



# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Fortieth session

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

### Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

## Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Note by the Secretariat

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\* CEDAW/C/2008/I/1.



## **I. Introduction**

1. The present report contains information that is relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Section II contains information on developments in the United Nations human rights regime, including information concerning the work of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. The same section contains information related to the sixth informal meeting of the Committee and the transfer of the servicing of the Committee to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Section III contains information on the reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions. Section IV summarizes the activities of the Secretariat in support of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. Other issues are covered in section V.

## **II. Developments in the human rights regime**

### **A. Human Rights Council**

2. At its fifth session (11-18 June 2007), the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 5/1 entitled “Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council”. The resolution lays out the basic structure for the Council’s new institutional machinery, including the universal periodic review mechanism, the special procedures, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, and the complaint procedure. It also sets out an agenda and framework for a programme of work, and lays down the rules of procedure for the Council. In its resolution 5/2, the Human Rights Council adopted a code of conduct for special procedures mandate holders.

3. At the first part of its sixth session (10-28 September 2007), the Council adopted general guidelines for the preparation of information under the universal periodic review mechanism, technical and objective requirements for eligible candidates for mandate holders, and technical and objective requirements for the submission of candidatures for the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council (decision 6/102). In its resolution 6/17, the Council requested the Secretary-General to establish a universal periodic review voluntary trust fund to facilitate the participation of developing countries, particularly least developing countries, in the mechanism, and also requested the Secretary-General to establish a new financial mechanism to be called the voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance, to be administered jointly with the universal periodic review voluntary trust fund, in order to provide a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries implement recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review in consultation with, and with the consent of, the country concerned. The second part of the sixth session is scheduled to be held from 10 to 14 December 2007. The Human Rights Council selected the countries to be reviewed in the universal periodic review for the next four years, from 2008 to 2011. On 20 and 21 September 2007, the Human Rights Council convened a panel discussion on the integration of a gender perspective in its work programme.

## **B. General Assembly**

4. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed the General Assembly at its sixty-second session in 2007 under the item entitled “advancement of women”. The statement has been sent to experts electronically and will also be made available to the Committee at its fortieth session.

5. The Third Committee recommended for adoption by the Assembly a draft resolution on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/C.3/62/L.15/Rev.1). Under the terms of the resolution, the Assembly would in particular welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to spearhead a multi-year system-wide campaign to eliminate violence against women. It would call upon the international community to support national efforts to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality in order to enhance national efforts to eliminate violence against women, and also call upon all United Nations entities to intensify their efforts at all levels to eliminate violence against women and to better coordinate their work. The Assembly would request the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to develop and propose a set of possible indicators on violence against women.

6. At the time of the completion of this report, negotiations continued in the Third Committee of the General Assembly on several other resolutions that are relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In particular, negotiations continued on a resolution pertaining to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the request of the Committee that the Assembly authorize an extension of its meeting time (see decisions 39/I and 39/II of the Committee).

7. Under the terms of the draft resolution on violence against women migrant workers (A/C.3/62/L.14), the Assembly would encourage the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to further the momentum of its work in finalizing a general recommendation on women migrant workers. A draft resolution was introduced on rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations (A/C.3/62/L.16).

## **C. Sixth informal meeting of the Committee**

8. The Committee held its sixth informal meeting from 24 to 26 October 2007, in Geneva, hosted by the Government of Switzerland. Members of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol also participated in an orientation session on 23 October. It completed a first reading of the draft treaty-specific guidelines on reporting under the Convention; considered its relationship with national human rights institutions; and discussed ways to enhance the integration of a gender perspective into the work of the Human Rights Council. The agreements reached at that meeting are contained in annex III to the present report. Two staff members of the Division participated in this informal working session, at the invitation of the Government of Switzerland.

#### **D. Transfer of servicing of the Committee to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

9. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat has been in contact with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to ensure a smooth transfer of servicing responsibilities from the Division to OHCHR, effective 1 January 2008. In mid-October, the Division submitted a detailed transition note to OHCHR that conveyed information about relevant work processes; gave an update on the current status in all relevant work areas; provided background information relevant for the smooth servicing of the Committee; and summarized points for action on the part of the Division and OHCHR. The note will be updated by the end of the year to reflect any additional information that may become available, as applicable. A second note on documentation to be transferred from the Division to OHCHR, including the Division's internal procedural manual on servicing the Committee, was also made available to OHCHR. All documentation is expected to be shipped to OHCHR in the course of November 2007.

### **III. Reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions**

10. All States parties selected by the Committee for presentation of reports at the fortieth session will be able to do so.

