



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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

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Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

**Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee
on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Note by the secretariat

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* CEDAW/C/49/1.



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I. Introduction

1. The present report contains information relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Section II contains information on developments in the human rights regime, including the human rights treaty bodies, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Section III relates to working methods of the Committee and other relevant issues. Section IV provides information on reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions and on reports that have been received but not scheduled for consideration. A list of States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is contained in annex I to the present report. Annex II contains a list of States parties whose reports had been submitted but not yet considered or scheduled for consideration by the Committee as at 1 May 2011.

II. Developments in the human rights regime

A. Human rights treaty bodies

2. The Human Rights Committee held its ninety-eighth session from 8 to 26 March 2010, its ninety-ninth session from 12 to 30 July 2010, its hundredth session from 11 to 29 October 2010, and its hundred-and-first session from 14 March to 1 April 2011. During its ninety-eighth session, following its decision taken in October 2009 to send to States parties lists of issues prior to reporting, the Human Rights Committee started discussing the practical modalities of the new procedure. The Committee also continued to discuss its draft revised reporting guidelines, taking into account the harmonized guidelines for the common core document. During its hundredth session, the Committee introduced a new rule in its rules of procedure allowing it to declare communications inadmissible as constituting an abuse of the right of submission when there has been a long delay between exhaustion of domestic remedies and the submission of the case before the Committee. It also completed the first reading of its draft general comment 34 on article 19 (freedom of opinion and expression). The draft was made public and comments from State parties and other stakeholders have been solicited.

3. During its forty-fifth session, from 1 to 19 November 2010, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights held a day of general discussion on the right to sexual and reproductive health in accordance with article 10, paragraph 2, and article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The day of general discussion was part of the preparatory work leading to the formulation of a general comment on the right to sexual and reproductive health. The day provided an opportunity to exchange views and garner insights from practitioners and academic experts on this subject with a view to fostering a deeper understanding of the content and implications of these particular rights. The day consisted of four panels on the following themes: definitions and elements of the right to sexual and reproductive health, cross-cutting issues and groups in focus, legal aspects and State parties' obligations and conclusions. A member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Dubravka Šimonović, took part in the day of general discussion and shared the experience of the Committee with regard to the right to sexual and reproductive health.

4. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held its seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions, from 15 February to 12 March 2010, 2 to 27 August 2010 and 14 February to 11 March 2011, respectively. The Committee examined the situation of several States parties under its early warning and urgent action procedures, which are aimed at preventing and responding to serious violations of the Convention. It also held a thematic discussion on racial discrimination against people of African descent during its seventy-eighth session in the framework of the International Year for People of African Descent. The Committee also discussed its working methods and decided at its seventy-sixth session that it would no longer send lists of issues which require a response, but would forward to the State party concerned a short list of themes with a view to guiding and focusing the dialogue between the delegation and the Committee during the consideration of the State party's report. Such a list of themes does not require written replies.

5. The Committee against Torture held its forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions from 1 to 19 November 2010 and from 9 May to 3 June 2011, respectively. Like the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture adopted an optional reporting procedure available to States parties, whereby lists of issues and questions are transmitted to the State party concerned prior to the submission of its periodic report and the replies to this list of issues would constitute the State party's report under the Convention. The Committee, in adopting this new procedure, was of the view that it would assist States parties in preparing focused reports, would guide the preparation and content of the reports, would facilitate reporting by States parties and would strengthen their capacity to fulfil their reporting obligations in a timely and effective manner. This new procedure, however, also requires that the reports be considered within the shortest possible period of time after being received by the Committee, otherwise the added value of the procedure will be defeated, as new lists of issues would have to be adopted to update information provided. The Committee against Torture has used this procedure with respect to 75 States parties.

6. Following the fiftieth ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, by Switzerland on 24 September 2009, the number of independent experts of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture increased from 10 to 25.

7. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its fifty-fourth session from 25 May to 11 June 2010. The Committee discussed the need to reduce the length of the concluding observations and to better identify priority concerns and recommendations. It decided to limit replies to lists of issues to 30 pages for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to 15 pages for the Optional Protocols to the Convention. It also decided to indicate these page limits on the lists of issues themselves. In addition, the Committee decided to "advance" the pre-sessional working group so as to be able to transmit the lists of issues and questions two sessions (rather than one session) in advance of the session at which the consideration of the report of the State party concerned would be taken up.

