



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

Twenty-fourth session

Summary record of the 486th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 January 2001 at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. González

later: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She welcomed seven new members of the Committee, Ms. Achmad, Ms. Gaspard, Ms. Kwaku, Mr. Melander, Ms. Mtengeti-Migiro, Ms. Shin and Ms. Tavares da Silva, to whom should be added Ms. Livingstone Raday, who would be serving the remainder of the term of Ms. Shalev. She likewise congratulated the three members — Ms. Acar, Ms. Ferrer Gómez and Ms. Schöpp-Schilling — who, in addition to herself, had been re-elected.

2. **Ms. Ertürk** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) assured the Committee of the Division's full assistance in what promised to be a most challenging session, as the Committee entered a new phase, with a number of new members and new working methods and thematic areas. She looked forward to continued close cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee, whose input into the former's work programme was highly appreciated.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2001/I/1)

3. *The agenda was adopted.*

Solemn declaration by the new and re-elected members of the Committee

4. *Ms. Acar, Ms. Achmad, Ms. Ferrer Gómez, Ms. Gaspard, Ms. González, Ms. Kwaku, Mr. Melander, Ms. Mtengeti-Migiro, Ms. Livingstone Raday, Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, Ms. Shin and Ms. Tavares da Silva made the solemn declaration provided for in rule 10 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure.*

Election of officers

5. **Ms. Aouij** nominated Ms. Abaka for the office of Chairperson.

6. **Ms. Corti** seconded the nomination.

7. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** and **Ms. Manalo** supported the nomination.

8. *Ms. Abaka was elected Chairperson by acclamation.*

9. *Ms. Abaka took the Chair.*

10. **The Chairperson**, thanking the Committee for the trust it had placed in her, said that it was clear from the review of States parties' reports that the Convention was now a key pillar of international human rights law and that gender equality was reflected in national legislation. The beginning of the new century called for a renewed commitment to the implementation of the Convention and the work of the Committee. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol had added a new quality to the promotion and protection of women's human rights. That and the Committee's responsibility for implementing the new procedures presented a fresh challenge which the Committee would undoubtedly meet. It must be clear to all stakeholders that the Committee's work on the Optional Protocol was very closely linked to the efficient implementation of article 18 of the Convention.

11. The Committee could count on continued cooperation with the United Nations system as a whole and with non-governmental organizations, from whose valuable work it had always benefited, not least in connection with the effective implementation of the Optional Protocol. In recognition of their contribution, she proposed that a meeting should be arranged between the Committee and non-governmental organizations in order to seek their views.

12. Among the issues calling for the Committee's particular attention were its methods of work, notably discussion of the rationale behind holding a closed meeting prior to the presentation of responses by a State party's delegation and ensuring a subsequent constructive dialogue on periodic reports, and issues raised during that dialogue and during the preparation and adoption of concluding observations — the point being to focus on the real, pertinent concerns of a particular State party and hence to make practical, implementable suggestions and recommendations. Other issues were the still unacceptably high rate of maternal mortality in most developing countries and countries in transition, recently aggravated by privatization of the health sector; the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa; the elderly; new forms of slavery, pornography and trafficking in women and children; and the continued

under-representation of women at decision-making levels, including in national parliaments. One of the reasons for under-representation was the fact that democracy was still not strongly built on the culture of human rights in many countries — hence the need for human rights education, on which the Committee might consider placing more emphasis. Another issue was the growing feminization of poverty, often as a consequence of structural adjustment policies and now coupled with privatization. She encouraged the Committee to take a more proactive approach and to strengthen its working relationship with the relevant special rapporteurs.

13. **Ms. Corti** nominated Ms. Acar, **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** nominated Ms. Regazzoli and **Ms. Taya** nominated Ms. Manalo for the three offices of Vice-Chairperson.

14. *Ms. Acar, Ms. Regazzoli and Ms. Manalo were elected Vice-Chairpersons by acclamation.*

15. **Ms. González** nominated Ms. Hazelle for the office of Rapporteur.

16. *Ms. Hazelle was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions of the Committee

17. **Ms. González**, speaking in her capacity as outgoing Chairperson of the Committee, said that, during the two years in which she had presided over it, the Committee had worked very hard, not only in fulfilling its mandate under the Convention but also in connection with the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women. The landmark adoption in October 1999 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and its entry into force on 22 December 2000 would entail new responsibilities for the Committee. In June 2000, the Committee had therefore begun analysing and discussing draft rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol on the basis of an excellent analytical paper prepared by Silvia Cartwright, a former Committee member. At the Expert Meeting on the Proposed Draft Rules, held from 27 to 30 November 2000 in Berlin, the Committee had completed its elaboration of the draft rules of procedure on the basis of a draft prepared by the

Division for the Advancement of Women with the help of Ms. Cartwright (C/2000/I/4, annex I). The Optional Protocol was being disseminated all over the world in a campaign led by the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP), with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the participation of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights. Committee members should also make every effort to publicize the objectives and procedures of the Protocol in their own countries and abroad.

