

Check against delivery

60th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women



Statement by
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Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you for the opening of the **sixtieth 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. The High Commissioner is looking forward to meeting you this afternoon at 5 pm.

I would especially like to extend a warm welcome to the new members of the Committee who will assume their duties today, namely: Ms. Gladys ACOSTA VARGAS [Peru], Ms. Bakhita AL-DOSARI [Qatar], Ms. Magalys AROCHA DOMINGUEZ [Cuba; was already a member from 2005 to 2012], Ms. Louiza CHALAL [Algeria], Ms. Lilian HOFMEISTER [Austria], and Ms. Lia NADARAIA [Georgia].

I also congratulate the re-elected members of the Committee who today are commencing a new term: Ms. Ayse Feride ACAR [Turkey], Ms. Naéla GABR [Egypt], Ms. Ruth HALPERIN-KADDARI [Israel], Ms. Yoko HAYASHI [Japan], Ms. Ismat JAHAN [Bangladesh], Ms. Pramila PATTEN [Mauritius], and Ms. Patricia SCHULZ [Switzerland].

Treaty Body Strengthening Process

Last year, the intergovernmental treaty body strengthening exercise came to a successful conclusion with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268. Your Committee was at the forefront of supporters for that process.

As we now turn to the work of implementing the resolution, I note that CEDAW's backlog of reports currently stands at 51, and new reports are coming in at a high rate. However, I am confident that, with your hard work, the support of OHCHR and the extra 1.3 weeks granted by the General Assembly, you will be able to meet the target of 28 reports and a similar number of lists of issues and questions to be tackled in 2015. The burden this places on you and on the OHCHR staff working with you is recognized.

At the end of 2014, we unfortunately witnessed a significant cut in OHCHR's extra-budgetary resources. This cut affected all parts of the organization and the Human Rights Treaties Division was not spared. In this constrained financial environment, and in line with GA resolution 68/268, OHCHR will focus its support in 2015 on assisting each Committee to reduce backlogs and reach the targets set out in the resolution in terms of numbers of lists of issues, concluding observations and individual communications.

I would also like to raise another issue in the resolution, namely the choice of three standing languages of the Committee. This Committee has indicated English, French and Spanish as its standing languages and has requested on an exceptional basis the use of Arabic. Conference Services are doing their best to meet this exceptional need; however, resolution 68/268 makes only limited provision for exceptional languages and such provision must be stretched to cover the needs of all Committees. We therefore urge you to exercise moderation in the number of meetings and documents for which you seek an exceptional language so that limited resources can meet the needs of all Committees. We look forward to working with you to find a solution.

Distinguished members,

In addition to reducing backlogs, the General Assembly recognized that strengthening the treaty body system requires the increased harmonization of working methods across treaty bodies. This will make the treaty bodies more accessible to States and stakeholders, and benefit the system as a whole. As a traditional pioneer in rationalizing treaty bodies' working methods, we hope that CEDAW will continue to lead by example, thereby showing other Committees the road to greater efficiency and unity.

We welcome the decisions the Committee has already taken in this regard, such as its decision to offer, during a pilot phase, the simplified reporting procedure to States parties with overdue reports which have submitted an updated common core document. We encourage the Committee to continue working on the operationalization of the Addis Ababa guidelines and to consider adopting the guidance note for States parties on the constructive dialogue and the framework for concluding observations as well as establishing the mandate of a Rapporteur on reprisals. All of these matters have been discussed of the meeting of Chairpersons in 2014.. A common treaty body policy on reprisals was also discussed at the recent informal meeting of treaty body Chairpersons held from 16 to 18 January in Wilton Park, United Kingdom, in which your outgoing Chair Nicole Ameline participated. I am sure that she will brief you on the informal meeting in her statement on inter-sessional activities. The 27th meeting of Chairpersons will be held in San José, Costa Rica, from 22 to 26 June to explore synergies with the regional human rights system.