8. From 13 September to 1 October 2010, the Committee held its fifty-fifth session. It continued discussions on three general comments. It adopted its treaty-specific reporting guidelines which aim to: (a) complement guidelines for a common core document as envisaged for all treaty bodies; and (b) integrate reporting and information on the implementation of one or both of the Optional Protocols into the

reports under the Convention for all States parties to the Convention. For States parties whose reports are delayed, the Committee will continue to allow combined periodic reports. Should a report exceeding the page limitations be submitted, the State party will be asked to review and eventually resubmit their report in accordance with the above-mentioned guidelines.

9. The Committee held its fifty-sixth session from 17 January to 4 February 2011. During the session, it discussed ways and means of improving its working methods, in particular related to the consideration of the large number of reports received, and in view of the number of reports due under the Convention and its two Optional Protocols. The Committee held an informal meeting with States parties to discuss various issues related to its methods of work, in particular with regard to follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee and with respect to the strengthening of the treaty body system.

10. The Committee on Migrant Workers held its thirteenth session from 22 November to 3 December 2010. During the session, the Committee discussed its methods of work and the harmonization of treaty body working methods. The membership of the Committee increased from 10 to 14 members as a result of the forty-first ratification, by Nigeria on 27 July 2009, of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

11. From 4 to 8 October 2010, the fourth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held. The Committee discussed its working methods. It devoted its day of general discussion on 7 October 2010 to article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which deals with accessibility. The discussion was intended to provide States parties and other actors with more comprehensive guidance as to their obligations under the article, which mandates that States parties take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public.

12. With the entry into force on 23 December 2010 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, nominations are now being received for upcoming elections to serve on the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

13. As part of the treaty body strengthening initiative, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized, on 29 January 2011, a joint consultation for the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to identify options for the future of their work and the treaty body system as a whole, including by addressing their working methods. On 9 April 2011, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized the third retreat on working methods and treaty body strengthening for treaty body members, attended by members of the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

B. Tenth and eleventh inter-committee meetings of human rights treaty bodies and twenty-second meeting of chairs of human rights treaty bodies

14. The tenth and eleventh inter-committee meetings of human rights treaty bodies were held from 30 November to 2 December 2009 and from 28 to 30 June 2010, respectively. The twenty-second meeting of chairs of human rights treaty bodies was convened on 1 and 2 July 2010 in Brussels, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178.

15. The meeting of the chairs was held for the first time outside of Geneva, with a view to bringing treaty bodies closer to the implementation level and raising awareness at the regional level of their work so as to strengthen linkages and enhance synergies between international and regional human rights mechanisms and institutions. The chairs considered the follow-up to the recommendations of the twenty-first meeting and reviewed developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies. The chairs also met with institutions of the European Union, including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as well as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. In addition, they met with institutions of the Council of Europe, including the European Court of Human Rights, and with representatives of civil society organizations and academia to discuss the applicability of United Nations human rights treaties to European Union actions and the role of the European Union in promoting implementation of and follow-up to the recommendations of the United Nations treaty bodies.

16. The reports on the tenth and eleventh inter-committee meetings of human rights treaty bodies were considered by the chairs. The report of the chairs, including their recommendations, as well as the reports on the tenth and eleventh inter-committee meetings of the human rights treaty bodies are contained in the note by the Secretary-General on effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights (A/65/190). Some of the more pertinent decisions and recommendations included encouraging the European Union to systematically mainstream international human rights law and the recommendations of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies into its policies and laws; encouraging the European Court of Justice to refer to international human rights law and the recommendations of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, when appropriate; encouraging the European Union to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations treaty bodies in European Union member States, as well as outside European Union territory; and encouraging cooperation between the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and the European Court of Human Rights on matters related to procedure, methods of work and jurisprudence. Lastly, the meeting endorsed the points of agreement of the tenth and eleventh inter-committee meetings of the human rights treaty bodies.

17. The tenth inter-committee meeting decided on a number of points of agreement, including the following:

(a) It reiterated its previous recommendation to establish a working group on follow-up, composed of both the rapporteurs on follow-up to concluding observations and the rapporteurs on follow-up to individual communications of each treaty body, if applicable, or the members responsible for follow-up activities. It

also recommended that the working group should be divided into two subgroups, one on follow-up to concluding observations, inquiries and visits, and one on follow-up to individual communications, and that the subgroups should meet in parallel once per year with a view to facilitating interaction;

(b) It recommended that other thematic working groups should be established as decided;

(c) It recommended that the inter-committee meeting should be held once per year, with the participation of the chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, who were ex officio members for that purpose, as well as one additional member of each treaty body;

(d) It recommended that a standing item on its agenda should be the strengthening of the treaty body system through the improvement and harmonization of treaty body working methods;

