

Check against delivery

65th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women



Statement by
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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-fifth 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

This will be the last session for the **outgoing Committee members**, Ms. Al-Dosari, Ms. Bailey, Mr. Bruun, Ms. Pimentel, Ms. Pomeranzi and Ms. Zou. I wholeheartedly thank each one of you for your contribution to the Committee's work over the past years. Your strong and diverse expertise and spirit of cooperation have indeed enriched the Committee, personally as well as substantively.

Your engagement in the follow-up and review of the SDGs

I am pleased that your determined efforts to contribute to mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets have been recognized and that the ECOSOC President has invited CEDAW to provide inputs to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. This will be a first time opportunity for a treaty body to showcase its contribution towards the 2030 Agenda in general, and particularly for the SDGs and respective targets that are most relevant to your work.

It is our hope that your able contribution will set a precedent for future inputs by the treaty body system as a whole as well as by other human rights mechanisms. However, the fact that CEDAW is the first treaty body to be invited to contribute is a clear recognition of your engagement in the SDG process over the past years, starting with your participation in the General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in February 2014 and culminating in your recent contribution to UN Women's work on formulating a list of questions covering several areas of law under the CEDAW Convention that will be recommended to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs for adoption as the internationally accepted methodological framework for measuring 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").

I understand that during your current session, you will continue to integrate some of these questions in your lists of issues and in the constructive dialogues with States parties and to make references to specific SDGs in your concluding observations, with a view to informing the follow-up and review process of SDG 5 and other relevant SDGs.

The CEDAW Convention enjoys almost universal ratification and is the only human rights instrument that provides comprehensive protection of human rights of women. Linking the 2030 Agenda to the CEDAW Convention, as well as to other human rights treaties, therefore has great potential to strengthen State's accountability in delivering on their promise to promote and protect women's rights and achieve substantive gender equality.

Recent developments

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

The UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants on 19 September in New York marked the first time that the General Assembly called for a summit at the Heads of State and Government level to agree on a blueprint for a coordinated, humane international response to large movements of refugees and migrants. The outcome of the Summit, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, expresses the political will of world leaders to protect the rights of refugees and migrants, save lives and share responsibility for large population movements. The Declaration recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of women on the move and makes commitments to ensure that responses to large population movements mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and respect and protect their rights. Annex 2 of the Declaration sets out a process of intergovernmental negotiations towards a "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration", which, among others, will seek to protect women migrant workers in all sectors, to be adopted at an intergovernmental conference on international migration in 2018.

On 26 September, the Human Rights Council held its annual half-day discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Council and that of its mechanisms. The discussion focused on gender integration in the resolutions of the Council and in UPR recommendations.

Also at its 33rd session, the Human Rights Council appointed Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn from Thailand as Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and established a new mandate of Special Rapporteur on the right to development, each for a period of three years.

The Council adopted a resolution on “Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights” without a vote but with amendments to controversial parts such as references to General Comment No. 22 (2016) of CESCR on the right to sexual and reproductive health; text that would recognize sexual rights; or the clause that technical cooperation and assistance will be directed to States that apply the “OHCHR technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity”. The resolution decides to convene, at the 34th session of the Council, a panel discussion on the linkages between the SDGs relating to preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In May 2016, World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) announced the establishment of a high-level working group of global champions on health and human rights of women, children and adolescents. The working group has a year-long mandate to generate high-level political support, at both national and international levels, for the implementation of the human rights-related measures called for under the Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016-2030). The working group has recently requested civil society organisations, agencies and partners working on the health and human rights of women, children and adolescents to provide inputs to a High-Level Working Group of Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents.

OHCHR work on women’s rights and gender equality

The OHCHR Country Office in Tunisia continues its exemplary work on promoting the CEDAW Convention. After its successful advocacy for the withdrawal by Tunisia of its reservations to the Convention in 2014, it recently prepared a CEDAW promotion package for civil society organizations. A resource guide explaining the Convention and the Committee’s work that mainly targets CSOs from the inside regions of the country has been published in French and will soon also be out in Arabic. In addition, four leaflets containing

the text and a simplified presentation of the Convention, FAQ and answers concerning the main challenges to the Convention as well as facts and figures – article by article – on discrimination against women, in Tunisia, have been published for use by local CSOs. Another leaflet that would illustrate articles 1 to 16 with extracts from the Koran is currently being considered.

In September, OHCHR published an internal guidance note on systematizing gender integration for commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. This was in response to the findings of an OHCHR review of the integration of gender-based violence into the work of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, indicating that, while sexual violence is increasingly addressed, limited attention has been paid to other forms of gender-based violence and to the gender dimensions of other human rights violations.

Your 65th session

During this 65th session, you will conduct dialogues with eleven States parties, including your first review of a country [Belarus] under the simplified reporting procedure; meet with UNCTs and specialized agencies, other international organizations, NGOs and NHRIs. You will hold an informal meeting with the States parties to the Convention, as well as with Parliamentarians attending the IPU Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Committee against Torture; 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 follow-up and review of the SDGs.

As you have much work ahead of you, I stop here and wish you a most successful and productive 65th session.

Thank you.
