

**OPENING STATEMENT
BY
Ms. Naéla Gabr
Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against
Women
at the
Forty-seventh session**

4 October 2010

Excellencies
Distinguished colleagues
Ladies and Gentleman

I am very pleased to welcome you once again to the United Nations Office in Geneva, and to the forty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The number of States parties to the Convention remains at 186. Singapore and Bulgaria deposited their instruments of acceptance with the Secretary-General to the amendment to the Convention on 30 August 2010 and 25 September 2010, respectively, bringing the number of States that have accepted the amendment to 58. There are currently 99 States parties to the Optional Protocol.

During the past year, States parties continued to object to reservations which appear to be contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or which are so broad that it is unclear to what extent the reserving State feels bound by the obligations of the Convention. I am happy to report that two states withdrew reservations – Malaysia and Maldives.

Distinguished Colleagues,

It has only been two months since the forty-sixth session ended. I wish to highlight some of the activities that I have engaged in as Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee and other issues that may be of interest of the Committee.

Thirteen Committee Members, including myself, participated in an informal meeting in Paris at the invitation of the French Government from 20 to 21 May 2010. This meeting brought together, in addition to Committee members, French parliamentarians, national and international civil society representatives as well as representatives from OHCHR, UNIFEM, ICRC and IPU. The discussion focused on discriminatory laws and the role of parliament.

In July 2010, I participated in the twenty-second Meeting of Chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies which took place in Brussels. The objective of this initiative was to bring treaty bodies closer to the implementation level and raise awareness in regions on their work in order to strengthen linkages, synergies and enhance implementation

between international and regional human rights mechanisms and institutions.

I also endorsed a joint statement of the Chairpersons of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies on the occasion of the United Nations Summit, High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly held in New York from 20 to 22 September 2010 in which Member States were urged to be guided by human rights in finalizing the Summit Outcome Document and in establishing national action plans. The statement also drew the attention of the Member States to the guidance offered by the human rights treaties and the work of treaty bodies, and reminded them that the realization of the millennium development goals is but a first step in meeting their broader human rights treaty obligations.

The Committee has also been active in participating in panel discussions and seminars relating to women's issues. Ms. Victoria Popescu spoke on the plenary panel discussion on discrimination against women in law and practice, which was held at the Human Rights Council's 15th session on 20 September 2010. Ms. Violet Awori participated in the International Seminar of Experts on the Reform of the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies, held from 27 to 29 September 2010 in Poznan, Poland, organized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Faculty of Law of the University of Poznan. The focus of the discussion related to the enhancement of the impact of treaty bodies on human rights protection.

Ms. Pramila Patten is invited to speak during the Social Forum today, 4 October, and will focus on the effects of climate change on women and women's issues. Ms. Patten has also been invited to speak at the International Parliamentarian Union's annual seminar on CEDAW which IPU and OHCHR are organizing on 7 October.

Ms. Violeta Neubauer and Ms. Dubravka Simonovic will take part in an international seminar organized by the International Institute for the Rights of the Child on harmful traditional practices and human rights instruments, which will be held from 10 to 13 October 2010 in Sion, Switzerland. The Committee Members will also meet with counterparts from the Committee on the Rights of the Child as part of a joint working group to discuss a joint general comment on harmful traditional practices on 14 October.

Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao will address the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 11 October 2010 and will brief the Third Committee on the status of the Convention, reporting by States parties, Committee Membership, interaction with various stakeholders and other activities during the past year related to women's issues.

Ms. Ferdous Ara Begum will represent the Committee at the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action from, which is being held from 11 to 22 October 2010 in Geneva. Ms. Begum

will contribute as a panellist to the discussion on structural discrimination.

In November, I will be attending the inauguration ceremony of WOMANist at the International Istanbul Women's Meeting, which is being organized with the support of the H.E. Selma Aliye Kavaf, Minister of State responsible for women, to provide the keynote address to the special session on "CEDAW+30".

Distinguished Colleagues,

As you are aware, we have a very full, but interesting agenda during this session. The Committee will consider five periodic reports, namely from Burkina Faso, the Czech Republic, Malta, Tunisia and Uganda. Unfortunately, the Bahamas, which was also scheduled for the 47th Session, cancelled due to unforeseen exigencies on 30 September 2010. The Committee will also consider an exceptional report from India.

The Committee will also consider cases under the Optional Protocol to the Convention and discuss various issues, such as draft general recommendation No. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights and the draft general recommendation on Article 2 of the Convention, for example. It is hoped that the draft general recommendation on older women will be adopted at this session. The Committee will also consider reports and information received under its follow-up procedure to concluding observations and will discuss ways to improve

the format of its concluding observations. We will also meet with many non-governmental organizations, representatives of national human rights institutions and parts of the UN family. I would like to pay particular tribute to these stakeholders who provide such valuable input into our work.

Colleagues and friends,

As you are aware, this will be my last session as Chair. In this regard, I want to thank you all for your support during my tenure as Chair and would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the outgoing members of the Committee - Ms. Ferdous Ara Begum, Ms. Saisuree Chutikul, Ms. Dorcas Coker-Appiah, and Mr. Cornelis Flinterman. On behalf of the Committee, thank you for the significant contributions that you have all made to the work of the Committee and the rights of women. You will be missed.

I would also like to mention that since I will not be able to be with you during the entire session due to urgent business, Ms. Pimentel will chair from 11 to 15 October and Ms. Zou will chair from 18 to 23 October.

At this juncture, I would also be delighted to hear from Committee members who have represented the Committee at official meetings or undertaken work related to the activities of the Committee during our closed meetings.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank Ms. Natacha Foucard for her professionalism and dedication as Secretary of the Committee. I wish her the very best in her new position as Secretary of the Inter-Committee Meeting and Meeting of Treaty Bodies Chairpersons.

Thank you very much for your attention.