(e) The meeting agreed that follow-up procedures were an integral part of the reporting procedure and an important aspect of the work carried out by the treaty bodies in order to ensure effective follow-up to concluding observations. It also made recommendations on procedures and modalities for such follow-up;

(f) The meeting requested the secretariat to prepare a background paper on the convergence and divergence of follow-up procedures to individual communications of the treaty bodies and to present such paper to the proposed subgroup on follow-up to individual communications;

(g) The meeting recommended that decisions and views on individual communications be published in a regular and systematic way and disseminated broadly, with a view to enhancing the involvement of national human rights institutions and civil society in encouraging the implementation by States parties of the decisions and views of treaty bodies;

(h) The meeting recommended that treaty bodies should be able to conduct inquiries to consider the feasibility and necessity of establishing a follow-up procedure that was specific to the inquiry procedure.

18. The relevant points of agreement decided at the eleventh inter-committee meeting include the following:

(a) It reiterated that treaty body working methods should continue to be a standing item on the agenda of the inter-committee meeting;

(b) It noted with interest the optional reporting procedures adopted by the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee in respect of lists of issues prior to reporting. The meeting encouraged all treaty bodies to consider whether such procedures could be applicable to them and recommended that the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee report back to the twelfth inter-committee meeting on their experience in implementing such procedures;

(c) The meeting recommended that each treaty body explore ways of reducing the length of its concluding observations in order to achieve greater efficiency and impact without jeopardizing the quality or the exercise of the monitoring mandate of the respective treaty body;

(d) It recommended that all treaty bodies take account of their previous concluding observations, as well as any follow-up information provided or remaining outstanding, and views, decisions and opinions adopted under the individual complaints procedures, if applicable, when drafting lists of issues prior to reporting and concluding observations;

(e) The meeting welcomed the initiative by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to elaborate a joint general comment;

(f) The meeting recommended that all treaty bodies highlight in their concluding observations the need for States parties to respect the page limits for reports as established, and requested the secretariat to ensure that such page limits were applied, including by conveying the concerns expressed by conference services through a note verbale and by requesting States parties whose reports did not meet such requirements to review and eventually resubmit their reports in accordance with the established guidelines;

(g) The eleventh inter-committee meeting and the participants of the seventeenth annual meeting of special procedures mandate holders also agreed on the following:

(i) The joint meeting recommended a more systematic approach to the follow-up of respective recommendations by special procedures and treaty bodies, in particular by systematically sharing their respective priority issues in relation to country and thematic issues;

(ii) The joint meeting further recommended more systematic cross-referencing and reinforcement of the recommendations of special procedures and treaty bodies. Specifically, the recommendations of special procedures and invitations for country visits could be taken into account and referred to in the concluding observations of treaty bodies. Similarly, reference to and follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of treaty bodies should be reinforced by mandate holders in their reports and country visits. It was also emphasized that recommendations should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound in order to enable enhanced follow-up;

(iii) The joint meeting recommended regular interaction of the rapporteurs of the treaty bodies with special procedures mandate holders. It was also recommended that a joint meeting of the inter-committee meeting working group on follow-up and the special procedures should be held in January 2011 in order to explore ways and means of strengthening a coordinated approach to follow-up. It was recommended that, when relevant, country-specific or thematic mandate holders should brief treaty bodies in the context of country reviews.

19. The inter-committee meeting working group on follow-up met from 12 to 14 January 2011. The points of agreement will be presented to the twelfth inter-committee meeting for approval in June 2011. The relevant points of agreement are divided into follow-up with respect to concluding observations, inquiries and visits; and follow-up to individual complaints. With respect to follow-up to concluding observations, inquiries and visits, the working group made several recommendations, including:

(a) The working group recommended that treaty bodies should have a written follow-up procedure and that such procedural guidelines should include the following elements: ways in which the Committee should interact with stakeholders; procedures for determining when follow-up recommendations have been fully implemented; a timeline for requesting follow-up information; means of coordination between the follow-up rapporteur and the country rapporteur; methods for qualitative assessment of information received; and how follow-up should be considered in the context of other methods of work, including the early warning and urgent action procedure and lists of issues prior to reporting where appropriate;

(b) It further recommended that the committees limit the number of urgent and/or priority recommendations identified from two to four to keep the procedure focused;

(c) In order to further enhance the effectiveness of the follow-up procedure, the working group recommended that the treaty bodies consider formulating clear criteria for the selection of recommendations to facilitate their identification, such as, for example, feasibility and urgency;

(d) The working group agreed that reminders for overdue follow-up information should be transmitted to a State party two months after the expiration of the deadline for submitting such information and again after four months if the information remains overdue. If the information is not received within six months, it agreed that the treaty body concerned should meet with representatives of the State party;

