



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

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Note by the secretariat

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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. 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 2012.

II. Developments in the human rights regime

A. Human rights treaty bodies

2. The Human Rights Committee held its 102nd session from 11 to 29 July 2011, its 103rd session from 17 October to 4 November 2011, and its 104th session from 12 to 30 March 2012. At its 102nd session, the Committee adopted general comment No. 34 on the right of freedom of opinion and expression, which is related to article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as a proposal by the Special Rapporteur for follow-up on Views on the strengthening of the follow-up procedure. At its 103rd session, the Committee heard an update on the treaty body strengthening process and considered its methods of work, including the standard paragraphs in its list of issues prior to reporting and the possibility of using videoconferencing and telephone conferencing for its dialogue with States parties. At its 104th session, the Committee adopted its annual report, including a decision regarding a request for temporary increase of resources for the petitions unit, and also adopted its position on the treaty body strengthening process, endorsing the general thrust of the outcome document of the Dublin II Meeting, on strengthening the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System. It also adopted draft guidelines on the impartiality and independence of members to be considered at the next meeting of chairs of human rights treaty bodies in June 2012.

3. At its forty-sixth session, held from 2 to 20 May 2011, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights discussed and adopted two statements — on the obligations of States parties regarding the corporate sector and economic, social and cultural rights and on the importance and relevance of the Declaration on the Right to Development. It also discussed one preliminary proposal for a new statement — on article 2, paragraph 3, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee was also updated on the status of pending draft/outline general comments — on the right to sexual and reproductive health and on the right to just and favourable conditions of work. In addition, it discussed modalities of improving its methods of work with the aim of considering a higher number of reports per session to reduce the backlog of reports pending review. At its forty-seventh session, held from 14 November to 2 December 2011, the Committee concluded the first reading of its draft rules of procedure for the

Optional Protocol to the Covenant and adopted its annual report as well as a decision on working methods, introducing the “new” working method of considering periodic reports over two meetings only as of its session in November 2012, on a provisional basis. The Committee also held its annual round table meeting with the International Labour Organization Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

4. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held its seventy-ninth and eightieth sessions, from 8 August to 2 September 2011 and from 13 February to 9 March 2012, respectively. At its seventy-ninth session, the Committee made two statements under the early warning and urgent action procedure with regard to the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It also adopted general recommendation No. 34 on racial discrimination against people of African descent and the statement on the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. In addition, it held its third informal meeting with States parties (78 State parties, including 3 in New York through a video link) as well as informal meetings with United Nations system agencies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations. At the eightieth session, the Committee started the review of its early warning and urgent action procedure with a view to further improving it. The Committee also held a preliminary discussion on the thematic discussion on racist hate speech and appointed two rapporteurs who will assist in developing the programme of work for such discussion to take place at its eighty-first session, in August 2012. Moreover, the Committee sent a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in which it has referred to a proposal to create a joint inter-committee working group on individual communications. In the Committee’s view, such a procedure would guarantee the consistency of the case law by different treaty bodies and enhance the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by guaranteeing an inclusive approach to all human rights.

5. The Committee against Torture held its forty-seventh session from 31 October to 25 November 2011. During the session, six out of nine examinations of States parties’ reports were webcast by non-governmental organizations. The Committee postponed the examination of one report to the next session owing to the absence of the Government at the time of the consideration of the report, as it would have been impossible for the Government to send a delegation. In contrast, the Committee vacillated in its decision to postpone the consideration of one State party from its forty-eighth session to the session in November 2012, which has raised a question of how the Committee can respond in a consistent manner to requests for postponement. In addition, the Committee made an exceptional request to one State party to submit a special report on the events occurring in its territory, including the measures to prevent violation of the Convention. The Committee also held a public consultation for stakeholders on its draft general comment on article 14 (redress, compensation and rehabilitation for victims of torture), which attracted a large number of participants. As part of treaty body strengthening, the Committee continued, given its success, its policy of adopting the list of issues prior to reporting (optional reporting procedure). Under the individual complaints procedure, a request was granted to have an oral hearing on the merits of one case, which was an exceptional move.

6. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its fifty-seventh session from 30 May to 17 June 2011. The Committee continued discussions in the form of working groups on the preparation of the general comment on the best interests of the child (art. 3, para. 1), the general comment on the right to health (art. 24), and the joint Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women-Committee on the Rights of the Child general recommendation/comment on harmful practices; as well as on the consideration of the general comment on business and child rights and the general comment on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic life (art. 31).

7. The Committee held its fifty-eighth session from 19 September to 7 October 2011. It continued discussions on its draft general comment on the best interests of the child. The Committee's thematic working groups to elaborate general comments on the right to health, business and child rights and the right to play also held a number of meetings. In addition, the Committee held a day of general discussion, dedicated to children of incarcerated parents. Preceding the session, the Committee held, on 16 September 2011, together with the International Commission of Jurists, an expert meeting on the issue of child rights in relation to the business sector.

8. The Committee held its fifty-ninth session from 16 January to 3 February 2012. During the session, the Committee unanimously agreed to endorse the "Dublin II Outcome Document" on strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system. The Committee has been the first treaty body as a whole to endorse that document. It was also briefed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the proposal of having a comprehensive reporting calendar based on reports due (rather than on reports submitted), as spelled out in the 2011 report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. In addition, the Committee started the discussions on the development of its rules of procedures regarding the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure. It also adopted the report and recommendations of the 2011 day of general discussion on children of incarcerated parents. The Committee also discussed the follow-up procedure to its concluding observations as well as child participation in the work and sessions of the Committee.

