



**International
Human Rights
Instruments**

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/EGY/SEM/2006/1
24 April 2006

Original: ENGLISH

SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF CONCLUDING COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN AND THE COMMITTEE ON THE
ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Cairo, Egypt
19-22 December 2005

**REPORT OF THE SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF CONCLUDING COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON
THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND THE
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION***

Cairo, Egypt, 19-22 December 2005

* The list of participants can be found in HRI/EGY/INF/1.

Summary

A subregional workshop on the implementation of the concluding comments/observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) took place in Cairo, Egypt from 19 to 22 December 2005.

Over 50 participants from 6 countries of North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia), including government officials, members of the judiciary, representatives of national human rights institutions, national NGOs, the League of Arab States and United Nations entities as well as treaty body experts, took part in this event.

The main objective of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of States to implement the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD and to strengthen cooperation with other relevant stakeholders for this purpose.

The workshop took place in plenary meetings as well as in working groups on the following themes: (i) constitutional and legislative framework and obstacles to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); (ii) independent monitoring structures/national machineries; (iii) discrimination-based violence and access to justice/remedies; (iv) multiple forms of discrimination; (v) equal enjoyment of the right to education, health and employment and (vi) harmful cultural practices and stereotypes.

At the end of the workshop, participants adopted a series of recommendations supporting the implementation of recommendations of CERD and CEDAW in countries of the subregion.

The workshop, which was hosted by the Government of Egypt, was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DAW/DESA) in cooperation with the National Council for Women of Egypt. The Government of Germany contributed to the funding of this workshop.

Cairo, 19-22 December 2005

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Division for the Advancement of Women /Department of Economic and Social Affairs

regard. Subsequent presentations by Mr. Morten Kjaerum, CERD expert, and Ms. Françoise Gaspard, CEDAW expert, highlighted the role of the Committees as facilitators for the implementation of and follow-up to concluding observations/comments. Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic, CEDAW expert, and Ms. Fatima Binta Victoire Dah, CERD expert, also spoke respectively on the individual complaints procedure under the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention and under article 14 of ICERD.

4. A panel discussion was held on the activities of the United Nations and specialized agencies in the Arab region to combat discrimination against women and racial discrimination. Panellists were Mr. Pierre Sane, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Social and Human Sciences, Mrs. Maya Morsi, UNIFEM Representative and Mr. Frej Fenniche, OHCHR Regional Representative in the Arab Region.

5. A panel discussion was held on the role of civil society and national human rights institutions in follow-up to concluding comments/observations. Three representatives of non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions, Ms. Wassila Tamzali, Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité (Algeria), Ms. Amina Lemrini Elouahabi, Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme (Morocco) and Mr. Abdoulaye Sow, Association Mauritanienne des droits de l'homme (Mauritania) participated in the panel discussion.

6. The working groups discussed the six following themes:

- (i) Constitutional and legislative framework and on obstacles to the implementation of both Conventions, facilitated by Ms. Meriem Belmihoub-Zerdani (CEDAW member) and Mr. Mahmoud Abou-Nasr (CERD member);
- (ii) Independent monitoring structures/national machineries, facilitated by Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic (CEDAW member) and Mr. Morten Kjaerum (CERD member);
- (iii) Discrimination-based violence and access to justice/remedies, facilitated by Ms. Françoise Gaspard (CEDAW member), Ms. Fatima Binta Victoire Dah and Mr. Nourredine Amir (CERD members);
- (iv) Multiple forms of discrimination, facilitated by Ms. Françoise Gaspard (CEDAW member), Mr. Nourredine Amir and Mr. Morten Kjaerum (CERD members);
- (v) Equal enjoyment of the right to education, health and employment facilitated by Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic (CEDAW member) and Mr. Mahmoud Abou-Nasr (CERD member);
- (vi) Harmful cultural practices and stereotypes, facilitated by Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic (CEDAW member) and Mr. Mahmoud Abou-Nasr (CERD member).

7. Each working group was facilitated by CEDAW and CERD experts, and a rapporteur was appointed from among the participants. Participants were given copies of the latest concluding comments/observations adopted by CEDAW and CERD for the six countries participating in the workshop. Working groups discussed the objectives and obstacles regarding the implementation of these concluding comments/observations. They identified

recommendations regarding follow-up to and implementation of the concluding comments/observations of both Committees. A summary of the discussions in each of the working groups is contained in annexes to the present report.