(e) The working group recommended that all committees concerned consider developing guidelines for States parties to facilitate the preparation of follow-up replies and encourage States parties to submit concise and focused follow-up replies in order to ensure their more timely translation;

(f) It also recommended that the committees concerned strengthen their efforts to increase the visibility of the follow-up procedure so as to ensure systematic input from the relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations country teams, appropriate special procedures mandate holders, national human rights institutions and civil society, as well as to systematically engage with United Nations partners, including the specialized agencies, field presences and country teams;

(g) The working group discussed the proposal to structure concluding observations around immediate, medium-term and long-term deliverables to facilitate implementation of the treaty body recommendations at the national level;

(h) The working group recommended that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights assess the feasibility of organizing and funding regional workshops on follow-up, as well as the possibility of conducting in situ follow-up visits;

(i) Regarding inquiries, the working group recommended that the findings of treaty body inquiries, when completed and where applicable, should be followed up in the framework of the periodic reporting system, including in lists of issues and concluding observations.

20. The inter-committee meeting working group on follow-up also made several recommendations with respect to individual complaints, including the following:

(a) The working group recommended that common procedural guidelines be drafted with the purpose of complementing the existing rules of procedure and practices on follow-up and harmonizing the follow-up procedure of all of the committees;

(b) It recommended that the committees should continue to consider ways of further improving their recommendations on remedies to States parties with a view to enhancing implementation, and also recommended that efforts should be made to ensure consistency of each committee's jurisprudence in the remedies recommended;

(c) The working group also recommended that all committees in the implementation section of their decisions provide the basis upon which follow-up information is requested; it also recommended that all committees consider extending the deadline for responses from 90 to 180 days, except in the case of an emergency;

(d) It recommended that measures be taken to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the discussion of follow-up reports;

(e) The working group also made a number of recommendations to heighten the visibility of the follow-up procedure, including discussing and adopting follow-up reports in public session and publishing reports on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as soon as they are adopted.

C. Security Council

21. The Security Council adopted resolution 1960 (2010) reaffirming its commitment to the continuing and full implementation, in a mutually reinforcing manner, of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1612 (2005), 1674 (2006), 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1894 (2009) with respect to the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in particular against women and children. In the resolution, the Security Council expressed concern over the slow progress on the issue and reiterated its deep concern that despite its repeated condemnation of violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict, including sexual violence, and despite its calls addressed to all parties to armed conflict for the cessation of such acts, such acts continue to occur, and in some situations have become systematic and widespread. The Security Council, inter alia, reiterated its demand for the complete cessation, with immediate effect, by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence and called upon parties to armed conflict to make and implement specific and time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence, which should include issuance of clear orders through chains of command prohibiting sexual violence and the prohibition of sexual violence in codes of conduct, military field manuals, or equivalent. It further called upon those parties to make and implement specific commitments on timely investigation of alleged abuses in order to hold perpetrators accountable and requested the Secretary-General to track and monitor implementation of those commitments by parties to armed conflict.

22. In the resolution, the Security Council recognized that States bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of all persons within their

territory and subject to their jurisdiction as provided for by international law; reaffirmed that parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians; recalled that international humanitarian law affords general protection to women and children as part of the civilian population during armed conflicts and special protection due to the fact that they can be placed particularly at risk; and reaffirmed that ending impunity is essential if a society is to come to terms with past abuses and prevent future abuses and that justice and reconciliation mechanisms can promote not only individual responsibility for serious crimes, but also peace, truth, reconciliation and the rights of the victim. It also reaffirmed that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

23. The Security Council also adopted numerous country-specific resolutions which include references, *inter alia*, to gender equality; gender-based discrimination; sexual and gender-based violence, and impunity; and justice and the protection of human rights, with a special focus on the rights of women and children. For example, see Security Council resolutions 1933 (2010), 1946 (2010) and 1975 (2011) regarding Côte d'Ivoire; 1945 (2010) regarding Sudan; 1952 (2010) regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo; 1959 (2010) regarding Burundi; and 1974 (2011) regarding Afghanistan. It also recalled previous resolutions relating to women and peace and security (resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009)); and to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, especially women and children (resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1894 (2009)).

D. General Assembly

24. The General Assembly also adopted a number of resolutions which are relevant to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. On 18 December 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/140 on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, in which it recalled the importance attached to the problems of rural women in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Assembly also recalled the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which Member States resolved, *inter alia*, to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate sustainable development, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in which they also resolved to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination. In the resolution the Assembly recognized the critical role and contribution of rural women in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty, and the contributions of older rural women to the family and the community with respect to childcare, household and agricultural responsibilities.