9. The Committee on Migrant Workers held its fourteenth and fifteenth sessions from 4 to 8 April 2011 and from 12 to 23 September 2011, respectively. At its fourteenth session, the Committee issued a statement on the situation of migrant workers and members of their families in Libya. The Committee was briefed about the publication and dissemination by OHCHR-Brussels of the Committee's general comment No. 1 on migrant domestic workers, as well as the plan of action on unaccompanied children. Discussing its working methods, the Committee was also briefed on options for strengthening the reporting process. At its fifteenth session, the Committee members expressed views on the treaty body strengthening process and briefed each other on the activities they had undertaken since the previous session to promote the ratification of the Convention. A day of general discussion on the rights of migrant workers in an irregular situation and members of their families was held on 19 September 2011.

10. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its fifth and sixth sessions from 11 to 15 April 2011 and from 19 to 23 September 2011, respectively. At its fifth session, the Committee adopted its guidelines on individual communications and working methods. It was briefed on the implications of the

ratification of the European Union of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2010. The Committee also attended an inter-committee meeting with the Committee on Migrant Workers to discuss the process of strengthening the treaty body system. At the sixth session, the Committee received a debriefing on the most recent inter-committee meeting and the meeting of chairs of the human rights treaty bodies to follow up on their recommendations. It was also briefed by the Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division of OHCHR on the treaty body strengthening process.

11. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances held its first session from 8 to 11 November 2011 and its second session from 26 to 30 March 2012. At the first session, the Committee held smooth elections of the bureau and organized themselves in working groups and systems of rapporteurs. It adopted its provisional rules of procedures and appointed a special rapporteur, deputy and alternate to respond to urgent requests and communications between sessions. It decided to develop guidelines on reporting, urgent action and individual communications by working groups for the next session. At its second session, which included a thematic discussion on women, children and enforced disappearances, the Committee held an interactive dialogue with representatives of Member States which were either party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances or interested in it, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. The Chair of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, Osman El Hajje, described the mandate and workload of the Working Group, which had included some 40,000 unsolved cases of enforced disappearances. The Committee also met with national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors.

B. Twelfth inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies and twenty-third meeting of Chairs of human rights treaty bodies

12. The twenty-third meeting of Chairs of human rights treaty bodies was held in Geneva on 30 June and 1 July 2011, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/202. The Chairs considered the follow-up to the recommendations of the twenty-second meeting and reviewed developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies. They discussed the expertise and independence of treaty body members, as well as ways of enhancing the annual meeting of the Chairs. They held an informal meeting with States parties and adopted recommendations. The report of the twelfth inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, held in Geneva from 27 to 29 June 2011, was considered by the Chairs. The report of the Chairs, including the recommendations of the Chairs, as well as the reports on the twelfth inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, are contained in the note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of human rights instruments (A/66/175).

13. Some of the more pertinent decisions and recommendations of the Chairs included the enhancing and strengthening of the expertise and independence of treaty body members and enhancing the meetings of the Chairs. The Chairs reiterated their recommendation that guarantees for independence, availability and competence are strengthened in the context of the election and terms of appointment of treaty body members. The Chairs supported the suggestion to prepare a document

providing guidance on the eligibility and independence of treaty body members, and requested the secretariat to prepare a draft working paper in that regard. The Chairs also reaffirmed paragraph 17 of the Poznan Statement. While noting that the autonomy and specificity of treaty bodies should be respected, the spearheading role of the Chairs during the intersessional period in facilitating coordination of common activities and representation, such as consideration and adoption of joint statements, was recognized. It was recommended that the Chairs adopt measures on those working methods and procedural matters which were common across the treaty body system and had previously been discussed within each committee. The Chairs also recommended that such measures be implemented by all treaty bodies, unless a committee subsequently dissociated itself from it.

14. The Chairs also reiterated their recommendation that the meeting of the Chairs be held every other year in different regions. The objective is to make the human rights treaty bodies more accessible to all stakeholders. They also decided that at their twenty-fourth meeting, to be held in the African region in 2012, they would focus on: (a) the draft working paper on enhancing and strengthening the expertise and independence of treaty body members; (b) joint activities that could be undertaken by treaty bodies, including joint statements and general comments/recommendations; and (c) the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights compiling the various proposals from the treaty body consultation process.

15. In addition, the Chairs considered a consolidated implementation table of the recommendations adopted by the inter-committee meeting since its first session, and expressed concern about the low number of recommendations implemented, especially with regard to the recommendations pertaining to the harmonization of working methods.

16. The Chairs also agreed that the inter-committee meeting in its current format should be abolished and transformed, for example, into ad hoc thematic working groups to be established at the request of the Chairs. The Chairs also adopted a statement on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of the Right to Development. They also voiced concern about the memorandum of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management dated 13 June 2011 on the strict implementation of word limits for sessional documents and requested the Chair of the twenty-third meeting to address a letter to the Under-Secretary-General to seek clarification on the matter.

