the Convention obliges States to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes based on socially constructed roles and attributes associated with gender. Further, article 5(b) recognizes the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of their children, addressing the need to change stereotypes about the mother as the nurturer and the father as the bread winner that are most



strongly replicated in family roles in relation to child rearing. The panel also discussed a study by Simone Cusack of the Australian Human Rights Commission analysing how stereotyping in the judiciary undermines justice for women, in particular in cases of gender-based violence. The second panel focused on “Women’s human rights and the sustainable development agenda”.

On 23 June, the Council held a panel discussion on “Preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage”, which benefitted from the participation of your Vice-Chair Ms. Neubauer, who stated that the Convention and the jurisprudence developed by the Committee set out the framework to address child, early and forced marriage. She recognized the importance of culture in shaping behaviour and restricting the enjoyment of rights by girls and women, and stressed the need for comprehensive strategies, tailored to specific country and local contexts, to ensure respect for the legal minimum age for marriage for both women and men. Exceptions should be authorized only by tribunals and only with the full and free consent of the girls involved. Marriages made under coercion should be void or annulled, and the difficult situation of the women after has occurred should be addressed.

Another panel at the Human Rights Council was held on 16 June focusing on “The identification of good practices in combating FGM”, with the participation of an expert from the Committee on the Rights of the Child . Also

at its 26<sup>th</sup> session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on violence against women focusing on violence against women as an obstacle to women's economic and political empowerment. The Council decided to renew the mandates of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Manjoo, presented her report to the Council (A/HRC/26/38), flagging "the limitations of large and varied monitoring mandates" such as the ones of the human rights treaty bodies, in addressing violence against women, and recommending that the Council "undertake an inquiry into the normative gap, in a quest to further strengthen efforts to eliminate violence against women".

### **Other relevant developments**

The 103<sup>rd</sup> session of the International Labour Conference was held from 28 May to 12 June 2014 in Geneva. The Conference adopted a legally binding Protocol on Forced Labour that brings the existing ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour, adopted in 1930, into the modern era to address practices such as human trafficking, and aims to advance prevention, protection and compensation measures, as well as to intensify efforts to eliminate contemporary forms of slavery. The accompanying Recommendation adopted

by the Conference provides technical guidance on its implementation. The Conference also held a first discussion on the transition from informal to formal economy and concluded that it will have a second discussion next year with the aim of adopting a Recommendation. Both standard-setting developments are of major importance for women in the workforce.

### **Your 58<sup>th</sup> session**

*Madam Chair,*

*Distinguished members of the Committee,*

Your **agenda for the 58<sup>th</sup> session** is extremely busy and ambitious. You will conduct dialogues with 8 States parties, meet with UN bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, NGOs and NHRIs, hold a day of general discussion on girls' and women's right to education, continue your dialogue with the Human Rights Committee, and work on a host of other items related to general recommendations, individual communications and inquiries under the Optional Protocol, as well as the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on treaty body strengthening.

Without further ado, I wish you a very successful and productive 58<sup>th</sup> session and open the floor for questions and comments from members. There will also be some additional time between 11:00 to 11:30 for an exchange in closed meeting.

Thank you.

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