8. On the third day of the workshop, participants met in national working groups, which included representatives of governments, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations to discuss the elaboration, adoption and implementation of national plans to follow up on recommendations of CERD and CEDAW and the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop.

9. Throughout the workshop, discussions were frank and allowed for a fruitful exchange of information on experiences and difficulties encountered in each country to implement the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD. They also highlighted the common will to enhance cooperation between participating States and the Committees in order to improve follow-up to the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD.

10. Her Excellency, Mrs. Susanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, addressed the participants at the closing session. In her speech, H.E. Mrs. Mubarak stressed the importance of respecting international protection mechanisms. Acknowledging this was a long-term process, Mrs. Mubarak emphasized that all concerned should be committed to developing the necessary monitoring mechanisms. She indicated and welcomed the increase in cooperation between private actors, non-governmental organizations, and Government, which is a requirement for social peace and security. She also referred to the crucial role of education in the development of the individual and reiterated her commitment to democracy, human rights and a spirit of tolerance.

11. On the last day of the workshop, participants agreed upon the present report including conclusions and recommendations for further action to implement the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

12. The representatives of the Governments of Algeria, Egypt, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, the National Council for Women of Egypt, the League of Arab States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations, participating in the workshop on the implementation of concluding comments/observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held in Cairo, Egypt, from 19 to 22 December 2005:

13. *Express their gratitude* to the Government of Egypt for hosting the workshop, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the National Council for Women in Egypt, which organized the workshop. They express particular gratitude to the expert members of CEDAW and CERD: Mr. Mahmoud Aboul Nasr, Mr. Nourredine Amir, Ms. Fatima Binta Victoire Dah, Ms. Françoise Gaspard, Mr. Morten Kjaerum, Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic and Ms. Meriem Belmihoub-Zerdani who served as resource persons throughout the workshop. They express gratitude to the Government of Germany for their support and financial contribution towards the workshop;

14. *Reaffirm* the indivisibility and universality of all human rights, as stipulated in the Declaration of the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights;
15. *Also reaffirm* the importance in this regard of the ratification by States of international human rights instruments and of their full cooperation with the various United Nations mechanisms in place for the protection of human rights;
16. *Call* on religious institutions to contribute to building a modern State;
17. *Recall* that the consideration by CEDAW and CERD of States parties' initial and periodic reports, and the adoption of concluding comments/observations thereon, are useful to follow up the implementation by States parties of the obligations they have undertaken under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
18. *Emphasize* the importance of follow-up to the recommendations made by CEDAW and CERD in their concluding comments/observations;
19. *Consider* that the preparation by Governments of reports for CEDAW and CERD and the subsequent issuing of recommendations should be viewed as an opportunity for the State party and civil society to evaluate the situation and improve the implementation of the Conventions at the national level;
20. *Express* their appreciation for the expertise of CEDAW and CERD;
21. *Express* their commitment to enhance cooperation between all national stakeholders to increase the realization of human rights and, in this connection, commend the role played by national institutions and non-governmental organizations;
22. *Reaffirm* the importance of exchange of experience among States parties on implementation of the Conventions and the Committees' recommendations;
23. *Emphasize* the importance of making use of human rights technical cooperation programmes provided by the United Nations and its specialized agencies;
24. *Welcome* the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the promotion and protection of human rights, and in particular their activities in the region;
25. *Acknowledge* the catalytic role played by UNDP and other United Nations entities through the United Nations Country Teams;
26. *Adopt* the following recommendations addressed to Governments, civil society and the United Nations system, which they agreed should be widely disseminated by the participants, OHCHR and DAW/DESA, as well as the NCW:

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants recommend that:

27. All actors increase their efforts at the national and subregional levels to enhance follow-up to concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD;
28. CEDAW and CERD consider formulating more specific, concrete and action-oriented recommendations in their concluding comments/observations, so as to facilitate the implementation of the Conventions by States parties;
29. United Nations entities and agencies continue and strengthen their work with respect to human rights, and in particular the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of race, colour, descent, sex, gender, or national or ethnic origin;
30. United Nations entities and agencies enhance their efforts in the Arab region to assist States in the implementation of the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD;
31. States parties consider withdrawing reservations made to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
32. States comply with their reporting obligations and submit reports to CERD and CEDAW in a timely manner;
33. States strengthen their internal human rights coordination among the various branches of Government and civil society, including through the establishment of national committees to prepare periodic reports and follow up on the implementation of concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD;
34. States strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women by providing them with adequate financial and human resources to implement programmes for the protection and promotion of women's human rights and by placing them at the highest level of Government;
35. States that have not yet done so establish national human rights commissions in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions (the Paris Principles) and those States that have already established such commissions should ensure that the powers, composition and working methods are in full accordance with the principles;
36. States adopt a comprehensive approach to the promotion and protection of equality and non-discrimination, including through the full implementation of the concluding comments/observations of CEDAW and CERD, the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Programme of Action of the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban in 2001 and the Millennium Development Goals;
37. States fulfil their obligations under the CEDAW Convention and ICERD and adopt the necessary legislative and procedural measures to adapt their national legislation to the requirements of the two Conventions;