25. The Assembly urged Member States, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations and civil society, to continue their efforts to implement the outcome of and to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the United Nations conferences and summits and to attach greater importance to the

improvement of the situation of rural women by undertaking a number of measures, including: pursuing the political and socio-economic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, including through affirmative action, where appropriate; integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of development policies and programmes; strengthening efforts to meet the basic needs of rural women through improved availability, access to and use of critical rural infrastructure, education and literacy programmes and health and social support measures, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health; implementing national policies that promote and protect the enjoyment by rural women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; creating an environment that does not tolerate violations of their rights, including domestic violence, sexual violence and all other forms of gender-based violence; and ensuring that laws accord to rural women full and equal rights to own and lease land and other property, including the right to inherit. The resolution also calls upon the Member States to take into consideration the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concerning their reports to the Committee when formulating policies and designing programmes focused on the improvement of the situation of rural women.

26. On the same date, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/141 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In the resolution, among other things, the Assembly recognized that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of the obligations of States parties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were mutually reinforcing in respect of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in this regard welcomed the contributions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to promoting the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, and invited States parties to the Convention to include measures taken to enhance implementation at the national level in their reports to the Committee under article 18 of the Convention. The Assembly also called upon States parties, *inter alia*, to fully comply with their obligations under the Convention and to take into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee. It additionally urged States parties to consider limiting the extent of any reservation that they lodge to the Convention, to formulate any reservations as precisely and narrowly as possible, and to regularly review such reservations with a view to withdrawing them so as to ensure that no reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. In addition, the Assembly called upon Member States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to consider doing so and called upon those Member States that had not yet done so to consider signing and ratifying or acceding to the Optional Protocol.

27. In its resolution 64/172 on the right to development, the General Assembly recognized, *inter alia*, the important role and the rights of women and the application of a gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in the process of realizing the right to development, and noted in particular the positive relationship between women's education and their equal participation in the civil, cultural,

economic, political and social activities of the community and the promotion of the right to development.

28. In its resolution 64/178 the General Assembly welcomed the steps taken by the human rights treaty bodies, various special mandate holders, and United Nations agencies and other concerned intergovernmental and governmental organizations, within their existing mandates, as well as civil society, to address the serious crime of trafficking in persons and encouraged them to continue to address the issue and to share their knowledge and best practices as widely as possible.

29. On 21 December 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/217 on women in development, in which it called upon Member States, the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates, and all sectors of civil society to fully commit themselves to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Assembly also recognized the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty eradication. It urged Member States to undertake the following measures:

(a) To accelerate efforts to increase the number of women in decision-making and to build their capacity as agents of change, and to empower women to participate actively in the development, implementation and evaluation of national development and/or poverty eradication policies, strategies and programmes;

(b) To accelerate efforts, along with non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system, to increase the number of women in economic decision-making bodies in the relevant government ministries, international organizations, corporate boards and the banking sector;

(c) To incorporate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of national development strategies and environmental policies;

(d) To continue to increase women's representation and participation in government decision-making in development policy areas in order to ensure that the priorities, needs and contributions of women are taken into consideration by, inter alia, providing access to training, developing measures to reconcile family and professional responsibilities and eliminating gender stereotyping in appointments and promotions;

(e) To undertake a gender analysis of national labour laws and standards and to establish gender-sensitive policies and guidelines for employment practices, building in this regard on international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

30. The General Assembly expressed deep concern about the pervasiveness of violence against women and recognized that violence against women and girls is one of the obstacles to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace and that women's poverty and the lack of political, social and economic empowerment, as well as their marginalization, may result from their exclusion from social policies for and benefits of sustainable development and can place them at increased risk of violence.

31. Lastly, resolution 64/173 on promotion of equitable geographic distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, recognized the importance of

giving consideration in the membership of the treaty bodies to equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and representation of the principal legal systems. The Assembly expressed concern at the regional imbalance in the current composition of the membership of some of the human rights treaty bodies, noting that the status quo tended to be detrimental to the election of experts from some regional groups, in particular the African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean and Eastern European groups. In this respect, the Assembly encouraged States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments to consider and adopt concrete actions to address this issue, inter alia, the possible establishment of quota distribution systems by geographical region for the election of the members of the treaty bodies, and to include this matter in the agenda of each meeting and/or Conference of States Parties to those instruments in order to initiate a debate on ways and means to ensure equitable distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies. The Assembly also requested the chairs of the human rights treaty bodies to consider at their next meeting the content of the resolution and to submit, through the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, specific recommendations for the achievement of the goal of equitable distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies.

