



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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

Summary record of the 738th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 August 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Manalo

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the thirty-sixth session of the Committee.

2. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that a number of important events had taken place since the thirty-fifth session of the Committee. The newly established Human Rights Council had held its first session in June 2006 and had addressed a range of issues, including how to set up the modalities of the universal periodic review mechanism for review of the human rights situation in all countries. It had decided to extend for one year the mandates of all the special procedures of the former Commission on Human Rights and of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, but had also established an intergovernmental working group to review all the mandates, mechanisms and functions inherited from the Commission.

3. The Council had adopted the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and had recommended their adoption by the General Assembly. It had held its first special session, on the human rights and humanitarian situation in Palestine and other Arab occupied territories, in July 2006 and had agreed to hold its next session from 18 September to 6 October 2006.

4. She had made a statement to the Human Rights Council stressing the Council's historic opportunity and responsibility to promote gender equality so that women could achieve full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. In particular, she had called on the Council to address gross and systematic violations of women's human rights. She had expressed the hope that the Council would preserve the best features of the Commission, such as the use of independent rapporteurs and the participation of NGOs in its work. She had also called on the Council to maintain and strengthen the links previously established between the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. She had attended the fifth inter-committee meeting and the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies in Geneva in June 2006. At the 2006 session of the Economic and Social Council, she had spoken at a round table on innovation at work: national strategies to achieve gender equality in employment, the aim of which had been to encourage policymakers and planners to raise awareness of gender equality with the involvement of employers' organizations, trade unions, the private sector and civil society. Women were key contributors to the economy through both remunerated and unremunerated work. Promotion of productive work for women required the concerted action of government ministries, coordination between central and local institutions and public and private agencies, and partnership with civil society.

6. At the Economic and Social Council session, she had highlighted the progress achieved under the gender mainstreaming strategy, but also the challenges remaining in terms of the systematic practical application of the strategy. System-wide resources for gender mainstreaming were woefully insufficient, and greater coherence and coordination were needed to develop a system-wide action plan for gender mainstreaming.

7. Since the Committee's previous session, deliberations about various aspects of United Nations reform, including the "gender architecture", had continued in a number of forums. She stood ready to contribute to the Committee's discussions on those matters if required.

8. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that, since the previous session of the Committee, one additional State — Brunei Darussalam — had acceded to the Convention. Antigua and Barbuda had become a party to the Optional Protocol. No additional States had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

9. At its current session, the Committee would meet in parallel chambers for the first time for the purpose of discussing reports submitted by States parties and had carried out thorough preparations for that challenge. The Division for the Advancement of Women would do its utmost to support the Committee in dealing with its additional workload, the completion

of which would significantly reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration.

10. Turning to recent developments in the work of the Division, she said that preparations were under way for the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, including planning for an expert group meeting on the priority theme of the session: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. The Division was working closely with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on that meeting, which would be hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre at the end of September 2006. The Division would support the Committee in any contribution it might wish to make on the priority theme of the Commission and on the Secretary-General's report on the advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women. The Division had completed its work on the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, which would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

11. The Division had organized a high-level consultation mission to Liberia in June 2006 with a view to increasing awareness of the Convention at the highest political levels and assessing the status of national implementation. Four experts had held consultations with high-level officials and had also met with President Sirleaf, who had pledged her full support for the mission. A comprehensive report on the mission would be produced, including recommendations for enhanced implementation of the Convention.

12. Efforts to support implementation of the Convention in Sierra Leone had continued since the Committee's previous session. The Division had convened a workshop in Sierra Leone in June 2006 to discuss the shortcomings of the draft country report prepared under article 18 of the Convention and also issues relating to implementation of the Convention. The draft report was being revised on the basis of the outcome of the workshop and would be submitted for consideration by the Committee in due course.

13. At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee would consider the reports of 15 States parties and would continue its work under the Optional Protocol. It would receive reports on the outcome of the fifth inter-committee meeting and the eighteenth meeting of

chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the follow-up action required, and on the brainstorming meeting that had taken place in Malbun, Liechtenstein. The Committee would also continue its work on general recommendations on women migrants and on article 2 of the Convention. In accordance with established practice, it would also meet with representatives of NGOs and of the United Nations system to hear information about the countries reporting at the current session. Arrangements were being made for a discussion on the ongoing reform of the United Nations. The Division pledged its full support for the Committee in completing its heavy workload.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2006/III/1)

14. **The Chairperson** drew attention to document CEDAW/C/2006/III/1 and said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposed provisional agenda and organization of work, subject to any necessary adjustments.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she had been unable to participate in the recent meeting of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol because her entry visa for the United States had not been issued in time. Committee members were independent experts and did not represent their country of citizenship or residence. She therefore wished to protest against the arbitrary treatment she had received as a Cuban citizen and demanded to be treated equally with other Committee members for the purposes of travel connected with the Committee's work. She thanked the Working Group for drawing the matter to the attention of the host country authorities, since her treatment had constituted a violation of the host country's obligations, and expressed the hope that no such situation would recur in the future.

Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions of the Committee

17. **The Chairperson** said that the major activity she had undertaken since the previous session of the Committee had been participation in the fifth inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies,

which she and Ms. Pimentel had attended, and the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies. At those meetings, she had elaborated on the Committee's working methods and on action taken to follow up the recommendations of the fourth inter-committee meeting and the seventeenth meeting of chairpersons. One of the major issues for discussion had been the reform of the United Nations human rights framework. She had presented the Committee's proposal for a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty body system as an alternative to the unified standing treaty body proposed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Chairpersons of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had also presented proposals. The inter-committee meeting had called for continued consultation among the appropriate stakeholders on all the proposals for reform. It had been decided that the initial timetable for the reform discussion had been too ambitious and that the meeting of States parties envisaged in the High Commissioner's plan of action would be postponed to the first half of 2007.

18. The inter-committee meeting had accepted the revised harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties and had recommended that the Committees should apply those guidelines in a flexible manner, review their existing reporting guidelines, as appropriate, and record any difficulties experienced in implementing them. The meeting had also recommended the establishment of a working group consisting of seven members, one from each Committee, to discuss further harmonization of the treaty bodies' working methods. A number of other matters had been discussed and the Committee would be following them up during the thirty-sixth session.

19. The chairpersons of the treaty bodies had held an informal meeting with States parties to discuss treaty body reform and the relationship between the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. They had also met with the special procedures mandate holders to discuss ways of enhancing interaction between such mandate holders and the treaty bodies, and ways of establishing interaction with the Human Rights Council. Those issues would also be taken up during the Committee's current session.

20. She had attended the first session of the Human Rights Council, where the Chairperson of the seventeenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights

treaty bodies had made a presentation highlighting the complementary roles of the Council and the treaty bodies and conveying the recommendation of the inter-committee meeting that concluding observations of treaty bodies should form part of the Council's universal periodic review. The Committee had also been represented at the brainstorming meeting on treaty body reform hosted by the Government of Liechtenstein, and a briefing on the discussions would be given during the current session.

21. At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee would for the first time be meeting in parallel chambers and would consider the reports of 15 States. It would also meet with representatives of the United Nations system and NGOs. In that connection, she expressed particular appreciation for the continued support provided to national NGOs by International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific. Lastly, the Committee would discuss its follow-up to the inter-committee and chairpersons' meetings and would continue to implement its responsibilities under the Optional Protocol and take forward its work on general recommendations.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/PSWG/2006/II/CRP.1)

22. **Ms. Šimonović**, speaking as Co-Chairperson of the pre-session working group, drew attention to the report contained in document CEDAW/PSWG/2006/II/CRP.1 and said that the group, with the support of the Secretariat, had drawn up lists of issues and questions for 23 States parties, eight of which had reported at the thirty-fifth session and the remaining 15 of which would be reporting at the current session. To ensure the timely completion of its work, the group had split into two subgroups for discussions but had adopted the lists of issues and questions in plenary. In accordance with various Committee decisions, the lists of issues and questions focused on priority issues addressed by the Convention rather than on specific articles.

Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/2006/III/3 and Add.1, 3 and 4)

Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/2006/III/2, CEDAW/C/2006/III/4)

23. **Ms. Brautigam** (Chief, Women's Rights Unit, Division for the Advancement of Women) drew attention to the Secretary-General's note contained in document CEDAW/C/2006/III/3. Three specialized agencies, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), had submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas within their purview. Those reports were contained in addenda 1, 3 and 4 respectively to the document in question. Later that morning, the Committee would be meeting with representatives of the specialized agencies and of other United Nations system entities wishing to present information on the States parties whose reports would be considered at the current session.

24. The note on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/2006/III/4) summarized recent developments in the human rights regime, in particular the human rights treaty bodies. The Committee also had before it a summary of the outcome of the first session of the Human Rights Council, which had been prepared after the completion of the note. The note also contained a list of reports received from States parties but not yet considered by the Committee. In addition to the States parties listed in the document, Liechtenstein and the Republic of Korea had submitted reports. In that connection, the Committee's attention was also drawn to document CEDAW/C/2006/III/2 on the status of submission of reports by States parties under article 18 of the Convention.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.