38. States take steps, in partnership with civil society, to change stereotypical attitudes and traditional views about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in society and the family;
39. States take temporary special measures, in accordance with articles 4 (1) of the CEDAW Convention and 2(2) of ICERD to accelerate the advancement of all disadvantaged groups and to promote their rights, in particular in the fields of employment, health, education and participation in public and political life;
40. States become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and make the declaration under article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which respectively grant CEDAW and CERD the competence to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals who claim to be victims of violations of the rights set forth in the two Conventions and which grants CEDAW the competence to institute inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.
41. Participants in the workshop adopted the following additional recommendations:
42. That all participants contribute to the dissemination of the report of the workshop and its recommendations;
43. That OHCHR and DAW/DESA disseminate widely the report of the workshop.

III. ANNEXES: SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A. Constitutional and legislative framework and obstacles to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

44. Participants in the working group on constitutional and legislative framework and obstacles to the implementation of the CEDAW Convention and ICERD noted the importance of the following:
 1. Clarifying the status of CEDAW and ICERD in domestic law and recognizing the primacy of norms of international law over domestic law, and in particular the norms provided in the CEDAW Convention and ICERD;
 2. Initiating discussion of the reasons for entering reservations to human rights treaties, in particular to the CEDAW Convention, taking account of current developments in other States parties with regard to reservations;
 3. Prohibiting and bringing to an end, by all appropriate means, including through legislation, discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin by any person, group or organization, and adopting measures to ensure the implementation of such legislation;

4. Submitting the concluding comments/observations of the two treaty bodies to Parliaments/people's assemblies in order to ensure appropriate follow up to CERD and CEDAW recommendations, including through the revision and amendment of domestic laws whenever necessary;

7. Designing and running training programmes at the national level in order to facilitate follow-up to CEDAW and CERD recommendations, drawing on international cooperation programmes in this domain, particularly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs;
8. Training professionals working in relevant fields, such as law enforcement officers, journalists, educators and civil society actors in order to enhance their contribution to combating racial discrimination and discrimination against women.

D. Multiple forms of discrimination

47. Participant

8. Considering education as a vital tool for spreading the message of tolerance and respect for others;
9. Protecting and promoting cultural rights and consider cultural diversity as a strength and an asset;
10. Ensuring that members of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, in particular the Amazigh, can exercise their rights to their own culture, use their own language and preserve and develop their own identity;
11. Organizing awareness-raising campaigns to promote tolerance and combat all forms of discrimination and hatred and discrimination against women.

E. Equal enjoyment of the right to education, health and employment

48. Participants in the working group on the right to education, health and employment noted the importance of the following:

1. Studying, with a view to their elimination, the obstacles to the implementation of the recommendations of CEDAW and CERD in the areas of education, health and employment;
2. Discussing the ways of developing national action plans to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and realize the Millennium Development Goals on the eradication of poverty and the World Programme for Human Rights Education;
3. Inviting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs to hold other workshops, especially at the national level, to enable States parties to share experiences about ways to promote and implement human rights for all without discrimination, in particular the right to education, health and work;
4. Designing and implementing human rights training programmes in secondary and higher education institutions to promote the principle of equality without discrimination on grounds of sex, race, colour, descent or national or ethnic

8. Undertaking efforts to eradicate illiteracy, particularly in poor and rural communities;
9. Taking the necessary steps to ensure that children, especially girls, do not drop out of school;
- 10.

5. Revising educational materials that portray women in a negative manner and perpetuate the stereotypical roles of men and women in the family and society;
6. Broadening cultural dialogue in society in order to promote the discourse of acceptance of others and to safeguard democratic principles;
7. Undertaking, in accordance with article 7 of ICERD, to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnic groups.

Cairo, 22 December 2005
