



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

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Seventeenth session
7-25 July 1997

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora JAVATE DE DIOS

II. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. On 25 July 1997, the closing date of the seventeenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women there were ... States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York in March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Opening of the session

3. The Committee held its seventeenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 25 July 1997. The Committee held ... plenary meetings and its two working groups each held ... meetings. A sub-group of Working Group I on the revised rules of procedure of the Committee held ... meetings.

4. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Salma Khan (Bangladesh), who had been elected at the sixteenth session of the Committee in January 1997.

5. Addressing the Committee on behalf of the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues, the Deputy Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Ms. Kristen Timothy, stated that the seventeenth session of the Committee was an historic occasion as it was the first time that it was meeting for a second annual session.

6. She noted that the General Assembly's approval of the second session was an interim measure pending the acceptance of two thirds of the States parties to the Convention of the amendment of article 20 (1). At present, 14 States parties had accepted the amendment. She added that since the sixteenth session of the Committee, five more countries had become States parties to the Convention, namely Kyrgyzstan on 10 February 1997, Switzerland on 27 March 1997, Mozambique on 16 April 1997, Lebanon on 21 April 1997 and Turkmenistan on 1 May 1997.

7. She said that significant progress had been made towards the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention, which would provide for the right to petition the Committee. The open-ended working group of the Commission on the Status of Women, which met for the first time in parallel with the fortieth session of the Commission, had continued its work at the forty-first session in March 1997. She indicated that the working group had considered a draft optional protocol prepared by its Chairperson, Ms. Aloisia Woergetter of Austria, on the basis of the Committee's suggestion number 7 and comments made by Member States. She informed the Committee that the first reading of the Chairperson's draft had been completed by the working group, and the draft would be built upon when the Commission met in 1998. The Commission had again invited a representative of the Committee to attend as a resource person of the open-ended working group when it met during its forty-second and forty-third sessions, in 1998 and 1999, respectively.

8. The Deputy Director informed the Committee that the Commission at its forty-first session had marked the fiftieth anniversary since its establishment. She noted that at its forty-second session, the Commission would review four critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,¹ held at Beijing in 1995, which incorporate issues of central importance to the Committee: violence against women; women in armed conflict; human rights of women; and the girl child. As part of the preparations for the Commission's session, the Division for the Advancement of Women would convene expert group meetings on those issues. She pointed out that the Division would welcome inputs from the Committee on the substance of the expert group meetings.

9. The Deputy Director stated that the Division was working closely with non-governmental organizations to prepare for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998 and suggested that the Committee might consider making a contribution to the observation of that anniversary.

10. She commended the pre-session working group of the Committee on its work and suggested that the Committee might wish to consider further ways in which the Secretariat could assist the working group to fulfil its task. She also suggested that the Committee might wish to revisit the question of the timing of the pre-session working group.

11. The Deputy Director informed the Committee that since its last session the working methods of United Nations human rights treaty bodies had been subjected to scrutiny by at least two academic conferences. The final report on enhancing their long-term effectiveness had been submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session in March 1997.

C. Attendance

12. With the exception of Ms. Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling and Ms. Mervat Tallawy, all members of the Committee attended the seventeenth session; Ms. Tendai Ruth Bare attended from ..., Ms. Miriam Estrada attended from 10 to 25 July and Ms. Anne-Lise Ryel and Ms. Ginko Sato attended from 7 to 11 July.

13. A list of the members of the Committee and the duration of their terms of office, appears in annex II to the present report.

D. Solemn declaration

14. At the opening of the seventeenth session, before assuming her functions, the re-elected member of the Committee, Ms. Kongit Sinegiorgis (Ethiopia), made the solemn declaration as provided for under rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Committee.

E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

15. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/1997/II/1) at its 334th meeting, on 7 July 1997. Before adopting the agenda, the Committee agreed with the proposal of its Bureau to consider the third report of Italy on the basis of an English text only, noting that it would do so only on an exceptional basis. The agenda as adopted was as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Solemn declaration by the new member of the Committee.
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
4. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Committee.
5. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
6. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
7. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

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8. Provisional agenda for the eighteenth session.
9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its seventeenth session.

F. Report of the pre-session working group

16. The Committee had decided, at its ninth session, to convene a pre-session working group for five days before each session to prepare lists of questions relating to second and subsequent periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the session.

17. The following three members participated in the working group:

Aurora Javate de Dios (Asia and the Pacific)

Ayse Feride Acar (Europe)

Miriam Estrada (Latin America and the Caribbean).

The working group completed its task in four days, the fifth day being a holiday.

18. The working group prepared lists of issues and questions on four States parties' reports: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh and Italy.

19. At the 342nd meeting, on 11 July 1997, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the group (CEDAW/C/1997/II/CRP.1 and Add.1-4).

G. Composition and organization of work of the working groups

20. At its 335th meeting, on 7 July 1997, the Committee agreed on the composition of its two standing working groups: Working Group I, to consider ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, and Working Group II, to consider ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention. A sub-group of Working Group I was established to review the draft revised rules of procedure of the Committee.

21. Working Group I was composed of the following members of the Committee: Ayse Feride Acar, Emna Aouij, Desiree Bernard, Silvia Cartwright, Ivanka Corti, Yolanda Ferrer Gomez, Aurora Javate de Dios, Salma Khan, Yung-Chung Kim, Aida Gonzalez Martinez, Ahoua Ouedraogo, Anne Lise Ryel, Ginko Sato, Carmel Shalev, Lin Shangzhen and Kongit Sinegiorgis. The sub-group to review the revised draft rules of procedure was comprised of Desiree Bernard, Silvia Cartwright, Ivanka Corti, Aida Gonzalez Martinez and Kongit Sinegiorgis.

22. Working Group II was composed of the following members of the Committee: Aida Gonzalez Martinez, Carlota Bustelo, Charlotte Abaka, Sunaryati Hartono, Ahoua Ouedraogo, Carmel Shalev, Silvia Cartwright and Lin Shangzhen.

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23. The specific issues addressed by Working Groups I and II were as follows:

(a) Working Group I. Overdue reports and withdrawal of reports and other practices; draft guidelines on concluding comments; report of the independent expert on effective functioning of bodies established pursuant to United Nations human rights instruments; methods of work and timing of the pre-session working group; relations with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and other rapporteurs; seminars to be developed by the Committee; and reports to be considered at the nineteenth and twentieth sessions of the Committee;

(b) Working Group II. Method of formulation of general recommendations and long-term programme of work in this regard (i.e., articles to be the focus of general recommendations); relations with specialized agencies; possible contribution of the Committee to the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, e.g., statement for the Commission on Human Rights; and briefing for the resource person on the working group on the optional protocol.

Notes

¹ A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
