



* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates and participants,

It is my honour and privilege, as the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to contribute to the panel of the CSW on ‘Key policy initiatives on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women.’ I will focus on the Committee's experience and efforts to secure increased attention to financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women to accelerate, or strengthen the full implementation of the Convention.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women contains human rights standards for women and girls in the civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and any other area. This comprehensive scope underlines the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights. The Convention aims at the universal enjoyment of these rights by all women, in all parts of the world, in public and in private life.

While the Convention itself does not explicitly refer to the question of financing required for the achievement of Convention goals and the implementation of its provisions, it is clear that the Convention as the legal binding instrument contains international obligations for States parties to fully finance its implementation. It is also in line with the Article 2 of the Convention that contains an obligation to States to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women “

”. Financing the implementation of the Convention is required and forms part of the “appropriate means”, called for the Article 2 of the Convention. The Committee is in the process of elaborating a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention.

The Convention also requires States parties to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the “practical realization” of the principle of equality of men and women (art. 2). With ratification or accession, all 185 States parties to the Convention have accepted this obligation.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is mandated to monitor implementation of the Convention by States parties. In the course of its work, the Committee regularly assesses the challenges which States parties continue to face in fully complying with their treaty obligations. The Committee provides guidance and recommendations to reporting States in its concluding observations on specific steps required to accelerate implementation and to enhance compliance with Convention obligations.

At the same time, the CEDAW Committee has dealt with the question of financing for Convention implementation extensively in its consideration of States parties reports. In doing so, the Committee has addressed overall aspects of policy, and has also covered issues pertaining to specific articles of the Convention. While it has had the opportunity to note positive aspects in a number of instances, there have been significantly more instances where the Committee was concerned about lack of, or insufficient resources and financing devoted to Convention implementation.

Of particular and regular concern to the Committee has been the situation of States parties' national machineries for the advancement of women. The Committee considers that such an institutional mechanism is crucial for effective promotion of gender equality which requires for its effectiveness adequate human and financial resources, as well as power, authority and appropriate location within Government so as to be able to influence decision-making at the highest level, and across sectors.

Last year, the Committee celebrated 25 years of its work. During these 25 years, the Committee held 39 sessions, during which it examined 401 reports, submitted by 154 States parties. The last two years (2006-2007) have been especially productive: The Committee held a total of six sessions, three of which took place in parallel chambers, and it considered the reports of 69 States parties. This was an unprecedented number of States, and today I will highlight the issues raised and recommendations made by the Committee with respect to the topic of this panel, based on an analysis of the Committee's concluding comments adopted in these past two years.

Let me start by highlighting the positive aspects identified by the Committee.

During the consideration of the reports of 69 States parties in 2006/07, the Committee found opportunity to commend some 13 States parties in the area of financing for gender equality.

In several instances, the Committee welcomed the strengthening of national machineries for the advancement of women through increases in financial resources for such mechanisms.

The Committee has also positively noted the introduction of gender-sensitive budget policies, and the expansion of the gender budgeting approach to all ministries. It has also welcomed the conduct of gender assessments of budgets.

The Committee has noted the introduction of a women's component in the national budget which earmarked a specific percentage of planned development expenditure in all sectors for women. It has welcomed the integration of gender dimensions into development cooperation programmes.

In addition to enhanced funding for national machineries and initiatives to strengthen gender sensitivity of budgets, the Committee also commended a number of States for allocating, or increasing resources to pursue particular goals. For example, the Committee was pleased

Before moving on to particular sectoral areas, let me highlight certain other aspects of relevance for securing the necessary financing for Convention implementation. These include in particular States parties' macro-economic frameworks which significantly influence the manner in which Convention provisions are implemented, depending on the priorities that are being pursued. The Committee has discussed with a number of States parties the links between the practical realization of equality of men and women and such frameworks, and has urged them to integrate implementation of women's human rights into, and to monitor the effects of macroeconomic policies on gender equality in general and Convention implementation in particular. It has requested States to include gender perspectives in all economic policies, and to take corrective measures to prevent negative results for women. The Committee has also been concerned about the potential impact of free trade agreements on the u93ficategrssed wiocik ce

Committee repeatedly urged States parties to address the obstacles which prevent girls from attending school or continuing their education by investing further resources to increase educational opportunities and especially female literacy, including for equal participation at secondary and tertiary levels.

The Convention comprehensively covers women's rights in the field of employment. Also in this area, the Committee identified financing shortcomings, and addressed a number of recommendations to States parties to realize equal opportunities in the labour market. For example, the Committee pointed out that labour inspectorates that enforce labour laws and equality protections require sufficient budgetary resources for their effective functioning.

The Committee has also recommended steps to tackle the persistent pay gap between women and men, and the horizontal labour market segregation, by, for example, raising salaries, or providing additional wage increases in female-dominated sectors of public employment. The Committee has also recommended the creation of financial incentives, for example through the tax system, to encourage the involvement of men in domestic and care responsibilities. Maternity leave with pay or comparable social benefits was likewise urged as an appropriate measure to strengthen compliance with the Convention. The Committee has also encouraged States parties to provide access for women to credit in general, including micro-credit.

There is no doubt that the Committee considers financing as one of the appropriate means necessary for the full and effective implementation of the Convention. It has extensively pointed out gaps in States parties' attention to this issue, and has highlighted ways in which compliance can, and should be strengthened. While the Committee has frequently welcomed the existence of action plans, policies and laws, it has also highlighted that a lack of funding for such plans renders them ineffective. Therefore, it has urged States to identify and allocate the necessary resources in the many areas covered by the Convention. It has done so by requesting States to allocate dedicated resources, but also to strengthen integration of the Convention and of gender equality into macro-economic frameworks, and national development plans and policies. It has welcomed the use of gender sensitive budgeting procedures. The Committee has encouraged States to seek the support of the international community, but also of innovative sources of funding for the promotion of gender equality, including partnerships with the private sector.

The Committee has also made it clear that promotion of gender equality requires strong and dedicated institutional mechanisms, and adequate funding for such mechanisms is seen as a prerequisite for their effective implementation of their mandates.

Let me conclude: State parties to the Convention have an international legal obligation to pursue by all appropriate means including adequate financing, the full implementation of the Convention and concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee.