

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Thirty-sixth session
7 to 25 August 2006

AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE THIRTY-FIFTH AND THIRTY-SIXTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women,
Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured to present my report on inter-sessional activities since our June session. It will be a short report, as only two months elapsed since the adjournment of the thirty-fifth session.

Let me first thank Ms. Mayanja and Ms. Hannan for their opening statements, and in particular the important information provided on the results of the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council, and work undertaken in the Division in support of implementation of the Convention.

Distinguished experts,

The major inter-sessional activity I undertook on behalf of the Committee was my participation in June, together with Ms Pimentel, in the fifth Inter-Committee meeting (ICM). We regretted that Ms Schöpp-Schilling was unable to participate for health reasons and she was missed by all, in particular because of her leadership in the work on the harmonized reporting guidelines. I also participated in the eighteenth meeting of the Chairpersons of human right treaty bodies.

During these meetings, I had the opportunity to elaborate on the Committee

requested that the Secretariat continue to organize, in appropriate fora, consultation among the treaty bodies, States parties, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and other stakeholders to discuss all the proposals for reform. As the High Commissioner noted, the time table set out in her Plan of Action for the reform discussion had been too ambitious. The States parties meeting foreseen in her Plan of Action would be postponed to the first half of 2007.

I am very pleased to report that the ICM accepted the revised harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty specific documents, and recommended that the committees apply these guidelines in a flexible manner, review, as appropriate their existing reporting guidelines for initial and periodic reports, and compile indications of any difficulties experienced in their implementation. The ICM also recommended the creation of a working group consisting of seven members, one from each Committee, to discuss proposals on how to further harmonize the working methods of treaty bodies.

We also discussed a number of other matters, including the standardization of terminology, follow-up to concluding observations, the question of reservations to treaties, liaison with specialized agencies and United Nations funds and programmes. NGO participation, engagement with national human rights institutions, statistical information related to human rights, and the relationship between the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies. The Committee is called upon to follow-up on these matters, and we will have the opportunity to discuss them in closed meetings during the course of this session.

The ICM was followed by the meeting of Chairpersons of treaty bodies. The Chairpersons had an informal meeting with States parties where we discussed, inter alia, the treaty body reform and the relationship between treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. The Chairpersons also met with the special procedures mandate holders whose annual meeting takes place in parallel to those of the chairpersons of treaty bodies. We discussed ways to enhance interaction between such mandate holders and treaty bodies, and to create interaction between treaty bodies, special mandate holders and the Human Rights Council. Again, we will take up these issues during the course of this session.

During my stay in Geneva, the Human Rights Council held its first session which I, together with the other chairpersons had the opportunity to attend. The Chairperson of the seventeenth meeting of Chairpersons of treaty bodies, Mme. Christine Chanet, participated in a panel presentation at the Council. She highlighted the complementary roles of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies in the protection of human rights and conveyed to the Human Rights Council the recommendation of the ICM that concluding observations of treaty bodies should form part of the basis of the universal periodic review of the Council.

This Committee also participated in the brainstorming in the treaty body reform hosted by the Government of Liechtenstein, and we will have an opportunity to hear from the two experts about the discussion and results.

Dear colleagues,

At this session, the Committee is embarking on a new phase of its work. For the first time, we will meet in parallel chambers, and a total of 15 States will present their reports over the next three weeks. We will meet with representatives of the United Nations system, as well as with non-governmental organizations who will provide country-specific information. I understand that many such organizations are present and wish to interact with the Committee, and I commend this commitment to women's human rights. IWRAW Asia Pacific has also once again worked with national non-governmental organizations in many of the reporting countries towards the preparation of shadow reports.

The Committee will discuss our follow-up to the Inter-Committee and Chairpersons' meetings. We will continue to implement our responsibilities under the Optional Protocol, as well as our work on general recommendations.

Before concluding, I wish to congratulate those experts who have been re-elected to serve another four-year term on the Committee, and extend my warm welcome to those who will join the Committee in January 2007. As you know, my own term of office will come to an end in December. I would like to express to all of you my sincere appreciation for the support you have consistently extended to me