11. The following States parties are scheduled to present their reports at the forty-first session (30 June-18 July 2008): Finland (fifth periodic report); Iceland (fifth periodic report); Lithuania (third periodic report); Nigeria (sixth periodic report); Slovakia (combined second, third and fourth periodic reports); United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (fifth and sixth periodic reports); United Republic of Tanzania (combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports); and Yemen (sixth periodic report). Finland, Iceland and Lithuania have indicated that their next periodic reports would be submitted in the course of the fall of 2007, and have expressed the wish that their currently available reports be taken up together with their forthcoming reports. The pre-session working group for the fortieth and forty-first sessions agreed therefore to finalize the lists of issues and questions for those three States parties intersessionally after receipt of the respective reports. At the time of completion of the present report, Finland had submitted its sixth periodic report.

12. The following States parties have been invited to present their reports at the forty-second session (20 October-7 November 2008): Belgium (combined fifth and sixth periodic reports); Cameroon (combined second and third periodic reports); Canada (combined sixth and seventh periodic reports); Ecuador (combined sixth and seventh periodic reports); El Salvador (seventh periodic report); Kyrgyzstan (third periodic report); Mongolia (combined fifth, sixth and seventh periodic reports); Myanmar (combined second and third periodic reports); Portugal (sixth periodic report); Slovenia (fourth periodic report); and Uruguay (combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periodic reports). As at 2 November, the following States parties had confirmed in writing their readiness to present their reports at that session: Belgium, Ecuador, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Slovenia and Uruguay. It is anticipated

that the Committee will meet in parallel chambers at the forty-second session, pending approval by the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. In such case, the Committee's practice suggests that 15 States parties would be selected for consideration (14 periodic reports and 1 initial report — the latter would be considered in plenary). The Committee may therefore wish to add to the above list from among reports that have been received since adjournment of the thirty-ninth session (see annex II).

13. The Committee continued its efforts to encourage States parties with long overdue initial reports to submit those within a specified time frame. The Committee requested a total of 12 States parties to submit long overdue initial reports by a specific date, for consideration at a specific future date, as follows:

- Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia: March 2008, for consideration in early 2009;
- Bahamas, Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles: end of 2008, for consideration in early 2010;
- Chad, Comoros, Lesotho and Papua New Guinea: July 2009, for consideration in the second half of 2010.

As a measure of last resort, and failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested time frame, the Committee noted its intention to proceed with the consideration of the implementation of the Convention in these States parties in the absence of a report. Letters by the Division and/or the Chairperson have been sent to these States parties. The Division also wrote to the Resident Coordinators in the countries concerned to encourage them to offer any possible assistance.

14. Based on decisions taken by the Committee, the Chairperson wrote to the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya seeking an update, by 15 December 2007, on the submission of that State party's next periodic report. In accordance with the concluding comments of the Committee on Serbia (CEDAW/C/SCG/CO/1, para. 7), the Division wrote to the head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, drawing his attention to the request of the Committee that the Mission submit a report on the implementation of the Convention in Kosovo and Metohija since 1999, by no later than 1 June 2008.

15. The attention of the Committee is drawn to annex II to the present report, which provides an overview of available reports and dates of previous consideration, as applicable.

#### **IV. Secretariat activities in support of the implementation of the Convention**

16. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat continued their efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, acceptance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. Those aspects are regularly addressed by the Special Adviser, the Director and staff of the Division in meetings with and briefings for representatives of Member States,

entities of the United Nations system and civil society organizations in training workshops and other outreach activities.

17. The technical cooperation programme of the Division in countries emerging from conflict continued with a workshop in Monrovia, held from 18 to 22 June 2007. The workshop focused on reporting under the Convention and involved staff of the Ministry of Gender and Development and several line ministries expected to be directly involved in the preparation of the report. Two experts of the Committee served as resource persons and facilitators at the event. At the request of the Minister of Gender and Development, and based on the discussions during previous workshops, a framework was prepared for the preparation of the report as well as a timeline for its completion. The Division anticipates that a further workshop will be convened in Liberia in November 2007 to consider a first draft of the report and to identify remaining gaps and challenges in the report.

18. In cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Division organized a workshop on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for judges and members of parliament in Amman from 17 to 19 October 2007. The workshop was attended by judges and parliamentarians from 10 countries, and explored the opportunities and responsibilities of judges and parliamentarians in encouraging legal interpretation and reform of laws that would contribute to increased implementation of the Convention. At the end of the workshop, the participants adopted a series of recommendations to enhance implementation of the Convention in the region. An expert of the Committee served as facilitator and resource person at the event.

