

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Thirty-first session
6-23 July 2004**

Agenda item 3: Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Committee

**Report by Ms. Feride Acar
Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women and Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women,
Distinguished experts and dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a great pleasure being here, once again, at the start of a new session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I am delighted that all members are well and we are looking forward to another productive session.

I would like to thank Ms. Hannan for her opening statement. She has briefed us about work undertaken by the Secretariat in support of the implementation of the Convention and highlighted important issues which I also believe require the Committee's careful consideration. I will have the opportunity to elaborate on some of the points raised by her.

We have just appointed a new Rapporteur for the Committee, Ms. Fatima Kwaku, and I would like to congratulate and thank her for taking on this task. This action was necessitated by the resignation of Ms. Christine Kapalata, who was also the Committee's Rapporteur for the last three sessions. Ms. Kapalata has taken on an assignment as Political Affairs Officer at the United Nations Mission for Liberia, a function incompatible with the exercise of the mandate of an expert on this Committee. I am very pleased that in the person of Ms. Kapalata the United Nations has recruited a professional of the highest competence and integrity, and I am sure that she will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Mission's mandate. At the same time, I am very sorry that the Committee has lost an outstanding and committed expert. I am confident, as Ms. Kapalata noted in her letter of resignation to me, that she will bring to her new responsibilities the spirit of the Convention of women's rights to equality and non-discrimination and that in every way possible, she will support the implementation of the Convention within the framework of her new duties.

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to report to you on my activities since the thirtieth session of the Committee.

I participated in the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, where I spoke under the item on the integration of the human rights of women and a gender perspective. While this was no doubt an important chance for me to brief and update the Commission on the work the Committee has undertaken in the last year, I must relay to you that due to the timing of the item and severe restrictions on speaking time, my interaction with the Commission was not fully satisfactory. In fact, the question of the effective participation of the Chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies in the Commission on Human Rights constituted a major agenda item of the sixteenth meeting of Chairpersons of treaty bodies held in Geneva two weeks ago. I will refer to that latter meeting shortly, but let me just say here that this issue was of particular importance at the meeting of the Chairpersons with the expanded Bureau of the Commission. The Chairpersons voiced their concern about the format of the present interaction which they considered to be less than satisfactory, however they also recognized the extreme time constraints imposed on the Commission. At the same time, there was a commitment to find better modalities within existing constraints to enhance the exchange between the treaty bodies and the Commission on Human Rights.

So far as CEDAW participation in the Commission on Human Rights goes, let me also say that, while other commitments unfortunately prevented me from staying for more than a day and from participating in a panel discussion organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on “Affirmative Action and Security Council resolution 1325: CEDAW General Recommendation 25 and Women’s Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution”, I was very pleased that Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, who was the driving force behind general recommendation 25, participated in this panel, along with the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Hannan, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in the family and community, Ms. Rugh3 the CTucuwf8(aeau of the Com&(ission en the)TJj10.381.15 TD0.000

The Inter-Committee Meeting and Meeting of Chairpersons had very full agendas. While all recommendations deserve our attention, several of these require specific follow-up action. I will highlight some of the outcomes of the meetings.

The most anticipated item for discussion was the Secretariat's report with proposals for guidelines on an expanded core document and harmonized guidelines for reporting to all treaty bodies. Following the discussion, the Inter-Committee Meeting approved in principle the basic structure and content of the proposed common core document, although it was clear that further work is required. As a consequence, the Inter-Committee Meeting recommended that the Chairpersons forward the draft guidelines on an expanded core document and treaty-specific targeted reports to their respective committees for discussion as a priority item. The Inter-Committee Meeting also recommended the establishment of a mechanism for further consultations between the Committees on the draft and other matters relating to the harmonization of their reporting guidelines during the coming year. Mr. Kamel Filali, a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, was entrusted with the task of rapporteur on this issue.

I thus have the honour to bring this matter to your attention. I should like to emphasize the importance attached by all Committee Chairpersons to a thorough and in-depth discussion of these proposals and which should include a careful weighing of advantages, shortcomings and areas for further improvement. I understand that the relevant documentation is in members' folders, including the advance unedited report of the meeting. I urge Committee members to consider these documents carefully. We will have an opportunity during this session to exchange views, starting from this afternoon's closed meeting when I, together with Mr. Flinterman, hope to brief you in more detail. At this session, we should aim to give preliminary indications to our three-member working group of our views, and areas of the draft guidelines we want to comment on so that we are ready to adopt our recommendations to the Inter-Committee Meeting in January. It is anticipated that the Inter-Committee Meeting will consider a revised set of guidelines at its session in 2005 that would incorporate the comments of all treaty bodies.

In addition to the expanded core document and harmonized reporting guidelines, the Inter-Committee Meeting and Meeting of Chairpersons followed up on the recommendations from last year. I am pleased to report that progress was made with regard to several of those recommendations, including by our Committee, such as on the lists of issues and questions, and procedures for dealing with situations of non-reporting. Committees were also invited to include a regular item on working methods on their agendas; something this Committee has done for many years. The Secretariat of each Committee was requested to produce a document detailing the Committee's respective working methods for inclusion in its annual report: a step this Committee took last session. Likewise, it was recommended that the Secretariat produce a comprehensive report highlighting the situation with regard to non-reporting by States parties. Members will recall that such a report was prepared for this Committee for our twenty-ninth session in July 2003.

I would further like to highlight a reco