17. The twelfth inter-committee meeting was held at Geneva from 27 to 29 June 2011. The participants decided to transmit the points of agreement to the Chairs at their twenty-third meeting for discussion and endorsement. Some of the more pertinent points of agreement are as follows:

(a) *Structure of the dialogue with States parties.* It was recommended that each committee prepare written guidelines for its dialogue with States parties in the context of the reporting process. The participants also recommended that the guidelines be translated into the working languages of the respective committee and that they be transmitted to the State party in question in advance of the consideration of its report. The participants recommended that a dialogue with a State party should, as a general rule, be limited to two meetings, except in the case of initial reports;

(b) *Opening statements.* The participants recommended that each treaty body allocate no more than 30 minutes for the opening statement of States parties;

(c) *Time management.* The participants encouraged the Chairs of the treaty bodies to exercise their power to lead the dialogue effectively so as to ensure a balanced exchange between treaty body members and the State party delegation. In that respect, the participants encouraged the various treaty bodies to introduce time limits for interventions by their members, as well as for States parties to reply to questions;

(d) *Country task forces.* The participants reiterated their recommendation that each treaty body give due consideration to the idea of establishing country task forces, as well as a country rapporteur, for the consideration of State party reports, and further recommended that the country rapporteurs and/or country task forces, as relevant, increasingly contribute to the preparations of a dialogue with a State party;

(e) *Concluding observations.* With regard to periodic reports, the participants highlighted that previous concerns and recommendations should be the point of departure for the new concluding observations so as to ensure a clear assessment of the progress made by the State party since the previous review. The participants also encouraged treaty bodies to produce focused recommendations, to limit the length of paragraphs and the number of subparagraphs by focusing on the main areas of concern, to use subject headings, if appropriate, and to use a clear format;

(f) Treaty bodies were invited to develop a common strategy to ensure the active participation of national human rights institutions throughout the reporting process;

(g) The participants also agreed that treaty bodies should invite national human rights institutions: (i) to encourage the dissemination of information by the State party to all relevant actors on the concluding observations and to support public awareness thereof; (ii) to support and host follow-up meetings to concluding observations with the participation of national stakeholders; (iii) to advise States parties on action that could be taken to effectively implement the concluding observations; and (iv) to engage with members of parliament, ministries and other public authorities regarding the implementation of concluding observations;

(h) It was also agreed that treaty bodies should encourage national human rights institutions to support the capacity-building of relevant State officials regarding the reporting process, and that the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies adopt a statement on the interaction of treaty bodies with national human rights institutions;

(i) With respect to non-governmental organizations, the participants also endorsed the recommendations made in the context of the civil society consultations on the effective functioning of the treaty body system that civil society actors have access to and can participate in all stages of the treaty reporting cycle. The participants recommended that the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies adopt a statement on the interaction of treaty bodies with non-governmental organizations;

(j) The participants recommended that individual treaty bodies invite non-governmental organizations to provide coordinated and more focused

submissions to the treaty bodies and to organize their interventions in a more coordinated manner;

(k) The participants recommended that treaty bodies address as a violation of obligations by States parties the issue of threats or reprisals against human rights defenders and any other person or organization engaging with treaty bodies throughout the reporting process, including in the context of individual communications, inquiries and visits;

(l) The participants reiterated their recommendation on the webcasting of treaty body sessions. Webcasting the sessions would enable stakeholders, particularly at the national level, to follow the process;

(m) The participants reiterated their recommendation that OHCHR continue to facilitate the participation of civil society in the work of the treaty bodies, including by making its master calendar more user-friendly. They also recommended that all treaty bodies prepare an information note to be posted on their respective web page on the modalities of interactions with various stakeholders, including deadlines for the submission of information at sessions and pre-session working group meetings;

(n) The participants also reaffirmed their recommendation that the reports of States parties be written in a clear and precise manner, and reiterated the page limits for State party reports (60 pages for initial treaty-specific documents and 40 pages for subsequent periodic documents).

18. The report of the twelfth inter-committee meeting also included information on the joint meeting of the participants of the eighteenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and Chairs of working groups of the special procedures with the Chairs and members of the treaty bodies. The participants noted that many examples of good practices of cooperation between treaty bodies and special procedures were already taking place, including the holding of regular meetings and sharing well in advance the workplans of the treaty bodies and the special procedures mandate holders; making cross-references to and hence reinforcing each other's recommendations; that special procedures mandate holders were inviting treaty bodies to provide comments on the guidelines and studies that they were developing and to participate in expert consultations; and that the treaty bodies' practice of consulting special procedures mandate holders on general comments was likewise considered a good practice. Some of the more relevant points of agreement are as follows:

(a) The participants recommended that the next joint meeting be more substantive and focus on specific themes, to be agreed upon by the two Chairs;

(b) The participants commended OHCHR for the compilation of good practices on cooperation between treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders and recommended that it include additional examples of good practices, be finalized and made public, and be updated regularly;

(c) The participants recommended that interactions be systematized and better structured, that a mechanism be established to increase communication and information flow, as well as for the coordination of follow-up activities; treaty body members be informed of the presence in Geneva of special procedure experts during

their sessions and vice versa, as well as of countries under consideration and thematic discussions;

(d) In order to further increase the availability and accessibility of the collective information produced by the treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders, the participants recommended that greater use of the Universal Human Rights Index be promoted;

(e) Participants also agreed that special procedures mandate holders and treaty bodies can facilitate the implementation of their recommendations by ensuring that their recommendations are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

C. Treaty body strengthening

19. The treaty body strengthening process was initiated approximately two years ago by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who called upon all stakeholders to initiate a process of reflection on ways to strengthen the treaty body system. The process is open to all relevant stakeholders, including treaty body members, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, academics and States parties. The consultation process is a multichannel and flexible one composed of formal meetings, including the inter-committee meetings and meetings of chairs; consultations and informal meetings; written submissions; the list of emerging proposals and the treaty body members online forum.