E. Human Rights Council

32. At its fifteenth session, held from 13 September to 1 October 2010, the Human Rights Council decided to appoint, for a period of three years, a working group of five independent experts on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice (resolution 15/23). The tasks of the working group will be as follows:

(a) To develop a dialogue with States, the relevant United Nations entities, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to identify, promote and exchange views on best practices related to elimination of laws that discriminate against women or are discriminatory to women in terms of implementation or impact, and, in that regard, to prepare a compendium of best practices;

(b) To undertake a study, in cooperation with and reflecting the views of States and relevant United Nations entities, national institutions and civil society organizations, on the ways and means in which the working group can cooperate with States to fulfil their commitments to eliminate discrimination against women in law and in practice;

(c) To make recommendations on the improvement of legislation and implementation of the law, to contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal 3 on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(d) To work in close coordination with other special procedures and subsidiary organs of the Council, relevant United Nations entities, including the Commission on the Status of Women and UN-Women, and, in particular, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other treaty bodies, with a view to avoiding unnecessary duplication;

(e) To take into account the views of other stakeholders, including relevant regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations;

(f) To submit an annual report to the Human Rights Council, starting at its twentieth session, on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, and on good practices in eliminating such discrimination, drawing upon the findings of the United Nations human rights machinery and the broader United Nations system.

33. On 17 June 2010, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 14/2 on trafficking in persons, especially women and children: regional and subregional cooperation in promoting a human rights-based approach to combating trafficking in persons. On 18 June 2010, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 14/12 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in prevention. During the fourteenth session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, submitted her first report to the Human Rights Council, while the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a thematic study on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights.

III. Working methods of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Concluding observations

34. The Committee discussed working methods related to the drafting of concluding observations and has implemented some of the proposals discussed, including limiting the number of concerns and recommendations delineated under each section and the use of bullets to provide a more user-friendly tool to the States parties. Discussions also focused on the need to continue to improve the quality of the concluding observations with a view to making them more focused and implementable, as well as shorter. Lengthy concluding observations are less likely to be translated into all languages during the session in time for adoption. In addition, lengthy concluding observations may lend themselves to lengthy periodic reports, which also has implications for translation. The same applies to the list of issues.

35. These matters were also discussed during the eleventh inter-committee meeting (see para. 18 above) and were subsequently endorsed at the twenty-second meeting of chairs of human rights treaty bodies. As indicated in paragraph 18 (c) above, the meeting recommended that each treaty body explore ways of reducing the length of its concluding observations in order to achieve greater efficiency and impact without jeopardizing the quality or the exercise of the monitoring mandate of the respective treaty body. It is also noted that the High Commissioner has expressed the opinion that recommendations in the concluding observations should be prioritized into short-, medium- and long-term goals, depending upon urgency and feasibility of implementation.

B. Follow-up

36. The Committee decided, during its forty-seventh session, to include follow-up to concluding observations as a standing item on the agenda. Follow-up and related matters such as procedures and criteria, as well as efficiency measures, were discussed during the meeting of the inter-committee meeting working group on follow-up (see para. 19 above). The points of agreement will be presented to the twelfth inter-committee meeting for approval in June 2011.

37. In order to facilitate the work of the Committee in this regard, the Rapporteur on follow-up and the secretariat have been working on an analytical table on follow-up which would act as a progress report to the Committee on actions taken or proposed at each session of the Committee.

C. Documentation and translation

38. Based on discussions at the forty-eighth session, the secretariat established a documentation protocol identifying the documents that would be provided to Committee members at the session in hard-copy and in CD-ROM, the documents that would be provided to the country rapporteurs only, the confidential and sensitive documents, reference materials and other documents. The protocol was developed with a view to rationalizing the distribution of documents to allow the Committee members to discharge their functions more effectively and to reduce the quantity of document production, where appropriate, as part of the greening initiative of the United Nations. In this regard, it is noted that the secretariat has agreed to provide hard copies upon request. It is further noted that the protocol should be reviewed and further adjusted as required.

39. The Committee has also raised concerns regarding the translation of documentation required for the work of the Committee. The secretariat, in response to the concerns raised, has taken additional steps to address this issue. The secretariat has met with the Division of Conference Management to discuss the issue of documentation. Based upon this discussion, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division of Conference Management have agreed to use the forecasting system used by the Division, as adjusted for the specific needs of OHCHR.

40. With respect to forecasting, the Committee should take note that ad hoc translations cannot be accommodated, unless they are made part of the forecast for a particular year. In order to ensure translation of such documents, such as draft general recommendations, more planning will be required on the part of the Committee and the secretariat regarding its long-term workplan. It is noted that documents which are forecasted and submitted on time have priority over all other documents submitted for translation.

