

Check against delivery

“55th SESSION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN”



Statement by Mr. Ibrahim Salama
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GENEVA, 8 JULY 2013

Madame Chair,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, I have the great pleasure to welcome you to the **fifty-fifth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.**

Treaty Body Strengthening Process

Let me take this opportunity to update you on the **General Assembly's Intergovernmental Process** on the strengthening of the treaty body system. Negotiations among States are in full drive right now in New York, and I am pleased that treaty body experts have been closely associated to this process. In April, the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process, the Ambassadors of Iceland and Indonesia in New York, visited Geneva for two days, where they met with CED, CMW and CRPD, which were in session at that time. I would like to express my gratitude to your Chair, Ms Ameline, and to Ms Haidar and Ms Schulz, who came at their own expense to participate in the consultations conducted by the co-facilitators with the CED and CMW.

At the request of the co-facilitators, the **25th Annual Meeting of Chairpersons** was moved to New York in order to allow for maximum synergy between the Chairpersons and the inter-governmental process. During the meeting from 20 to 24 May 2013, the Chairpersons held informal consultations with Member States and groups of States. The ten Chairs called on Member States to respect **five key principles** for a successful outcome of the treaty body strengthening process, namely strengthened human rights protection; independence; reinvestment of any cost savings in the treaty body system; use of modern technologies to enhance the accessibility of treaty bodies, including for persons with disabilities; and, in line with the statement that you adopted at your last session on the HC report, a comprehensive and sustainable response to the challenges faced by the treaty body system.

Madame Chair,

At this point, I wish to thank you for your vital role in facilitating these consultations and for your active engagement in the adoption of the joint statement on the post-2015 development agenda by the Chairpersons Meeting.

It is reassuring to see to what extent the **intergovernmental negotiations** are based on the proposals in the High Commissioner's report and on the views of treaty body experts. There is strong support among States for reinvesting

cost savings in the treaty body system and for enhancing the accessibility of treaty bodies, especially for persons with disabilities through webcasting and captioning. In addition, the co-facilitators have called for increased resources for capacity building to enable States parties to comply with their reporting obligations. Although diverging views still exist on several points, they can still be reconciled during the final phase of the process.

The intergovernmental process has entered its decisive stage. Draft elements for a resolution are currently being discussed in New York and will serve as a basis for the final negotiations. The intention of the co-facilitators is to wrap up the process by the end of July. However, some States argue that more time is needed and propose a procedural resolution to extend the negotiations until next year. Please be assured that my Division will keep you abreast of any new developments.

Vienna +20 Conference

Distinguished members of the Committee,

As you know, the World Conference on Human Rights took place in Vienna 20 years ago. It led to historic advances in many vital areas, among them women's rights. In her opening statement at the 22nd session of the

Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner recalled that at Vienna, where she was representing a women's activist group, the NGO slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights" spoke loudly, and that the **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** reclaimed the vision of human rights for women and called for universal ratification of the CEDAW Convention, the integration of women's rights into all UN activities, and for the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Vienna Conference also laid the path for **new mechanisms** to promote and protect women's rights such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the creation of a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The High Commissioner also stated that it would be a welcome development if every single States has become a party to the CEDAW Convention by the end of 2013. She recalled that despite the many advances, women continue to be subject to discrimination and violence, to a shocking degree.

At the Vienna +20 Conference, hosted by the Austrian Government on 27 and 28 June, one of three thematic working groups focused on women's rights. It developed action-oriented recommendations which will be presented to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly in the autumn of 2013.

57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Turning now to developments in relation to other UN bodies dealing with women's rights, I am pleased to note that the 57th session of the CSW in March focussed on addressing violence against women, and that its **Agreed Conclusions** are a testimony to the commitment of Member States to address such violence. While the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Agreed Conclusions were tense and difficult, the text reaffirms that violence is rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations and uses language from General Recommendation No. 19. It also recalls the obligations of States to promote and protect all human rights of women and to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish perpetrators, end impunity and ensure appropriate remedies for victims. The text calls on States to ratify relevant international human rights instruments and to withdraw reservations.

On 4 March 2013, the opening day of the 57th session of the CSW, your Chair delivered a statement to the Commission, highlighting the Committee's activities and priorities.

Human Rights Council

On 5 June 2013, during its 23rd regular session, the Human Rights Council held its **annual full-day of discussion on women's rights**. The discussion focused on violence against women and took stock of the progress since the Vienna Conference, where the elimination of violence against women in private and public life was recognized as a human rights obligation. Specific attention was devoted to the importance of holistic frameworks that address all forms of violence against women in an over-arching manner, and the need for strengthened synergies at the international level for greater effectiveness and accountability. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Ms Rashida Manjoo, moderated the full-day discussion. Your Committee was represented by Ms Schulz, who participated in one of the panels.

Following the full-day discussion, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution urging States to eliminate all forms of violence against women and, in particular, to prevent and respond to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Security Council

On 24 June 2013, the **Security Council adopted resolution 2106 on conflict-related sexual violence**, strengthening its women, peace and security

architecture. The resolution calls on States to fight impunity by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence and by including such crimes in their national penal legislation. It lists a range of measures to address sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations and also notes the link between conflict-related sexual violence and HIV/AIDS.

G-8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

In the context of this year's G8, the United Kingdom launched an initiative which resulted in the adoption by the G8 ministers of a Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, in London on 11 April 2013. In addition, the UK is working on a draft non-binding international protocol on the investigation and documentation of sexual violence in conflict, which it plans to present to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly in 2014.

Women's rights and gender issues in the OHCHR planning process

Women's rights and gender issues came out strongly in the regional consultations that were held in March/April 2013 in connection with the **OHCHR 2014-2017 planning process**, and issues such as discrimination against women and sexual and gender-based violence are likely to figure

among the focus areas to be covered by the future thematic priorities of the Office.

Your 55th session

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Your **agenda for the 55th session** is again a heavy one. You will conduct dialogues with 8 States parties, meet with UN bodies and specialized agencies, NGOs and NHRIs, hold a high-level panel discussion on “Linking HIV/AIDS and women’s human rights”, and work on a host of other items related to general recommendations, individual communications and inquiries under the Optional Protocol, as well as on your working methods.

I therefore wish you successful deliberations and a productive session.