20. With the exception of the consultation with States parties in Sion, which was organized by OHCHR in May 2011, all consultations were initiated and hosted by external partners, such as academic institutions or national human rights institutions, with the support of their respective Governments. OHCHR, to the extent possible, sought to ensure adequate representation of all stakeholders. Treaty body members were in fact represented at almost all consultations. OHCHR has also sought to keep States parties informed and to seek their views both in Geneva and New York and through informal briefings with regional groups. OHCHR recognizes that the role of States in the process is fundamental. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights underscored this fact in her briefing to States parties in October 2011.

21. Following such consultations, various statements were adopted by treaty body members (Dublin I and II and Poznan), national human rights institutions (Marrakesh), and non-governmental organizations (Seoul and Pretoria). In addition, following the informal consultation with States parties in Sion, Switzerland, a report was compiled reflecting the diverse views and perspectives of the States parties present. Other consultations by academics (Lucerne, Switzerland), United Nations entities (Geneva) and on treaty body petitions (Geneva) have generated reports as well. Proposals stemming from the various meetings and consultations as well as other inputs by stakeholders have been compiled into a non-exhaustive list of emerging proposals, which reflects the very nature of the multiple stakeholder process. At this point in the process, OHCHR is asking all treaty bodies to reflect on such proposals with a view towards identifying those that would best meet the objectives of the overall exercise.

22. At its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was updated on the strengthening of the treaty body

system process. A briefing was also provided on the list of issues prior to reporting, which was followed by a discussion in plenary on its relevance for the work of the Committee. Comments from the Committee referred, for example, to the specificity of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with respect to other human rights instruments and the compatibility of the procedure with States parties' reporting obligations as contained in the Convention. Some Committee members were interested in this new procedure and commented that the Committee had already considered the implementation of the Convention by States parties in the absence of reports and that this new procedure for reporting would be somewhat analogous.

23. At the fifty-first session, the Committee was briefed on the Dublin II meeting and the informal consultations with States parties held in Geneva in February 2012. The Committee was also briefed on the master calendar concept for treaty body reporting. The Outcome Document on Dublin II was shared with all Committee members prior to the session and was made available during the session, including the updated list of emerging proposals, addressed to treaty bodies, States and OHCHR, respectively.

24. On 7 and 8 February 2012, OHCHR organized a consultation on the treaty body strengthening process at the request of a large number of States. Another meeting was held on 2 and 3 April 2012 in New York, which marked the final stage of the reflection process on treaty body strengthening initiated and facilitated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in November 2009, both at the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. These consultations facilitated discussions among States parties and covered a range of pertinent topics, including resourcing the treaty body system and measures to further improve the effectiveness, harmonization and reform of the treaty body system. The participants noted the growth of the system and the backlog in the consideration of States parties' reports notwithstanding an overall 33 per cent compliance rate by States regarding their reporting obligations. Other issues discussed included the comprehensive reporting calendar, cost-saving measures, strengthening the membership of the treaty bodies, strengthening the States parties' reports and the constructive dialogue, and rationalizing working methods across the treaty body system. The comprehensive reporting calendar was one of the main ideas that raised interest and is based on the concept of establishing a calendar that would ensure predictability and compliance by States of their reporting obligations. Basically, the majority of States were in favour of the calendar. Most have some reservations, in particular with regard to those elements that would require additional resources. Many States also felt, and some are insistent, that more serious savings of costs could be made (through strict adherence to page limitations, replacement of summary records with indexed webcasting, limitations to the working languages of the Committees in which they would need translation and interpretation, etc.). A small number of States opposed one of the preconditions of the calendar, which is the obligatory examination of each State party, even when a report is not received despite long advance notice. Among the most salient points of the discussion were:

(a) The acknowledgment that the treaty body system has reached its limits with respect to resources, and that sustainable solutions need to be found in the context of the intergovernmental process;

(b) The acknowledgment by many States that the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will serve as a basis for discussion in the intergovernmental process, which should be open to all stakeholders;

(c) The wish expressed by some States that the report should not only be a compilation but a package of proposals and reflect the multi-stakeholder nature of the process by addressing recommendations to different stakeholders concerned;

(d) The request that the cost of all proposals contained in the report of the High Commissioner be duly evaluated;

(e) The support expressed by many States for the enforcement of a strict page limitation for State parties' reports, which should be balanced by shorter and more focused concluding observations and shorter lists of issues prior to reporting;

(f) The reduction in the number of working languages of the various committees and translation of summary records in a maximum of two languages;

(g) Broad support for the list of issues prior to reporting, with prior agreement of the State concerned;