41. In addition, the Division of Conference Management advised that a letter would be required from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requesting that the simultaneous distribution policy be suspended. As a result, a letter dated 11 March 2011 was transmitted to the Division from the Chair requesting that the policy mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution on multilingualism (resolution 50/11) be suspended indefinitely to enable the Committee to discharge its functions more effectively. With the policy suspended,

documents submitted for translation would be made available to the Committee as soon as they were issued in the various working languages of the Committee, without having to wait for all language versions to be finalized. Such documents include the reports by the States parties, the list of issues and replies thereto, as well as the concluding observations for the purpose of adoption during the session.

42. The Committee will also need to discuss and take a decision on modification to the mandated period of six weeks for distribution of documents prior to its sessions. In its resolution 47/202 B, the General Assembly urged the Secretary-General to ensure that pre-session documents for meetings are distributed no less than six weeks before the meetings in all official languages, “unless there is a specific decision by the body concerned regarding the timing of issuance of pre-session documentation”. It also urged the substantive departments of the Secretariat to comply with the rule which requires them to submit documents to the Office of Conference Services at least 10 weeks before the beginning of sessions, to permit processing in time in all official languages. The 10 weeks include 4 weeks for processing and 6 weeks as the mandated period by which all documents for meetings should be distributed. In Geneva, an additional 2 weeks are added for editing and referencing, for a total of 12 weeks. As mentioned, all documents must be forecasted and only those documents forecasted and submitted on time are processed on time. All other documents, including those submitted late (e.g., replies to lists of issues) are not given the same priority. As such, by reducing the six week period, so that the entire processing time would be seven or eight weeks, the Committee should be able to receive more translations than they currently are for working purposes, especially with respect to replies to the lists of issues, assuming that the replies are submitted within the time frame forecasted (which would be 7 to 8 weeks instead of 12 weeks). To reduce the six week time frame, the Committee would also need to write to the Division of Conference Management.

D. General recommendations

43. Article 21, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that the Committee may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from States parties. General recommendations are normally directed at States parties and suggestions are usually addressed to United Nations entities. The Committee elaborates general recommendations on articles or themes/issues of the Convention. Most of them outline matters that the Committee wishes to see addressed in the reports of States parties, and seek to provide detailed guidance to States parties on their obligations under the Convention and the steps that are required for compliance.

44. The Committee has adopted 28 general recommendations so far.¹ Those adopted during the Committee’s first 10 years were short, addressing such issues as the content of reports, reservations to the Convention and resources for the Committee. At its tenth session, in 1991, the Committee decided to adopt the practice of issuing general recommendations on specific provisions of the Convention and on the relationship between the Convention articles and themes/issues. Detailed examinations of articles or themes were to be formulated on

¹ The texts of the general recommendations are available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org).

the basis of the Committee's examination of States parties' reports and input from the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, as well as from interested non-governmental organizations (see A/46/38, paras. 369, 373 and 380-382; and CEDAW/C/1997/II/4, paras. 4-9).

45. Following that decision, the Committee has issued more detailed and comprehensive general recommendations, which offer States parties clear guidance on the application of the Convention in particular situations. Comprehensive general recommendations have been adopted on violence against women (No. 19); equality in marriage and family relations (arts. 9, 15 and 16) (No. 21); women in public life (arts. 7 and 8) (No. 23); access to health care (art. 12) (No. 24); temporary special measures (art. 4, para. 1) (No. 25); women migrant workers (No. 26), older women (No. 27) and the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention (No. 28).

46. At its seventeenth session, in 1997, the Committee adopted a three-stage process for the formulation of general recommendations (A/52/38, para. 480). The first stage consists of a general discussion and exchange of views on the subject of the proposed general recommendation in an open meeting of the Committee, specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as non-governmental organizations, who are encouraged to participate in this discussion and to submit informal background papers. At the second stage, a Committee member is asked to draft the general recommendation, which would be discussed by a working group at the next or a subsequent session of the Committee. During this phase, resource persons may be invited to participate in the discussion. The third and final stage consists of the submission of the revised draft of the general recommendation for consideration and adoption by the Committee.

