



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women  
Thirty-first session**

**Summary record of the 648th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Açar

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

### Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the thirty-first session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

2. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) briefed the Committee on events relating to its work, as well the activities of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, since the Committee's previous session in January 2004. At its forty-eighth session in March 2004, the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted agreed conclusions on two thematic issues — "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality" and "Women's participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building" — and had also adopted seven resolutions, including one on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

3. The Commission had also agreed on preparations for its forty-ninth session in 2005, which would focus primarily on progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in 2000. At a high-level round table on the theme of gaps and challenges in measuring progress in implementation, participants had underlined the importance of statistical information in fulfilling reporting obligations under the Convention and had noted that methodological shortcomings and lack of reporting or underreporting had resulted in inaccurate data collection, which might in turn lead to poor policies. A number of resolutions adopted at the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, held in March and April 2004, referred specifically to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Moreover, by its decision 2004/110, the Commission had decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur whose mandate would focus on the human rights aspects of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

4. Referring to changes made to the status of the Convention among individual States parties since the Committee's previous session, she noted that Kiribati and Swaziland had ratified the Convention, bringing the total number of States parties to 177, and that an additional three States — Belarus, Belgium and the

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya — had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, bringing the total to 62 States parties. Furthermore, Ireland had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention, bringing the total number of acceptances to 44, and two States parties — Switzerland and Ireland — had withdrawn their reservations to the Convention.

5. There had been a number of noteworthy events during May 2004. The Division for the Advancement of Women had collaborated with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to hold a workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on reporting under the Convention. It had also held a three-day colloquium in Nassau on the application of international human rights law at the domestic level. The colloquium had been attended by 22 judicial officers from 11 countries of the region, as well as observers from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Discussions had focused on the opportunities and remedies available under international human rights law, and in particular the Convention, to achieve equality in the areas of nationality, marriage and family relations and violence against women.

6. Also in May, the Division had held a training workshop in Nassau for government officials responsible for reporting under the Convention. Other recent activities focused on enhancing implementation of the Convention had included preparation of a conference room paper on the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee relating to the situation of indigenous women for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; the holding of a briefing for indigenous organizations on the Optional Protocol as a tool for protecting the human rights of indigenous women; and preparation of a paper, for the United Nations Millennium Project, on the Convention and the Millennium Development Goals.

7. With regard to preparations for the Commission's 2005 review of progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, she noted that 86 Member States had responded to the Secretariat's related questionnaire, and that the Commission would be analysing the responses in an effort to discern trends and challenges,

with respect to the Platform's 12 critical areas of concern. Areas of political interest to the Committee would be information regarding the critical areas of concern regarding the human rights of women, violence against women and trafficking in persons.

### **Election of officers**

8. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to elect a Rapporteur.

9. *Ms. Kwaku was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

### **Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2004/II/1)**

10. *The provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2004/II/1) were adopted.*

### **Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Committee**

11. **The Chairperson** said that in accordance with established practice, she had attended the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March and had reported on the results of the Committee's thirtieth session. In particular, she had informed the Commission of the Committee's consideration of the reports of eight States parties, the adoption of general recommendation 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, the plans for an informal meeting on working methods, the Committee's proposals for the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly, and the Committee's statement on the situation of women in Iraq.

12. She had also elaborated further on the Committee's consideration of the different options for discharging its obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, including meeting in parallel working groups. During the Commission's session, she had also taken part in a panel discussion, hosted by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, on the role of parliamentarians in implementing the Convention. She had also met with a number of high-level participants and, in line with an earlier decision by the Committee, with representatives of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations.

