



INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

BY

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**AT THE 39TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON
THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN
(*PRESENTING BELIZE'S THIRD AND
FOURTH PERIODIC REPORT*)**

Distinguished Chair and members of the Committee, other participants,

It is indeed a privilege to be before you esteemed members of the
Committee to represent Delaware's 14th

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The Women's Department spearheaded a study to look at the issue
and the findings were largely disappointing. (b) (7) - (C)

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Training organized by the Women's Department which provided a clear understanding of the concept of gender equality and of the gender mainstreaming strategy.

~~2533 - Criminal Code - Section 41 - Domestic Violence Act in 1992~~

and national consultations, several initiatives have been undertaken. Over the last few years, particular pieces of legislation were amended or passed in seeking women's empowerment. These initiatives include the amendment of the Criminal Code to provide for the offence of marital rape; to rationalize the penalties for the offence of carnal knowledge of a female child; provide a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for habitual sex offenders and makes provisions for the treatment and reporting of sex offenders. Furthermore, the law now recognizes common law unions as couples living together for five years or more and not married to anyone else for the purpose of inheritance and property rights. The law has also placed economic

Thirteen years after The Domestic Violence Act was passed, the Women's Department spearheaded a review of the Act. From

Volunteer, we met with representatives of agencies central to the implementation of the Act. The interviews included people at all levels of service including government officials, public officers,

The Women's Department continues to work along with Family Court, the Domestic Violence Unit and the Police Haven House

continues to play a central role in providing a safe home for women. Government continues to give an annual subvention for the day to day running of Haven House.

The Women's Department acts as the Secretariat for Haven House and provides support services. In August 2005 a Program

entitlement for female Public Officers instead of 12 weeks on full pay and to ratify the revised ILO Convention No. 183 – Maternity Protection Convention.

Cabinet in July 2005 directed that the Attorney General's Ministry

draft amendments to existing legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 9 to 12 and to raise the age of marriage (with the consent of the parents) from 14 to 16 years.

Madam Chair, we recognize that despite the many achievements, much more needs to be done in our efforts to attain equality and equity in Belize and to provide women with full access to justice. Limited human and financial resources are a major challenge particularly when discussions about women's issues are now being debated against the perception of men at risk or marginalized. Limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also pose a challenge and the availability of data disaggregated by sex and the analysis of such, are concerns.

Traditional stereotypes, attitudes and expectations of society continue to pose challenges. Women's daily reality of survival after domestic abuse continues to be a major issue. Once women leave the shelter they are often unable to support themselves and their children financially. Often this is a common reason why they return into their

Our Government continues to rely on partnerships with NGO's, civil society groups, international partners and other stakeholders to actively engage women, girls, men and boys in the promotion of gender equality and eliminating violence against women and

and in some cases we have made giant leaps, but our journey is far from over. It has only begun. We constantly renew our pledge to fulfill the goals and objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing +5 Outcomes Document, and the Millennium Development Goals.