19. The Division collaborated with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in a one-day briefing on the Convention for parliamentarians attending the IPU annual session in Geneva. The briefing took place on 11 October, and one Committee expert served as resource person at the event. In September and October 2007, at the invitation of the Government of Mexico, a staff member of the Division participated in two workshops in a series of international workshops on international instruments on women's human rights, persons with disabilities, and gender-based violence in Mexico.

20. Two staff members of the Division will participate in a regional workshop on follow-up to concluding comments of the Committee in Port Vila, from 19 to 21 November 2007. The workshop is being organized by OHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and will bring together a number of countries in the region. The Committee Chairperson is expected to serve as resource person and facilitator at the event. The Division has been requested by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to support the convening of a workshop aimed at accelerating preparation of that State party's combined fourth and fifth periodic reports. The workshop is expected to take place on 10 and 11 December 2008.

## **V. Other issues**

21. Pursuant to decision 34/I (2006) of the Committee, summary records from the eighteenth to the thirty-ninth session, in available languages, have been posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

## **Annex I**

### **States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention**

#### **Africa**

Somalia

Sudan

#### **Asia and the Pacific**

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Nauru

Palau

Qatar

Tonga

#### **Western Europe and other**

Holy See

United States of America

## Annex II

### States parties whose reports have been submitted but not yet considered by the Committee as of 12 November 2007<sup>1</sup>

#### Initial reports

<i>State party (report)</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>
Bahrain (1-2)	18 July 2003	4 October 2007

#### Periodic reports

<i>State party (report)</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Belgium (5-6) <sup>c</sup>	9 August 2002	9 May 2007	2002, 27th session	3-4
Bhutan (7)	30 September 2006	3 August 2007	2004, 30th session	1-6
Cameroon (2-3) <sup>b,c</sup>	22 September 1999	28 March 2007	2000, 23rd session	Initial
Canada (6-7) <sup>c</sup>	9 January 2003	4 May 2007	2003, 28th session	5
Ecuador (6-7) <sup>b,c</sup>	9 December 2002	23 February 2007	2003, 29th session	4-5
El Salvador (7) <sup>b,c</sup>	18 September 2006	15 March 2007	2003, 28th session	3-4, 5,6
Finland (5) <sup>a,b</sup>	4 October 2003	23 February 2004	2001, 24th session	3,4
Germany (6)	9 August 2006	19 September 2007	2004, 30th session	5
Iceland (5) <sup>a,b</sup>	18 July 2002	14 November 2003	2002, 26th session	3-4
Israel (4) <sup>b</sup>	2 November 2004	1 June 2005	2005, 33rd session	3
Kyrgyzstan <sup>c</sup>	12 March 2006	27 February 2007	2004, 30th session	2
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (2) <sup>b</sup>	15 June 1994	14 December 1998	1994, 13th session	Initial and Add.1
Lithuania (3) <sup>a,b</sup>	17 February 2003	16 May 2005	2000, 23rd session	Initial, 2
Madagascar (2-5)	16 April 1994	13 August 2007	1994, 13th session	Initial
Mongolia (5-7) <sup>b,c</sup>	3 September 1998	23 March 2007	2001, 24th session	3-4
Myanmar (2-3) <sup>c</sup>	21 August 2002	15 June 2007	2000, 22nd session	Initial
Nigeria (6) <sup>a,b</sup>	13 July 2006	4 October 2006	2004, 30th session	4-5
Portugal (6) <sup>b,c</sup>	3 September 2002	15 May 2006	2002, 26th session	5

<sup>1</sup> Not including the States parties whose reports the Committee will consider at its fortieth session.



<i>State party (report)</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Rwanda (4-7)	3 September 1994	25 October 2007	1993, 12th session	3
Slovakia (2-4) <sup>a,b</sup>	27 June 1998	27 February 2007	1998, 19th session	Initial
Slovenia (4) <sup>b,c</sup>	5 August 2005	10 August 2006	2003, 29th session	2 and 3
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (5 and Add.1 and 2) <sup>a,b</sup>	7 May 2003	7 August 2003	1999, 21st session	3 and Add.1 and 2; 4 and Add.1-4
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (6 and Add.1 and 2) <sup>a,b</sup>	7 May 2007	2 May 2007	1999, 21st session	Same
United Republic of Tanzania (4-6) <sup>a,b</sup>	19 September 1998	8 February 2007	1999, 20th session	2-3
Uruguay (4-7) <sup>c</sup>	8 August 1994	8 June 2007	2002, 26th session	2-3
Yemen (6) <sup>a,b</sup>	29 June 2005	5 December 2006	2002, Exceptional session	4-5

<sup>a</sup> Report selected to be considered by the Committee at its forty-first session.

