***CLOSING REMARKS***

***By***

***Ms. Gladys Acosta Vargas***

***Seventy-ninth session of the***

***Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women***

Dear Colleagues,

As we are coming to the end of the seventy-ninth (online) session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it is customary for the Chair to sum up the work completed during this session.

We decided not to hold any online dialogues and to postpone the consideration of the reports of eight States parties initially scheduled for the 79th session (Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, South Sudan, Spain and Yemen) to our 80th session, which will hopefully be held in-person in October/November this year. This decision was based on our assessment that the technological conditions, the varying time zones of members and the lack of interactive engagement would not have been conducive to the constructive dialogues with those States parties. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that we were able to make important progress on our other mandated activities during the session, with a view to protecting and promoting women’s rights in these critical times.

Let me start from the beginning of this session and assess our results.

The highlight of this session was the virtual day of general discussion on the rights of indigenous women and girls that we convened on 24 June. The discussions under the two thematic segments on intersecting forms of discrimination against and participation rights of indigenous women and girls benefited from the rich contributions by the expert speakers, interventions by 14 Member States, 21 civil society organizations and other stakeholders, as well as the more than 70 written submissions received. I wish to thank my colleagues on the Working Group on indigenous women and girls and the Secretariat for their tireless work to make this day of general discussion happen.

I am pleased that we were able to adopt two important statements at this session, one on “Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention: A retrogressive step back in the protection of women’s human rights enshrined in the CEDAW Convention”, and a joint statement on “Prevention, protection of and assistance to children born of conflict-related rape and their mothers”, which still needs to be endorsed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child”. In this regard, I thank Genoveva Tisheva, Aruna Narain and Bandana Rana for their lead in drafting these statements.

I also wish to thank the new Rapporteur on reprisals, Dalia Leinarte, and the alternate Rapporteur on reprisals, Leticia Bonifaz Alfonzo, for having drafted guidelines to address allegations of reprisals and acts of intimidation against individuals and organizations cooperating with the Committee, which we were able to adopt last week.

Moreover, I wish to thank the working group on working methods, in particular the chair, Hiroko Akizuki, and co-chair, Nicole Ameline, for having updated the rules of procedure to reflect new working methods and practices of the Committee. Their meticulous work enabled us to adopt the revised rules of procedure today. The working group also prepared important decisions concerning the limitation of online sessions to two weeks and of online dialogues to very exceptional circumstances as well as ways to reduce the backlog of State party reports.

I am pleased with the progress made by the working group on gender-based violence against women, chaired by Ms. Tisheva, in drafting various sections on different forms of gender-based violence for inclusion in the draft Guidance note for States parties on the implementation of their obligations and their accountability as set out in general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19.

Dear colleagues,

I deeply satisfied that we were also able to deliver on our core mandates under the Convention and the Optional Protocol during this online session.

In that regard, I wish to thank the Rapporteur on follow-up, Louiza Chalal, and the alternate Rapporteur on follow-up, Natasha Stott Despoja. Thanks to their diligent coordination and preparation, with help from other colleagues, and the efficient support from the Secretariat, we were able to adopt twelve follow-up assessments at this session.

I thank the Working Group on Communications, in particular the Chair, Hilary Gbedemah, and Vice-Chair Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, for the preparation of three excellent final decisions on individual communications that we adopted at this session, with support from the OHCHR Petitions Section – despite the numerous technological, resource and other constraints faced by the Working Group and the Petitions Section.

Also under the Optional Protocol, we were able to assess the observations of the State party concerned with regard to one inquiry submission and decided that the threshold for conducting an inquiry had not been met in this case. I wish to thank the Working Group on Inquiries, particularly the Chair, Bandana Rana, and Vice-Chair, Rhoda Reddock, for the important preparatory work in that regard.

During the session, we also had interesting exchanges, such as our private informal meeting with the outgoing Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and former Committee member Dubravka Simonovic, who has been a strong partner of the Committee throughout her mandate, as well as the thematic briefings by the Center for Reproductive Rights, IWRAW-Asia Pacific, the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, the Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights, and the Women’s Rights Coalition steered by the European Network of Migrant Women.

Dear colleagues,

Before I conclude, please allow me sincerely to thank all experts for the impressive work accomplished during the past two weeks. We again worked under difficult conditions and I am proud that we successfully delivered on our mandate to protect and promote women’s rights and gender quality.

I thank all our colleagues from the Secretariat who again provided excellent support to us and for whom it was a challenge to coordinate our remote work: Jamila, Robert, Isabelle, Adrian, Theodora, Alexey, Maxence, Anne, Marco, Bashar, Anganile, Caroline, our excellent intern Romane, Jakob and Simon.

I would also like to thank the interpreters, technicians, IT specialists, our conference room officers, the précis writers, press officers, and all others who made this online session successful.

In concluding, I wish you a nice summer, stay healthy, and I look forward to seeing you all at our eightieth session in October/November – this time hopefully in Geneva again!