13. At the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, she had spoken under the item on the integration of the human rights of women and a gender perspective, but she had not been given enough time to update the Commission on the Committee's work in the past year. Indeed, the chairpersons of all the human rights treaty bodies had made their effective participation in the Commission a major topic of concern at their recent meeting of chairpersons, and raised the issue again at their meeting with the expanded Bureau of the Commission. It had been decided to find a better way within the existing time constraints to enhance the exchange between the treaty bodies and the Commission. Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, who had been the driving force behind the Committee's general recommendation 25, had represented the Committee on a panel organized by the Commission to discuss affirmative action, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the Committee's general recommendation 25 and women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

14. Members would recall that, shortly thereafter, the entire Committee had convened informally in Utrecht, at the invitation of the Netherlands, for a very profitable three-day meeting focusing on working methods. The agreements reached at the Utrecht meeting, which were annexed to the document on ways and means of expediting the Committee's work (CEDAW/C/2004/II/4), and which must now be formally adopted, would ensure the Committee's commitment to innovation and flexibility in furthering the implementation of the Convention by States parties, and keep it apprised of developments in other human rights treaty bodies. Of particular interest was the proposal to extend the Committee's meeting time to put it on a par with other treaty bodies by adding a week to its thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions and, starting in 2007, establishing three annual three-week sessions, each preceded by meetings of a pre-session working group.

15. Immediately after the Utrecht meeting, she had been the keynote presenter in a three-day workshop organized by the Division together with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to train States parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States region in reporting procedures under the Convention. Fifteen government officials from six countries had attended and shared experiences.

16. Most recently, from 21 to 25 June in Geneva, she had attended the Inter-Committee Meeting and the meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, the former together with Mr. Flinterman. The Inter-Committee Meeting had in principle approved the basic structure of a common, expanded core document, and had drafted harmonized reporting guidelines for States parties to all the human rights treaties, with the recommendation that a mechanism should be established for further consultation between the treaty bodies regarding harmonization of the guidelines. Those proposals now had to be discussed in depth in each treaty body as a matter of priority.

17. In the Committee, preliminary comments should be prepared at the current session for the next inter-session working group so that the Committee could make recommendations at its January 2005 session for consideration at the Inter-Committee Meeting in 2005. The 2004 Inter-Committee Meeting had also called for a secretariat report on the kind of reservations that had been made to the various human rights treaties, on which a joint working group would report at the 2005 session. Both meetings had also followed up on the previous year's recommendations, and progress had been made especially on the lists of issues, the procedures for dealing with States parties which failed to submit reports, and reviews by the treaty bodies of their working methods.

#### **Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention**

##### *Report of the Chairperson of the pre-session working group*

18. **Ms. Manalo**, introducing the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/PSWG/2004/II/CRP.1), said that it had met from 2-6 February 2004 to prepare lists of issues and questions with respect to the reports of Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Spain. Pursuant to Committee decision 18/I, the working group had held a closed meeting with representatives of entities of the United Nations system and had also received written contributions from non-governmental organizations regarding one of the States parties whose reports were before it. The lists had been transmitted to the four States parties involved.

19. The working group was of the opinion that each of the periodic reports described the major social,

economic, political and legislative changes aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and that most of them had followed the Committee's general guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports. Lastly, the working group had also formulated short lists of issues and questions, focusing on themes addressed by the Convention, pursuant to Committee decisions 22/IV and 25/II.

#### **Implementation of article 21 of the Convention**

##### **Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee**

20. **Ms. Brautigam** (Chief, Women's Rights Section, Division for the Advancement of Women) said, with regard to the implementation of article 21, that three of the United Nations specialized agencies invited to submit reports to the Committee on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities had done so: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in documents CEDAW/C/2004/II/3/Add.1, 3 and 4, respectively. Later that morning, the Committee would be meeting with representatives of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system wishing to present information on the States parties whose reports were being considered at the current session or on what the agencies themselves had done to promote the provisions of the Convention internationally and regionally. Pursuant to article 21, the Committee would, at the current session, begin to work on its next general recommendation, on article 2 of the Convention, and would start the process by exchanging views on the subject with specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations.

21. With regard to the Committee's working methods, she drew attention to the report in document CEDAW/C/2004/II/4, which summarized recent developments in the human rights regime, including the treaty bodies, and action taken by intergovernmental bodies, as well as relevant secretariat activities in support of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. The report also reviewed developments with regard to overdue reports. In that connection, she drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of submission of reports by States parties to the

Convention (CEDAW/C/2004/II/2), including a list of overdue reports and of reports submitted but not yet considered by the Committee as of May 2004, to which should be added the reports of Iceland, Malawi and Venezuela. In all, 40 reports would be awaiting consideration after the current session.

*The meeting rose at 11.05 p.m.*