[INFORMAL DOCUMENT]

 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Seventy-eighth (online) session
(15 – 25 February and 4 March 2021)

 Annex 2

 Report of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on its eighteenth session

1. The Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women held its eighteenth session online from 11 to 12 February 2021. The five members of the Working Group attended the session (Marion Bethel (Chair), Rosario Manalo, Lia Nadaraia, Ana Pelaez Narvaez (temporarily replacing Mr. Gunnar Bergby, whose term ended on 31 December 2020) and Franceline Toe-Bouda (temporarily replacing Ms. Aicha Vall Verges, whose term ended on 31 December 2020).

2. At the beginning of the session, the Working Group adopted the agenda of its eighteenth session.

3. The Working Group was briefed by Orest Nowosad, Chief, Groups in Focus Section, Human Rights Treaties Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on various issues relating to inquiries. While acknowledging the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on its work, the Working Group reiterated its serious concern at the lack of both human and financial resources to fully support its mandate under the inquiry procedure.

4. The Working Group was informed:

(a) In relation to submission No. 2020/1, that the State party concerned had requested a two-month extension of the time limit for submitting its observations on the information received by the Committee under article 8 of the Optional Protocol;

(b) In relation to Inquiry No. 2019/1, that on 8 February 2021, the State party concerned had submitted its observations on the information received by the Committee under article 8 of the Optional Protocol.

5. The Working Group continued to discuss the standard operating procedures for inquiries in order to consider adapting them to the mandate of the Working Group and reflect the recent practice of the Committee in examining information received under article 8 of the Optional Protocol.

6. The Working Group also discussed matters in relation to Inquiries Nos. 2017/3; 2016/1; 2014/2; 2014/3; 2012/1; and 2013/1.

 Action taken at the eighteenth session

7. The Working Group decided to recommend:

(a) In relation to Inquiries Nos. 2016/1, 2014/3 and 2014/2, that a Note verbale be sent to the Permanent Missions of the States parties concerned to explore the possibility, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to undertake these inquiries in a hybrid format combining desk research and a country visit at a later stage;

(b) In relation to submission No. 2019/1, that the Committee designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry and to seek the consent of the State party concerned to a visit to its territory.

8. The Working Group decided to hold its nineteenth session from 17 to 18 June 2021.