

Thirty-third session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Opening statement by

Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director

Division for the Advancement of Women

Mme. Chairperson,
Distinguished experts of the Committee,
Colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to New York to the 33rd session of the Committee.

Since your last session, one more State, Monaco, acceded to the Convention on 18 March with reservations, thus bringing the total number of ratifications to 180. Cameroon acceded to the Optional Protocol on 7 January, during your last session, bringing the total number of States parties to 71. There were no additional acceptances of the amendment to article 20.1 the number remains at 45. Among the seven core human rights treaties, the Convention thus remains the instrument with the second highest number of ratifications/accessions, but still short of universal ratification.

I would like to highlight recent developments that have a bearing on the work of this Committee. I will focus on the intergovernmental process, especially the outcome of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the activities implemented by the Division for the Advancement of Women since your last session.

The Commission on the Status of Women undertook, at its forty-ninth session earlier this year, a comprehensive 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In preparation for the session, 134 States responded to a questionnaire of the Division, which synthesized this extensive information into a report that served as basis for discussion in the Commission. I am pleased to note that a very large number of States referred to the Convention and its continuous implementation at the national level as a critical component of their follow-up to the Platform for Action. Well over half of the responses referred specifically to the critical area of concern of human rights of women, while most others also discussed the impact of the Convention and women's human rights in relation to other critical areas as well. Violence against women was another area that received comprehensive and detailed attention from Member States, with 129 reporting on action taken. In addition, trafficking in women was an area that was clearly a priority concern of many States. These are all areas where this Committee consistently engages with States parties in a constructive dialogue to find better ways of achieving compliance with Convention obligations.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted a declaration in which it reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General

Assembly. The declaration recognized that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfillment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I wish to highlight that one of the eight interactive panels organized by the Division during the Commission, focused on the Synergies between national-level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women . The panel discussed ways to ensure a more effective use of both instruments by a diverse range of actors to achieve gender equality. Speakers in the panel included the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Chairperson of the Committee, and representatives of Member States including Ms. Simonovic, and non-governmental organizations. The resulting summary of the debate clearly highlighted the importance which all stakeholders attribute to the reinforcing links and consistent use of both, the global policies and legal obligations for the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men. Your Chairperson will report in more detail about the event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Manalo for her important contributions to the forty-ninth session of the Commission, including during the opening. A number of other experts of this Committee also attended the Commission, either as part of non-governmental organizations, in their capacity as experts or on governmental delegations, to reinforce and underline the central role of the Convention in the achievement of the goals of the Platform for Action. The Division is also most grateful to CEDAW experts who contributed to the expert group meetings we organized in preparation for the session in November 2004 and February 2005, in particular Ms. Dairiam, and Ms. Tavares da Silva.

This year, the Commission adopted ten resolutions, including on themes that the Commission had not dealt with before in this manner. These included resolutions on ~~eliminating demand for trafficked~~ men and girls ~~to~~ all forms of ~~exploitation~~, ~~the economic~~ advancement of women , and indigenous women beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action . These resolutions made explicit reference to the Convention. In addition, the resolution on the situation of women and ~~exploitarm for~~ Ap6TD(e)Tj 22 0 TD()Tj

for the

and in particular the Convention, to achieve equality in the areas of marriage and family relations and violence against women. Participants adopted a statement that summarizes the challenges as well as the opportunities for action identified by the meeting. Like our previous judicial colloquia, this event was funded by the Government of Germany and we are grateful to them for their continued support.

A training workshop for government officials in implementation and reporting under the Convention was held after the colloquium, again in collaboration with ECLAC, from 30 May to 1 June 2005 in Santiago, Chile. Twenty-two government officials from nine countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) attended the workshop, which was designed to enhance the capacity of government officials to more effectively implement the Convention at the national level and to prepare States parties' reports. Like our previous events, the workshop attempted to illustrate how the process of preparing and presenting a report to the Convention enables a State party to monitor and evaluate the extent to which it has been implemented, and identify gaps and challenges, as well as new strategies and opportunities for implementation and follow-up. Principal trainers and facilitators for the workshop were Ms Magalys Arocha, a member of this Committee, and Professor Rodrigo Jimenez of the University of Central America. We extend our thanks to both of them.

The Division continued development of training materials to support its technical cooperation programme and to assist in efforts towards raising awareness about the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Most notably, we are working on a manual on implementation of the Convention, an initiative called for by this Committee itself and which forms part of the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (see E/CN.6/2003/5, op.13). The manual is being prepared in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights at the University of Utrecht and its Director, Committee member Cees Flinterman, and with funding by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). A workshop was held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, from 12-14 May 2005 to assess the appropriateness and suitability of the draft chapters for the various constituencies for which the manual is intended. The manual, which is scheduled for completion before the end of the year, is expected to make a significant contribution to efforts designed at enhancing national capacity, including the strengthening of national institutional frameworks and improved consultative processes, to implement the provisions of the Convention and the concluding comments of the Committee.

Mme Chairperson,
distinguished members of the Committee,

Let me now turn to some of the issues on this session's agenda. The Committee will consider the reports of eight States parties, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Gambia, Guyana, Ireland, Israel and Lebanon. You will also continue your important work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention in regard to the petition as well as inquiry procedures. In this regard, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the five experts - members of the Working Group, for their diligent work during the fifth session which took place in February and the sixth session which was held last week.

