



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Fifty-ninth session

### Summary record (partial)\* of the 1245th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 20 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

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\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Opening of the session**

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the fifty-ninth session of the Committee.

**Statement by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**

2. **Ms. Pansieri** (Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the Committee should continue to give effect to the provisions of the General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system (A/RES/68/268), namely by discussing at the current session the issue of a harmonized approach to reprisals, including the possibility of appointing a rapporteur on reprisals, and the allocation of three or four official working languages for its work as of 2015. She urged the Committee to capitalize on the momentum created by the resolution to seek broad improvements in the quality and efficiency of its work, particularly in regard to reducing the backlog of State party reports and individual communications.

3. Turning to the work of other United Nations bodies dealing with women's rights, she welcomed the Committee's current efforts to come up with a joint general recommendation on harmful practices with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and harmonize its practices with other United Nations treaty bodies. She recalled that the General Assembly had held an informal panel discussion on child, early and forced marriage worldwide, including the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, in which panellists had stressed the detrimental effects of child, early and forced marriage on girls' lives and national development. Similarly, the Human Rights Council had adopted several resolutions concerning women's rights at its twenty-seventh session, including resolutions on girls' equal enjoyment of the right to education, female genital mutilation, sexual orientation and gender identity, and maternal mortality and morbidity, and had held a panel discussion on the protection of the family which had focused, inter alia, on the rights of women and children. On 28 October 2014, the Security Council would also hold an open debate on women, peace and security and the high-level advisory group on the global study to be prepared in advance of the review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015 would meet for the first time at Headquarters directly thereafter. In addition to Ms. Patten's participation in the group, the Committee as a whole would be invited to provide input on key women's human rights issues for the study.

4. **Ms. Schulz** expressed concern that the Human Rights Council resolution on female genital mutilation contained no reference to the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls and that the resolution on the protection of the family failed to mention women's equality. She proposed the introduction of a traffic light system at future sessions to give speakers sufficient advance notice that their time for questions and statements was drawing to a close in order to ensure that the Committee made the best use of the meeting time available.

5. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked whether steps would be taken to strengthen collaboration between the Committee and other United Nations bodies on gender issues.

6. **Ms. Gabr**, supported by **Ms. Pimentel**, expressed concern at the limitation of the Committee's working languages to three languages and stressed the importance of the Arabic-speaking Committee members' expertise for the Committee's work.

7. **Ms. Pansieri** (Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the Committee could provide invaluable support to the work of other United Nations bodies. However, Member States of the Human Rights Council and the Security Council had ultimate responsibility for drafting resolutions and deciding whether or not to seek external advice. The Human Rights Council panel discussion on the protection of the family had

been very complex, but had resulted in a consensus, an outcome which should be welcomed. She found it regrettable that sexual and reproductive health rights had not been referred to in the Human Rights Council resolution on female genital mutilation and highlighted the importance of taking into account those rights in the review of the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on its twentieth anniversary (Beijing + 20) and the post-2015 development agenda. She had no objections to the introduction of a traffic light system for speakers at future sessions and noted that the treaty body strengthening resolution provided for the inclusion, on an exceptional basis, of a fourth working language should the circumstances warrant it. She stressed that experts would not be appointed to serve on the Committee solely based on their language combinations, but rather on the relevance of their expertise and knowledge.

8. **The Chairperson** said that there should be some flexibility in the designation of the Committee's working languages so as to ensure the overall effectiveness and functioning of its work. Steps should also be taken to consult the Committee on future discussions on gender and equality, particularly during the Beijing + 20 review and the drafting of the post-2015 development agenda.

#### **Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/59/1)**

9. *The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions of the Committee**

10. **The Chairperson** recalled the Committee's statement on the abduction of 200 Nigerian schoolgirls and said that, although the news had yet to be confirmed, there was reason for optimism that they would soon be released. Since the beginning of the fifty-eighth session, Tajikistan had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, bringing the total number of States parties that had accepted the inquiry procedure to 105. Seven States parties had also submitted periodic reports since then: Malawi, Slovakia, United Arab Emirates, Iceland, Russian Federation, Sweden and Japan.

11. In August, she had met with former United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to inform him about the proposal to nominate the Committee for the Nobel Peace Prize. In September, she had been interviewed on the Committee's work by Radio France Internationale and had met with the Defender of Rights of France.

12. She had presented the Committee's report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly in mid-October. She had reiterated the Committee's support for the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process, the call for explicit references to the Convention and systematic mainstreaming of women's rights and a gender perspective in the Sustainable Development Goals, the role of the Convention and the Committee in shaping and implementing a culture of peace and addressing the rights of women in conflict situations, and the importance of the Committee's partnership with UN-Women. She was confident that the Committee would be able to formulate a proposal on how to further strengthen that relationship, particularly with regard to the Beijing + 20 and post-2015 processes, by the end of the session.

13. Directly after the current session, she would be participating in an event on the dynamism of the treaty body system organized by the Chairperson of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. She was also planning to meet with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi at the Women's Forum Meeting in Myanmar in December.

