



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: Limited
18 January 2002

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Twenty-sixth session

14 January-1 February 2002

Draft report

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II. Organizational and other matters

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

1. As at 1 February 2002, the closing date of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 168 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 its article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex __ to the present report. A list of States parties that have accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention is contained in annex __. A list of States parties that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention is contained in annex __.

B. Opening of the session

3. The Committee held its twenty-sixth session at United Nations Headquarters from 14 January to 1 February 2002. The Committee held __ plenary meetings (529th to 5__) and its two working groups held __ meetings. A list of documents before the Committee is contained in annex __, section __, to the present report.

4. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Charlotte Abaka (Ghana), who was elected at the twenty-fourth session of the Committee in January 2001.



5. Addressing the Committee at its 529th meeting, on 14 January 2002, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Angela E. V. King, welcomed the two new members of the Committee who had been nominated by their Governments and accepted by the Committee to complete the terms of two former members who had resigned because of professional commitments. The Special Adviser also introduced Carolyn Hannan, who was recently appointed as the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

6. While noting that the period between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions had been marked by difficulties resulting from the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the Special Adviser indicated that there had been several highlights during this period. These included the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was held from 31 August to 8 September 2001, in Durban, South Africa. Several members of the Committee including the Chairperson, had participated in the Conference, which recognized that racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance affected women and girls differently than men and boys and stressed the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes against racism and racial discrimination. She also highlighted the strategies recommended by the Conference to confront racism and racial discrimination, which included the signing and ratifying of human rights and other treaties, including the Convention and its Optional Protocol, and their full implementation.

7. The Special Adviser informed the Committee on developments with respect to the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. The United Nations had sponsored talks between four Afghan groups in Bonn, Germany, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, which had ended on 5 December 2001 with the signing of an Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions. Two women had participated as full delegates in these talks and two women had been included in the Interim Administration, one as Minister of Women's Affairs and one as Minister of Health. She also informed the Committee that the first Integrated Mission Task Force, which had been established to advise the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, included three gender specialists drawn from the Division for the Advancement of Women, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

8. The Special Adviser drew attention to the Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy, held in Brussels, on 4 and 5 December 2001, which had been organized at the request of Afghan women by the European Women's Lobby, Equality Now and other groups, in collaboration with her Office and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The meeting, which she had attended, had been held so that Afghan women could identify their priorities for the future of Afghanistan, particularly with respect to their full participation in the peace process, including in the context of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), of 31 October 2000, on women, peace and security. The Summit had concluded with the adoption of the Brussels Proclamation, which addressed women's demands with respect to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was one of the human rights instruments highlighted in the Proclamation.

9. The Special Adviser informed the Committee that she and the Division for the Advancement of Women had taken every possible opportunity to encourage ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, as well as acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. Letters had been sent to the Permanent Representatives of all States parties that had not yet accepted the amendment, as well as to Members from States parties which had not yet accepted the amendment, urging its acceptance. Her office and the Division for the Advancement of Women collaborated with the Office of Legal Affairs in connection with that Office's treaty signature/ratification event, which took place from 19 September to 5 October 2001 and which had been directed at achieving universal ratification of the United Nations treaties most relevant to the advancement of women. A significant number of ratifications and accessions of these treaties had been achieved during the event. The Division for the Advancement of Women had also provided technical support to a subregional training workshop organized by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on ratification of the Convention.

10. The Special Adviser informed the Committee that, taking into account its decision 25/1, the General Assembly had authorized the Committee to hold, on an exceptional basis, an extraordinary session of three weeks duration in 2002, to be used entirely for the consideration of the reports of States parties in order to reduce the backlog of reports. She indicated that, in considering the matter, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had expressed the view that the expected elimination of the backlog might be temporary unless the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reforms its methods of work, including its reporting procedures and provides guidelines concerning the length of reports from States parties. The Advisory Committee was also of the opinion that the Committee and the States parties should consider adopting reporting guidelines that could limit the length of States parties reports and streamline their structure and content.

11. In closing, the Special Adviser indicated that the work of the Committee during its current session would include the consideration of the reports of eight States parties and the continuation of discussion of the general recommendation of the Committee on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women. She also recalled that the World Summit on Sustainable Development would take place in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, and that the Committee might wish to prepare input for that event.

C. Attendance

12. All members of the Committee attended the twenty-sixth session.

13. A list of the members of the Committee indicating the duration of their terms of office appear in annex ____ to the present report.

D. Solemn declaration

14. At the 529th meeting, the opening meeting of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee, prior to assuming their functions, two members of the Committee made the solemn declaration provided for under rule 15 of the Committee's rules of procedure. They were Christine Kapalata (United Republic of Tanzania), who had been nominated by her Government and accepted by the Committee to complete the remaining period of the term of Asha Rose Mtengeti-Migiro, and Fumiko Saiga (Japan), who had also been nominated by her Government and accepted by the Committee to complete the remaining period of the term of Chikako Taya.

E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

15. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2002/I/1) at its 529th meeting. The agenda was adopted as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Solemn declaration by new members of the Committee.
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
4. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Committee.
5. Consideration of the 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.
8. Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session.
9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twenty-sixth session.

F. Report of the pre-session working group

16. The pre-session working group for the twenty-sixth session of the Committee met from 23 to 27 July 2001 to prepare lists of issues and questions relating to the periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at that session. The following members, representing different regional groups, participated in the Working Group: Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini (Africa); Heisoo Shin (Asia); Frances Livingstone Raday (Europe); and Zelmira Regazzoli (Latin America and the Caribbean). Ms. Zelmira Regazzoli was elected as its Chairperson.

17. The working group prepared lists of issues and questions relating to the reports of five States parties, namely Iceland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka and Uruguay.

18. At its 531st meeting, on 16 January 2002, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the group (CEDAW/PSWG/2002/1/CRP.1 and Add.1-5).

G. Organization of work

19. At its 529th meeting, the Committee decided to take up issues under agenda item 6, on implementation of article 21 of the Convention, and agenda item 8, on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, through a working group of the whole. The issues it decided to consider were: the general recommendation on article 4.1 of the Convention; the draft model form for communications prepared by the working group on the optional protocol; human rights education; and the agenda for the inter-treaty body meeting to be held in June 2002.

III. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Committee

20. At its 529th meeting, the Chairperson of the Committee, Charlotte Abaka, briefed the Committee on her attendance at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, including her participation in a number of important parallel events. These included an event entitled “The Voices of Victims — Human stories of racial discrimination with first hand accounts from every region of the world”, and a round table on the “Impact of Multiple Forms of Discrimination on Women”, which was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women and was chaired by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson. The Chairperson indicated that, during the round table, she had highlighted the Committee’s statement on gender and racial discrimination. The Chairperson emphasized the fact that the Committee’s work had attracted significant interest at events during the World Conference.

21. The Chairperson stated that the Convention was an effective tool in achieving sustainable human, economic, social and cultural development. She strongly recommended that the Committee place more emphasis on human rights education and actively participate in the final years of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). She identified gender-sensitive human rights education as a critical strategy to address inequalities, injustices and abuses in the home, the work place, the streets, courts, prisons and elsewhere. She stated that citizens and policy makers should learn to understand human rights obligations and responsibilities and that they should learn to monitor and enforce human rights effectively and efficiently.