<sup>b</sup> Report has been translated, reproduced and made available in all official languages.

<sup>c</sup> Report selected to be considered by the Committee at its forty-second session.

## **Annex III**

### **Agreements reached and issues discussed at the sixth informal meeting of the Committee**

#### **Revision of the CEDAW-specific guidelines on reporting**

1. The informal meeting had a first reading of the draft CEDAW-specific guidelines on reporting as prepared by the Division of the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat under the guidance of a working group led by Ms. Schöpp-Schilling. The meeting agreed to establish another small working group to finalize the draft guidelines with a view to their adoption at the Committee session in January 2008. The working group would be composed of Ms. Šimonović, Ms. Patten, Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani and Ms. Schöpp-Schilling. It was agreed that the Secretariat should distribute the current draft to all CEDAW members, indicating a two-week deadline for comments. Subsequently, the working group would revise and finalize the draft guidelines and submit the revised draft to the Secretariat by 15 December 2007 for translation purposes.

#### **Follow-up to concluding comments**

2. The informal meeting discussed the possibility of organizing regional or subregional workshops in follow-up to the concluding comments of the Committee and requested OHCHR to explore possible sources of funding for this purpose.

#### **Relationship with national human rights institutions**

3. The informal meeting agreed that there was a need to (a) enhance the visibility of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in the work of CEDAW and its sessions; (b) have NHRIs specifically highlighted in the Committee agenda; (c) continue its current practice of allocating time to NHRIs and also allocate a time slot for NHRIs during its pre-sessional working groups; and (d) formulate a short statement to be adopted at the fortieth session that could serve as a preliminary basis for a possible future general recommendation to be adopted. The meeting requested that the National Institutions Unit of OHCHR conduct a survey on the nature and mandate of NHRIs in relation to women and gender issues. Ms. Shin was nominated to provide a draft statement for the Committee's elaboration on this issue.

## **General recommendation on article 2**

4. The informal meeting reiterated that the working group should follow the procedure that had been previously decided by the Committee on the formulation of general recommendations in relation to its general recommendation on article 2.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Flinterman was requested to prepare a document for discussion as a first part of this process. The Secretariat was requested to organize an informal meeting for the working group on the general recommendation during the course of 2008.

## **Issues pertaining to the transfer of the servicing of the Committee**

### **Relationship with NGOs**

5. The informal meeting requested the Secretariat to ensure the usual briefings by NGOs regarding those countries that would be reviewed by the Committee at its fortieth session. The Secretariat was also requested to organize another separate meeting with NGOs on the first day during its lunch period to discuss the relationship between the Committee and NGOs, following the transfer of responsibility of the servicing of the Committee.

### **Databases**

6. The informal meeting discussed the issue of treaty body databases and agreed that all elements of the database of the Division on the Advancement of Women concerning the Committee should be migrated into the existing databases of OHCHR, i.e. the petitions database (decisions and views of the Committee under the Optional Protocol) and of the OHCHR treaty body database. The possibilities of migrating the Committee decisions and views into the Universal Human Rights Index of United Nations documents interface should also be explored.

### **Relationship with the Human Rights Council**

7. The informal meeting appreciated the fact that the findings and recommendations of treaty bodies would form the part of the basis of the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council and that one of the documents on which the review would be based would be a compilation prepared by OHCHR of the information contained in the reports of treaty bodies, special procedures, including observations and comments by the States concerned, and other relevant official United Nations documents. The informal meeting recognized

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<sup>2</sup> The Committee, at its seventeenth session (7-25 July 1997), established its process for the preparation of general recommendations in three stages; see A/52/38/Rev.1, para. 480 (a)-(c):  
 “(a) First, a general discussion and exchange of views on the subject of the proposed general recommendation during an open meeting of the Committee. Specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations, would be encouraged to participate in the discussion and to prepare informal background papers as appropriate;  
 (b) Second, the result of the general discussion would be compiled by a member of the Committee and the Secretariat into an initial draft general recommendation. That draft would be discussed at the next session by Working Group II, which could invite resource persons and non-governmental organizations to take part in discussions as appropriate. The comments of the Working Group would be incorporated into a revised draft which would be distributed to all experts before the next session;  
 (c) The revised draft would be submitted by Working Group II at the subsequent session for consideration and adoption by the Committee as a whole.”

the importance of developing effective cooperation between CEDAW, the other treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. It also called on the Council to integrate a gender perspective into all of its activities, including the universal periodic review.

**Other issues**

8. The informal meeting agreed that the Committee would collaborate closely with the Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit of OHCHR.

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