14. **Ms. Neubauer** said that she had participated in a meeting on women's human rights organized by the European Institute for Gender Equality in Vilnius in September, with a focus on the relevant strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. She had also

been a panellist at a regional seminar organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka on ending the cycle of violence against girls in the Asia-Pacific region and had participated in a Council of Europe conference in Finland on combating gender stereotypes in and through education.

15. **Ms. Gabr** said that, in her capacity as chairperson of the Committee working group on rural women, she had been invited to attend a workshop in Berlin on a United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. She had also given lectures on the human rights of women and gender issues at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies and the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa.

16. **Ms. Nwankwo** said that she had been invited in October to observe the second reading by the National Assembly of Nigeria of a bill to incorporate the Convention into national law. Opponents of the bill had argued that it was unconstitutional and it had ultimately been sent to a parliamentary committee on rules and business for further consideration.

17. **Ms. Patten** said that she had travelled to the Solomon Islands in September to undertake capacity-building exercises with the government delegation due to present the State party's report to the Committee later in the session.

18. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that Latin American NGOs and governments were keen to better understand the Committee's methods of work and make plans for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. She had been involved in activities related to the preparation of the periodic report of Uruguay and had also participated in activities organized by Bolivian NGOs and human rights bodies in Guatemala and Peru.

19. **Ms. Haidar** said that she had contributed to a Lebanese university programme for human rights activists in the Arab region on the theme of international law and armed conflict, highlighting the importance of general recommendation No. 30. She had also visited settlements for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, where efforts were being made to advocate for the rights of women and girls. She had attended a conference in Moscow on Muslim women and human rights and urged the Committee to take up that theme.

20. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, as the country rapporteur for Finland at the fifty-seventh session, she had been invited to participate in a follow-up seminar in Helsinki to discuss the Committee's concluding observations. That positive experience could serve as an example of good practice for other States parties.

21. **Ms. Schulz** drew the Committee's attention to a book recently published in French, *Introduction aux droits de l'homme*, to which she had contributed the section on the Convention. She had represented the Committee at a meeting of women parliamentarians organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and had highlighted the Committee's dialogue with States parties and its emphasis on providing resources for equality.

22. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had given a talk to local high-school girls on the relevance of the Convention to them, focusing on education and health. As a result, it had been agreed to provide the schoolgirls with improved sanitary facilities. The Committee should take account of those areas when it issued its general recommendation on education.

23. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she had spoken at a major conference in Argentina in September on zero discrimination and intolerance, highlighting the importance of intersectionality in the Committee's work. She had also been involved in various events in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, including an event to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention and a meeting at her university between women students and the university authorities on moral and sexual harassment, gender, race and class.

24. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she had recently participated in a panel discussion on violence against women in Vilnius organized by the Community of Democracies, focusing on trafficking in women and girls and prostitution. She had also given a speech at a debate in Budapest on women's rights in the region 10 years after the first accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union.

25. **The Chairperson** commended the efforts of the Committee members in the inter-sessional period. She drew their attention to a film on the work of the Committee in which a number of members, most notably Ms. Halperin-Kaddari, had participated, which would be screened in February and would serve as an important communication tool.

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

26. **Ms. Patten**, chairperson of the pre-session working group, said that the group had prepared lists of issues and questions with regard to the reports of Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, China, Ghana, Guinea, Poland, Solomon Islands and Venezuela. Particular attention had been paid to the States parties' follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations. Written and oral submissions had been received from United Nations entities and specialized agencies, NGOs and national human rights institutions. The lists of issues and questions adopted had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

**Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

27. **Ms. Zou Xiaojiao**, alternate Rapporteur on follow-up, said that, during the fifty-eighth session, she and the Rapporteur, Ms. Bailey, had met with representatives of Haiti. Follow-up letters had been sent to Belarus, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, and follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments of additional information had been sent to the Netherlands and Turkey. First reminders regarding overdue follow-up reports had been sent to Algeria, Grenada, Jordan, the Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe. Second reminders had been sent to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nepal, Tunisia and Zambia.

28. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Brazil on time, Costa Rica with a six-month delay, Kenya with a 15-month delay, Montenegro with a four-month delay and Norway with a five-month delay. She invited the country rapporteurs for Norway and Montenegro, Ms. Halperin-Kaddari and Ms. Šimonović, to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports of those countries, and called for volunteers to assist with the others. For translation reasons, follow-up reports received from the Bahamas, Bulgaria and New Zealand would be assessed at the sixtieth session.

29. During the current session, first reminders should be sent to Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico and Samoa and second reminders should be sent to Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait and Oman. In addition, meetings should be scheduled with representatives of Burkina Faso, Malta, South Africa and Uganda. As the mandates of the Rapporteur and alternate Rapporteur were to end on 31 December 2014, the Committee would need to appoint replacements to serve for the next two years.

*The public part of the meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*