Of course, the implementation of resolution 68/268 also involves tracking progress. The General Assembly has requested that the Secretary-General submit a report on progress made in the implementation of the resolution every two years. OHCHR has started collecting data and tracking progress specifically for this purpose. These reports will be used to ensure that

the regular budget resources devoted to the Committees keep in line with the backlogs of the Committees. They will also be used in the next review of the entire treaty body system scheduled under the resolution for 2020.

Tracking progress of implementation of the resolution also includes a review of the application of the Addis Ababa Guidelines on independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies – specifically by requesting Chairs to keep States parties updated on their implementation. In preparation for such reporting, you might wish to consider how you are approaching the implementation of the Addis Guidelines, and, in doing so, give thought to the establishment of an internal mechanism to keep track of progress.

Post-2015 agenda

Dear Committee members,

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to developments in the elaboration of the sustainable development goals within the post-2015 agenda. On 4 December last year, the Secretary-General issued his Synthesis Report on the post-2015 agenda entitled “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet”, which summarizes the process to date, including the draft goals and targets elaborated by the Intergovernmental Open Working Group in 2014. In his report, the Secretary-

General recalls that human development also means respect for human rights, and that gender equality and women's empowerment and rights must be realized in all regions of the world. He stresses that millions of people, especially women and children, have been left behind in the wake of unfinished work of the Millennium Development Goals. The post-2015 agenda must therefore accommodate the voices of women and ensure that women and girls have access to the full range of health services, education, as well as to financial services and the right to own land and other assets. The report also calls for zero tolerance of violence against or exploitation of women and girls.

In the joint statement on the post-2015 development agenda adopted by the Chairpersons of the treaty bodies at their informal meeting in Wilton Park in January this year, which was sent to all Member States, the Chairpersons welcomed the emphasis placed on equality and non-discrimination in the Secretary-General's synthesis report, including two dedicated equality goals on gender equality. At the same time, the Chairpersons urged Member States to include an explicit reference to 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' in the SDGs.

Your own Committee also made a significant contribution to the post-2015 process, through your "Statement on the post-2015 development agenda and the elimination of discrimination against women", adopted one year ago,

and the open letter that you sent to the co-chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in July 2014, highlighting the centrality of women's rights and gender equality for the post-2015 agenda.

Member States are now embarking on negotiations towards adopting the post-2015 development agenda at the UN General Assembly Heads of State Summit in September 2015. This final phase is crucial to ensuring the goals, targets, indicators and accountability frameworks are closely aligned with human rights norms, especially those enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Beijing +20

Dear Committee members,

The main focus of the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women that will take place from 9 to 20 March will be on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that affect its implementation as well as the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW will undertake a review of the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

This year, the CSW aims at adopting a political declaration rather than an agreed outcome as in previous years. The draft political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women “recognizes that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women”. However, no reference is made in the current draft to the contribution by the Committee to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

As part of the 20-year commemoration of the Beijing Conference, UN-Women launched an online public mobilization campaign hosted on the platform beijing20.unwomen.org, including facts, stories and audiovisual and social media content, which focuses each month on one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. In December 2014, the campaign highlighted women’s human rights, featuring an op-ed from the High Commissioner, Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein, and an interview with the CEDAW Chair recorded at your last session.

Your 60th session

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Your **agenda for the 60th session** is again a heavy one. You will conduct dialogues with eight States parties, meet with UN bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, NGOs and NHRIs, and work on a host of other items related to general recommendations such as the one on women's access to justice, individual communications and inquiries under the Optional Protocol, as well as the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on treaty body strengthening.

You will also elect a new Bureau today. I take this opportunity to thank your outgoing Chairperson, Nicole Ameline, the Bureau that served with her, and the members who have retired from the Committee (Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla, Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani, Ms. Neubauer, Ms. Pires and Ms. Simonovic) for their passion, their efficient work and for the *savoir-faire* with which they have steered the Committee over the past two years.

Without further ado, I wish you a very successful and productive 60th session and open the floor for questions and comments from members.

Thank you.