(h) The wish expressed by many States that the treaty bodies should focus on so-called "core" activities, which they perceive to be the examination of State parties' reports and individual communications;

(i) Vast support for webcasting and videoconferencing with the support of United Nations country teams for technical facilities in the case of States with limited financial and technical capacity;

(j) The request by a few States of a code of conduct for treaty body experts to be elaborated by States, while others highlighted that negotiations in the intergovernmental process should be guided by the wish to strengthen the treaty bodies while preserving their independence, and that such a code is unacceptable;

(k) The interest expressed by many States for the draft guidelines on independence and impartiality of treaty body members to be discussed at the next meeting of chairs. However, a majority of States highlighted that treaty bodies should not draft guidelines on the eligibility of treaty body members as this was clearly the prerogative of States;

(l) The support by many States of a transparent nomination and election process which was illustrated by the sharing of good practices;

(m) The support by many States for questions to be sent in advance of the constructive dialogue.

D. Security Council

25. In Security Council resolution 2033 (2012) on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, the Council reaffirmed the important role that women play in mediation, conflict prevention, as well as in the peaceful resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and also reaffirmed the importance of the prevention of and protection from sexual violence. The Council also stressed the need for the United Nations and the African Union to work to ensure that women and gender

perspectives are fully integrated into all peace and security efforts undertaken by the two organizations, including by building the necessary capacity.

26. In Security Council resolution 1983 (2011) on the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council expressed concern that in the 30 years since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, more than 60 million people had been infected, more than 25 million people had died and more than 16 million children had been orphaned by AIDS. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the continuing and full implementation, in a complementary manner, of all of its relevant resolutions, including resolution 1308 (2000), 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1894 (2009), 1960 (2010) and all relevant statements of its President. It recognized that conditions of violence and instability in conflict and post-conflict situations can exacerbate the HIV epidemic, inter alia, through large movements of people, widespread uncertainty over conditions, conflict-related sexual violence, and reduced access to medical care. It also recognized that women and girls are particularly affected by HIV and underlined the importance of concerted efforts towards ending conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, empowering women in an effort to reduce their risk of exposure to HIV, and curbing the vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child in conflict and post-conflict situations.

27. In the same resolution, the Security Council also noted that the disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS on women is one of the persistent obstacles and challenges to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and urged Member States, United Nations entities, international financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders, to support the development and strengthening of capacities of national health systems and civil society networks in order to provide sustainable assistance to women living with or affected by HIV in conflict and post-conflict situations. Furthermore, it requested the Secretary-General to consider the HIV-related needs of people living with, affected by, and vulnerable to HIV, including women and girls, in his activities pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of international peace and security, the prevention and response to sexual violence related to conflict, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Finally, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue and strengthen efforts to implement the policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations missions.

28. The Security Council also adopted numerous country-specific resolutions that 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 2036 (2012) on the situation in Somalia, 2037 (2012) on the situation in Timor-Leste, 2040 (2012) on the situation in Libya and 2041 (2012) on the situation in Afghanistan.

29. In January 2012, the Security Council published its second “Cross-cutting report on women, peace and security”, which provides an assessment of the impact of the overall United Nations women, peace and security, or 1325, agenda. The report covers both the status of the mechanisms that are being developed (such as monitoring analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence) and the incorporation of the women, peace and security agenda into the overall work of the Council.

E. General Assembly

30. The General Assembly also adopted a number of resolutions that are relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

31. In its resolution 66/216 on women in development, the General Assembly reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” and also the commitments to gender equality and the advancement of women made at the Millennium Summit, the 2005 World Summit and other major United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions. It reiterated that full, effective and accelerated implementation of these commitments is integral to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Welcoming the full operationalization of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on 1 January 2011, the Assembly noted that its establishment and conduct of work should lead to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations.

32. The General Assembly urged Member States, *inter alia*, to invest in the development of women and girls as it has a multiplier effect, to ensure alignment between national action plans on gender equality and national development strategies, and to encourage the involvement of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. In this regard, it called upon the United Nations system to support national efforts to develop methodologies and tools and to promote capacity-building and evaluation. Moreover, the General Assembly expressed deep concern about the pervasiveness of violence against women and girls, reiterating the need to further intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and recognizing that violence against women and girls is one of the obstacles to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. In addition, it recognized that women’s poverty and lack of political, social and economic empowerment, as well as their marginalization, may result from their exclusion from social policies and the benefits of sustainable development and can place them at increased risk of violence. Furthermore, it called upon Governments to strengthen efforts to protect the rights of, and ensure decent work conditions for, domestic workers, including migrant women, in relation to, *inter alia*, working hours, conditions and wages, and to promote access to health-care services and other social and economic benefits.

33. In its resolution 66/155 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 the education of women and their equal participation in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social activities of the community and the promotion of the right to development.

34. In its resolution 66/153 on the promotion of equitable geographic distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, the General Assembly 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. It also 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 the 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.

35. In its resolution 66/132 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, the Assembly recognized, among other things, 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. In that regard, it 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. In addition, it 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. 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. In addition, the General Assembly called upon UN-Women to continue to support gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system as an integral part of its work and, in that regard, to place a strong and more systematic focus on support for gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system. It also urged States to increase funding for the budget of UN-Women by providing, when legislative and budgetary provisions allow, core, multi-year, predictable, stable and sustainable voluntary contributions, recognizing the importance of adequate funding in enabling UN-Women to implement its strategic plan promptly and effectively, recognizing that the mobilization of financial resources for achieving its goals still remained a challenge.

