



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Ayse Feride Acar

Addendum

III. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the nineteenth and twentieth sessions

1. Salma Khan, the outgoing Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, welcomed all the Committee members to the twentieth session. She extended her congratulations to the new members elected at the tenth meeting of States parties, stating that they had joined the human rights treaty body responsible for promoting and defending the rights of half of humanity.
2. Ms. Khan indicated that during the inter-sessional period, she had sought to maintain regular contact with the experts, and this had facilitated her work and contributed to the achievement of their common goals.
3. In regard to her activities between the nineteenth and twentieth sessions of the Committee, Ms. Khan reported that she had attended several South Asian regional meetings to commemorate the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, including a meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal, which sought to develop a regional strategy for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to identify challenges and gaps in that regard.
4. Ms. Khan indicated that she had participated in a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, held in Paris from 14 to 16 September 1998. Her statement at that event highlighted the fact that the Declaration had established the equal rights of women and men, a principle elaborated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
5. Reporting on her attendance at the Third Committee of the General Assembly, Ms. Khan noted that several Governments had commended the work of the Committee and its efforts to reinforce the implementation mechanisms of the Convention. Several had welcomed the

development of an optional protocol and the statement on reservations adopted at the nineteenth session of the Committee as a contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

6. Ms. Khan underlined the Committee's growing links with specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations and drew attention to the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, to develop a partnership between her Office and the Committee. In this regard, Ms. Khan noted that the High Commissioner had sought inputs from the Committee prior to her recent mission to China and that Mrs. Robinson had provided her with a detailed account of her mission, highlighting progress achieved and challenges in a letter dated 3 December 1998.

7. Ms. Khan reminded the Committee that 18 December 1999 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, while 20 November 1999 would mark the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She noted that those anniversaries would provide opportunities to emphasize the importance of international normative instruments in the establishment of full and equal rights for women and girl children.

8. Ms. Khan noted that although the majority of Member States had subscribed to the Convention, the goal of universal ratification set by the Beijing Platform for Action had yet to be reached. On behalf of the Committee, she had written to those countries that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention, while Angela King, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, had also written to James Gustav Speth, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, requesting him to encourage Governments to ratify or accede to the Convention. Ms. Khan indicated that she had also requested a number of non-governmental organizations to encourage ratification. As a result of those efforts, several States, including Djibouti, had accepted the Convention.

9. In concluding her remarks, Ms. Khan outlined progress in the Committee's work during the two years of her chairpersonship. She noted that there had been a steady increase in ratification and accession and that the Committee was now meeting twice yearly. It had reviewed the reports of 35 States parties over this period, and positive steps towards *de jure* equality of women had been made. Some States parties had modified or withdrawn their reservations to the Convention, and significant progress had been made in the elaboration of an optional complaints mechanism to the Convention. Working relationships had been established with specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as non-governmental organizations. She indicated, however, that still more progress was required before women would achieve *de facto* equality with men. Ms. Khan thanked the members of the Committee for their support during her chairpersonship and paid particular tribute to the outgoing bureau member. She congratulated Aida Gonzalez, the incoming Chairperson, and the other members of the bureau on their election, and wished them well in their future work.