47. At earlier sessions, the Committee had adopted a long-term programme of work regarding its elaboration of general recommendations. This programme could be reviewed and amended at each subsequent session (*ibid.*, para. 381). At its twenty-eighth session, in 2003, and based on the report provided by the secretariat (CEDAW/C/2003/I/4, sect. III), the Committee agreed that members should simultaneously work on background papers to several general recommendations, including on article 6 of the Convention, equity and equality, and migrant women; however, no priorities were established among the topics (A/58/38, part one, para. 455). At its thirtieth session, in 2004, the Committee identified potential topics for the elaboration of general recommendations and agreed that the next general recommendation would be on article 2 of the Convention (A/59/38, part one, para. 429). At its thirty-second session, in 2005, the Committee reviewed and updated the list of proposed general recommendations, as follows: article 2; migrant women; gender race and ethnicity; reservations; the role of non-governmental organizations, including in the process of reporting; article 6; the situation of women in special circumstances; women with disabilities; older women; the girl child; article 3; and refugee women (A/60/38, part one, paras. 417 and 418). At its thirty-seventh session, in 2007, the Committee agreed that while it was up to individual experts to undertake background work on particular topics, its priority was on completion of the general recommendations on migrant women and on article 2, respectively (A/62/38, part one, para. 666). At its forty-second session, in 2008, the Committee established a working group on a general recommendation on the rights of older women (A/64/38, part one, paras. 30-32).

48. Currently, the Committee is working on two general recommendations, one on the economic consequences of divorce and one on women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. At its forty-third session, in 2009, the Committee established a working group on a general recommendation on the economic consequences of divorce (*ibid.*, part two, para. 33). At its forty-seventh session, in 2010, the Committee decided to elaborate a general recommendation on women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations (decision 47/I). At its forty-eighth session, in 2011, the Committee established a working group to elaborate this general recommendation (decision 48/VI).

49. The Committee is also currently working on a joint general recommendation/comment on harmful practices with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At its forty-fifth session, in 2010, the Committee adopted the report of Committee members that form part of a joint working group of the CEDAW and the CRC (A/65/38, part two, para. 28). At its forty-eighth session, in 2011, the Committee endorsed the revised draft outline of the joint general recommendation/comment, thereby authorizing the working group to start the elaboration of the draft (decision 48/VIII).

50. At its forty-eighth session (2011) the Committee agreed to establish a working group and to elaborate a general recommendation on access to justice (decision 48/VII).

51. The Committee may wish to review its long-term programme for the elaboration of general recommendations, taking into consideration earlier decisions of the Committee in this regard and resource requirements.

IV. Reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions

52. At its fiftieth session, to be held from 3 to 21 October 2011, the Committee will consider the reports of the following States parties: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mauritius, Montenegro, Oman and Paraguay. The following States parties have been invited to present their reports at the fifty-first session, to be held from 13 February to 2 March 2012: Algeria, Brazil, the Comoros, the Congo, Grenada, Jordan, Norway and Zimbabwe. Moreover, the Bahamas, Bulgaria, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand and Samoa are scheduled for the fifty-second session of the Committee, to be held from 9 to 27 July 2012, and the following States are scheduled for the fifty-third session, in October 2012: the Central African Republic, Chile, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Serbia, Seychelles, Togo and Turkmenistan. In drawing up the list of States parties to be considered at future sessions, the Committee is invited to consider annex II to the present report, which contains a list of States parties whose reports have been submitted but not yet scheduled for consideration.

Annex I

States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention

Africa

Somalia
Sudan

Asia and the Pacific

Cook Islands
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Nauru
Niue
Palau
Tonga

Western Europe and other

Holy See
United States of America

Annex II

States parties whose reports had been submitted but not yet scheduled as at 1 May 2011^a

<i>State party</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered (session)</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Andorra				
Combined second and third periodic reports	14 February 2002 and 14 February 2006, respectively	12 January 2011 (returned to Permanent Mission due to excessive length with a request to resubmit)	2001 (25)	1
Angola				
Sixth periodic report	17 October 2007	17 January 2011 (hard copy only)	2004 (31)	1 to 5
Cambodia				
Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports	14 November 2005 and 14 November 2009, respectively	11 January 2011 (hard copy only)	2006 (34)	1 to 3
Cape Verde				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	3 September 2006 and 3 September 2010, respectively	3 November 2010 (hard copy only)		
Greece				
Seventh periodic report	7 July 2008	30 December 2010	2007 (37)	1 to 6

^a The following States have been tentatively scheduled for the upcoming sessions of the Committee through the end of 2012:
 Fiftieth session: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mauritius, Montenegro, Oman and Paraguay
 Fifty-first session: Algeria, Brazil, the Comoros, the Congo, Grenada, Jordan, Norway and Zimbabwe
 Fifty-second session: the Bahamas, Bulgaria, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand and Samoa
 Fifty-third session: the Central African Republic, Chile, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Serbia, Seychelles, Togo and Turkmenistan