36. In its resolution 66/131 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the General Assembly welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its forty-fourth, forty-fifth, and forty-sixth to forty-eighth sessions. The Assembly invited the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to address and engage in an interactive dialogue with the Assembly at its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, and requested the Secretary-General to submit at its sixty-eighth session a report on the status of the Convention.

37. In its resolution 66/130 on women and political participation, the General Assembly called upon all States to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that, in a discriminatory manner, prevent or restrict women's participation in the political process. It also called upon them to enhance women's political participation, accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women and, in all situations, including in situations of political transition, to promote and protect women's human rights. The Assembly also called on States in situations of political transition to take effective steps to ensure the participation of women on equal terms with men in all phases of political reform, from decisions on whether to call for reforms in existing institutions to decisions regarding transitional governments, through the formulation of government policy, to the means of electing new democratic governments.

38. In its resolution 66/129 on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, the General Assembly urged States, with the organizations of the United Nations and civil society, as appropriate, to attach greater importance to the improvement of the situation of rural women, including indigenous women, in their national, regional and global development strategies by, inter alia, pursuing the political and socioeconomic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, including through affirmative action, and by promoting sustainable infrastructure, access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation and safe cooking and heating practices, to improve the health of rural women and children. The Assembly called upon 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. Governments and international organizations were also encouraged to integrate the perspective of women in rural areas, including indigenous women, into the preparations for and outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012.

39. In its resolution 66/128 on violence against women migrant workers, the General Assembly called upon all Governments to incorporate a human rights, gender-sensitive, and people-centred perspective in legislation, policies and programmes on international migration and on labour and employment, consistent with their human rights obligations and commitments under human rights instruments. In addition, the Assembly called for the prevention of and protection of migrant women against violence and discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the Assembly urged Governments to strongly encourage all stakeholders, especially the private sector, to strengthen the focus on, and funding

for, the prevention of such violence. It called upon Governments, in particular countries of origin and destination, to put in place penal and criminal sanctions to punish perpetrators of violence against women migrant workers and intermediaries, alongside gender-sensitive redress and justice mechanisms for the victims.

40. Finally, the Assembly took note of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, submitted to the General Assembly under the item entitled “Advancement of women” (A/66/215).

F. Human Rights Council

41. At the nineteenth session, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Human Rights Council the report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the activities of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women (A/HRC/19/30-E/CN.6/2012/13), which was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/166. The Secretary-General also transmitted to the Council the joint workplan of UN-Women and OHCHR (A/HRC/19/31-E/CN.6/2012/12). The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted to the Council a study documenting discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

42. During its eighteenth session, the Council adopted resolution 18/2 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights. In the resolution, the Council reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the targets and commitments regarding the reduction of maternal mortality and universal access to reproductive health. It took note of the analytical compilation of good or effective practices that exemplify a human rights-based approach to eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition, it encouraged action at all levels to address the interlinked root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, such as poverty, malnutrition and harmful practices, and requested the Office of High Commissioner to convene, within existing resources, in cooperation with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, an expert workshop. The workshop, to be open also to the participation of Governments, regional organizations, relevant United Nations bodies and civil society organizations, should prepare concise technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity (see A/66/53/Add.1, chap. II).

43. At the same session, the Council adopted resolution 18/21 on human rights of migrants, expressing concern that female migrant workers engaged in domestic services are among the most vulnerable groups of migrant workers, some of whom are subject to a widespread pattern of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and exposure to health and safety threats without adequate information about associated risks and precautions. It also reaffirmed the fact that all migrants are entitled to equal protection by the law, and that all persons, regardless of their migratory status, are equal before the courts and tribunals and, in the determination of his/her rights and obligations in a suit at law, and are entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law (*ibid.*). The

documents for the session included a report containing analytical compilation prepared by OHCHR on the elements of the initiatives that succeed in achieving reductions in maternal mortality and morbidity through a human rights-based approach (A/HRC/18/27 and Corr.1 and Corr.1/Rev.1).

44. At its seventeenth session, the Council adopted resolution 17/1 on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in which it recognized that victims of trafficking are particularly exposed to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It also recognized that women and girl victims are often subject to multiple forms of discrimination and violence, including on the grounds of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, culture and religion, as well as national or social origin, or other status, and that these forms of discrimination may themselves fuel trafficking in persons. Extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a period of three years, the Council requested his/her close cooperation, while avoiding unnecessary duplication, with relevant United Nations bodies (see A/66/53, chap. III.A).

45. In addition, the Council adopted resolution 17/19 on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to commission a study, to be finalized by December 2011, documenting discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, in all regions of the world, and how international human rights law can be used to end violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and decided to convene a panel discussion on the topic during the nineteenth session of the Council (*ibid.*).

46. At its sixteenth session, the Council adopted resolution 16/7 on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in which the Council welcomed the work of the Special Rapporteur and decided to extend her mandate for a period of three years. The Council further requested special procedures, and invited United Nations organs and bodies, in particular UN-Women, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, treaty bodies and relevant civil society actors, to give consideration to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in their respective work. It also requested those entities to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the fulfilment of his/her mandate (*ibid.*, chap. II.A).