18. In the past six months, she had had an opportunity to participate in a number of events of importance to the Committee. In September 2000, she had been invited by La Morada, a Chilean non-governmental organization, to participate in a seminar on the Convention, held at the University of Valdivia and co-sponsored by the Association of Women Magistrates and Judges of Chile. The Chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, Ms. Medina Quiroga, had also participated in the seminar. At a working meeting with the Chamber of Deputies of Chile, the possibility of Chile's ratification of the Optional Protocol had been discussed.

19. In October 2000, she had participated in the debates of the Third Committee of the General Assembly under the items on the advancement of women and the implementation of the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century". She had distributed the report of the Committee on its twenty-second and twenty-third sessions on that occasion. Many delegations had expressed their commitment to implementing the Convention and had welcomed the imminent entry into force of the Optional Protocol. She, in turn, had informed them that the Committee had already begun elaborating draft rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol at the Berlin Expert Meeting. She had appealed to the Secretary-General and Member States for the necessary support and additional resources to enable the Committee to fulfil its new responsibilities in connection with the Optional Protocol. She suggested that Committee members should study the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on relevant topics, such as violence against women and trafficking in women and children.

20. In early November 2000, she had been invited by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights to inaugurate the second course on women's rights at the Institute's headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, which had highlighted the importance of the Convention and the Optional Protocol. That had been an opportunity to witness firsthand the dissemination of the Convention and the Protocol at the regional level, as well as training in the use of the Protocol. She had also received two invitations which she had been unable to accept, one to attend the International Conference on Statistics, Development and Human Rights, held in Montreux, Switzerland, from 4 to 8 September 2000, and the other from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, to give a lecture on women's human rights and the Committee's responsibilities. The date of the latter would have conflicted with the Berlin Expert Meeting; however, the invitation demonstrated the interest of the academic community in disseminating the Convention and the Protocol.

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had informed her that the Committee would be invited to send a representative to each of the regional preparatory meetings for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Ms. Ferrer Gómez had attended the Latin American regional meeting held in Santiago, Chile, from 5 to 7 December 2000 and would be reporting to the Committee on its outcome. Unfortunately, the dates of the African preparatory meeting overlapped with those of the Committee's current session. She hoped that a representative of the Committee would participate in the Asian regional meeting, to be held in Tehran from 19 to 21 February. She had also received an invitation to participate in a seminar on international norms for the protection of women's human rights, convened by the Andean Federation of Jurists in Santiago, Chile, in December, at which she had been represented by Ms. Regazzoli.

22. The NGO Committee on the Status of Women had revised its questions on the implementation of the Convention in respect of elderly women, within the framework of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. The revised questions would be distributed to Committee members. In conclusion, she stressed the importance of the current session of the Committee, which would witness the adoption of both the Committee's revised rules of

procedure and the rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol, as well as preparations for the drafting of a general recommendation on article 4 of the Convention. She pledged her full support to the new Chairperson in carrying out those important tasks.

Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/2001/I/3 and Add.1-4)

Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/2001/I/4 and CEDAW/C/2001/WG.1/WP.1)

23. **Ms. Connors** (Secretary of the Committee), introducing the agenda item on the implementation of article 21 of the Convention, said that, at its twenty-third session, the Committee had decided to prepare a general recommendation on article 4 of the Convention. As part of its three-stage process for the preparation of general recommendations, it would hold a general discussion and exchange of views with specialized agencies, other bodies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations during the current session.

24. Drawing attention to the note by the Secretary-General on reports provided by specialized agencies (CEDAW/C/2001/I/3 and Add.1-4), she said that under the same agenda item, the Committee would also take up article 22 of the Convention, whereby specialized agencies of the United Nations were entitled to be represented at the consideration of such provisions of the Convention as fell within the scope of their activities. The Committee could also invite the specialized agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in those areas. In accordance with the decision taken at the Committee's eighteenth session, representatives of specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies had been invited to attend meetings of the pre-session working group, in order to provide information on the implementation of the Convention in those States parties whose periodic reports would be considered at the current session. Also in accordance with the Committee's decision taken at its eighteenth session, representatives of specialized agencies would address the Committee during a working group of the whole on the State party reports being considered.

25. Introducing the agenda item on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, she drew the

Committee's attention to the report contained in document CEDAW/C/2001/I/4, which covered a number of areas, including efforts by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women to encourage universal ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. She noted that annex VI to the report, on signatures, ratifications and accessions to the Optional Protocol might already be out of date. Under the agenda item, the Committee would also finalize its revised rules of procedure, the substance of which had been adopted by the Committee at its twenty-third session subject to editing by the Secretariat in consultation with Ms. Cartwright. It was proposed that the revised rules of procedure (CEDAW/C/2001/WG.1/WP.1) should be combined with those on the Optional Protocol and, when adopted, presented as one document.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.