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

A. Working Group on working methods

47. At its forty-ninth session, the Committee, noting its desire to strengthen its working methods within the broader context of the treaty body strengthening process and also noting that strengthening and rationalizing its working methods will be a long-term process, decided to transform the Task Force on working

methods into a standing working group on working methods. The Working Group discussed matters relating to the pre-session working group, the constructive dialogue with the States parties and the role of the country rapporteur. At the forty-ninth session, the Committee agreed, in order to assist in the prioritization of issues for the constructive dialogue and to keep replies as concise as possible, that the lists of issues should contain no more than 20 questions and that each question would contain no more than three issues. It also decided that the questions for lists of issues should be the types of questions that require research and not the type of questions that could be asked during the constructive dialogue. The Committee also decided that the transmittal note should indicate a page limit of 25 pages for replies and that the information contained in the reply should not repeat information already provided in the report.

48. At its fiftieth session, the Committee adopted decisions 50/I and 50/II, regarding enhancing the constructive dialogue with the State parties, including the establishment of task forces, and strengthening the role of the country rapporteur, respectively (for the texts of the decisions, see A/67/38). During its fiftieth session, the Committee also met with the Human Rights Committee to discuss working methods, specifically the list of issues prior to reporting and follow-up to concluding observations. The Committees decided to establish a joint working group for future cooperation.

49. At its fifty-first session, the Working Group on working methods approved a draft template to standardize the country briefing notes prepared by the country rapporteurs and also to facilitate their work in this regard. The draft template was distributed to the Committee for their comments and it was decided that this issue required more discussion at the next session. The Committee also undertook a preliminary review of the use of task forces and the overall impression of the Committee was that the task forces resulted in better time management during the constructive dialogues. Concerns were raised with respect to coverage of all relevant articles of the Convention and time allocated for questions. The Committee decided that this issue required more discussion at the next session. The Committee also started discussions on the idea of permanent parallel chambers once a year as a way of addressing the backlog in the consideration of the reports of States parties, and the increasing workload of the Committee, especially with respect to requests for inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Committee decided that this issue required more discussion at the next session.

B. Concluding observations

50. At its forty-ninth session, the Committee decided by vote that references to general recommendations in its concluding observations and other outputs of the Committee should be made in a consistent fashion and follow the same format, in other words, title followed by year without any reference, footnote or other mention. The Committee also decided to confirm its practice of referring to comments received from States parties relating to concluding observations of the Committee without reproducing them in the respective report of the Committee to the General Assembly. Furthermore, the Committee decided to post comments formally transmitted by States parties relating to concluding observations on web pages of the relevant session, on the Committee website (OHCHR), upon the request of the State party concerned. Such comments will be posted as received and will not be

translated. A reference to the website will be provided in the respective report of the Committee to the General Assembly.

C. Follow-up

51. At the fiftieth session of the Committee, the Rapporteur on follow-up presented an assessment of the follow-up procedure, in accordance with a decision taken by the Committee at its forty-first session. The Rapporteur stated that given the relatively short time of two years during which the follow-up procedure has been implemented, the information contained in the reports submitted suggests that the follow-up procedure is achieving its stated goal of acting as a tool of implementation of the Convention and more specifically the identified recommendations set out in selected concluding observations. The procedure is therefore proving to be an effective reporting procedure under article 18 of the Convention that enables the Committee to monitor progress achieved between reporting cycles. The Committee endorsed the assessment of the Rapporteur on follow-up and also agreed to the following recommendations:

(a) The follow-up procedure on the implementation of concluding observations should continue under article 18 of the Convention;

(b) The two-year mandate of the Rapporteur on follow-up and the alternate rapporteur should be retained, and all Committee members should rotate and participate in follow-up assessment;

(c) The methodology for follow-up should be retained;

(d) In addition to a separate agenda item on follow-up, which should continue, increased time should be allocated during the Committee session and a specific staff person should be assigned to the follow-up procedure to ensure timely support both during the session and intersession;

(e) The next evaluation of the process should be carried out and tabled at the session in October 2013.

52. In addition, the Committee decided to appoint Barbara Bailey as the new Rapporteur on follow-up and Yoko Hayashi as alternate rapporteur for a period of two years, until 31 December 2013.

D. Documentation and translation

53. The Committee raised its concern regarding translations of documentations required for the work of the Committee. Issues have arisen with replies to the lists of issues, which are often submitted by the States parties after the deadline provided in the forecasting system implemented by the Division for Conference Management. Under this system, documents which are forecasted and submitted on time have priority over all other documents submitted for translation. Documents that are submitted following the deadline provided in the forecast cannot be guaranteed. In addition, ad hoc requests for translations cannot be accommodated unless they are made part of the forecast for a particular year, which required long-term planning on the part of the Committee, especially with respect to its draft general recommendations.

54. The Committee also decided to lift the simultaneous distribution policy with respect to Committee documentation on an indefinite basis, which was confirmed by the Division for Conference Management so that electronic fair copies of documents would be shared with the Committee secretariat as languages become available, however, simultaneous distribution would still be applied with respect to archiving documents on ODS and hard-copy distribution.

E. General recommendations

55. 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, which 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.

56. 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 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). 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).

57. 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 between the Committee, non-governmental organizations and others. That meeting is open to 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

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).

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 on the submission of the revised draft of the general recommendation for consideration and adoption by the Committee.

58. 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 (see A/46/38, 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 30th 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; 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. 417-418). 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).

59. Currently, the Committee is working on several general recommendations:

(a) *Draft general recommendation on the economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution.* At its forty-third session, in 2009, the Committee established a working group on a general recommendation on the economic consequences of divorce. The Working Group met during the forty-ninth session and also further elaborated the general recommendation during a two-day retreat following the session. At its fiftieth session, the Committee was presented with the finalized draft version and started its final review of the text. The Committee continued to review the draft at its fifty-first session;

(b) *Draft general recommendation on women in conflict and post-conflict situations.* At its forty-seventh session, in 2010, the Committee decided to elaborate a general recommendation on women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. At its forty-eighth session, in 2011, the Committee established a working group to elaborate this general recommendation. The Committee held a general discussion on 18 July 2011. Following the fifty-first session, regional consultations, organized by UN-Women and OHCHR, took place in Bangkok, Addis Ababa, Guatemala City and Istanbul to solicit input from regional stakeholders on the draft general recommendation;

(c) *Draft joint Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women-Committee on the Rights of the Child general recommendation/comment on harmful practices.* The Committee is also 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 CEDAW and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (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; and authorized the working group to start the elaboration of the draft (Decision 48/VIII). The Working Group met during the fiftieth session and also held a joint meeting with the Working Group from the Committee on the Rights of the Child to review an annotated outline of the draft general recommendation. At the fifty-first session, the Working Group met twice with the United Nations Children's Fund and drafting has commenced on several substantive topics under the general recommendation;

(d) *Draft general recommendation on access to justice.* At its forty-eighth session, the Committee agreed to establish a working group and to elaborate a general recommendation on access to justice (decision 48/VII). A draft concept note was circulated to the Committee at its fiftieth session, and a revised version was circulated at the fifty-first session. The Committee decided that it would need more time to review the recommendation prior to its endorsement. The Committee suggested that the concept note be further revised and submitted at the fifty-second session;

(e) *Draft general recommendation on gender equality in the context of asylum, statelessness and natural disasters.* At its fiftieth session, the Committee decided to establish a working group for purposes of elaborating a general recommendation on the subject, with the understanding that any work would take place intersessionally until otherwise decided by the Committee;

(f) *Draft general recommendation on rural women.* At its fiftieth session, the Committee decided to establish a working group for purposes of elaborating a general recommendation on the subject, with the understanding that any work would take place intersessionally until otherwise decided by the Committee.

60. 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.

F. Task force on inquiries

61. At its fiftieth session, the Committee decided to establish a task force on inquiries, in the light of the number of request for inquiries that had been received. It is noted that five requests for inquiries have been received since 2011. It was also decided that the Task Force shall establish its terms of reference in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Committee and that the Task Force would be open ended.

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

62. States parties' reports have been scheduled through the fifty-seventh session, to be held in 2014. The secretariat has sent out notes verbales requesting the States parties concerned to confirm the sessions at which they are scheduled. In addition to

preferences by the States parties, the secretariat gives due consideration to geographic distribution as well as gives priority to initial reports, where possible. Since the regional groupings themselves are not evenly divided, there may be a larger proportion of States from the African Group and the Asia and Pacific Group scheduled during some of the sessions. It is important to note that Member States as well as other strategic partners have commented favourably on the advanced scheduling of States parties before the Committee, which allows adequate time for preparing for the constructive dialogues between the States parties concerned and the Committee. It also provides adequate notice to other stakeholders for necessary input into the reporting process. The schedule for the fifty-third to the fifty-seventh sessions is as follows: the following States are scheduled for the fifty-third session, in October 2012: the Central African Republic, Chile, the Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Serbia, Togo and Turkmenistan; the following States are scheduled for the fifty-fourth session, in February 2013: Angola, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Pakistan, Solomon Islands and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the following States are scheduled for the fifty-fifth session, in July 2013: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the following States are scheduled for the fifty-sixth session, to be held in October 2013: Andorra, Benin, Cambodia, Colombia, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles and Tajikistan; and the following States are scheduled for the fifty-seventh session, to be held in February 2014: Bahrain, Cameroon, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Annex I

States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention

Africa

Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan

Asia and the Pacific

Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Niue
Palau (signed on 20 September 2011)
Tonga

Western Europe and other

Holy See
United States of America (signed on 17 July 1980)

Annex II

States parties whose reports have been submitted but not yet scheduled as at 1 May 2012

<i>State party</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered (session)</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
China				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	3 September 2010	20 January 2012	2006 (36)	4 February 2004 (combined fifth and sixth reports)
Gabon				
Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports (Consideration to include eighth periodic report due on 20 February 2012)	20 February 2008	19 January 2012	2005 (32)	4 June 2003 (combined second to fifth reports)
Lithuania				
Fifth periodic report (Requested to be considered during second half of 2014)	17 February 2011	21 June 2011	2008 (41)	14 December 2007 (4)
Mauritania				
Combined second and third periodic reports	9 June 2010	16 February 2012	2007 (38)	11 May 2005 (initial report)