



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Thirtieth session
12-30 January 2004

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 and to the Optional Protocol

1. As at 30 January 2004, the closing date of the thirtieth 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. On the same date, there were __ States parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999 and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York on 10 December 1999. In accordance with article 16, the Optional Protocol entered into force on 22 December 2000.

3. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex __ to the present report. A list of States parties that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention is contained in annex __. A list of States parties that have accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, concerning the Committee's meeting time, is contained in annex __.

B. Opening of the session

4. The Committee held its thirtieth session at United Nations Headquarters from 12 to 30 January 2004. The Committee held ___ plenary meetings (629th to 6___) and held ___ meetings to discuss agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8. A list of the documents before the Committee is contained in annex ___, section ___, to the present report.

5. The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Feride Acar, opened the session. Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Ms. Angela E. V. King, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, made opening statements.

6. In addressing the Committee at its 629th meeting, on 12 January 2004, the Under-Secretary-General welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women early in his tenure as head of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a position he had assumed in September 2003. He drew attention to the emphasis placed by the United Nations system, as well as by Member States at the national level, on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Progress towards those goals required economic growth that was equitable, inclusive, pro-development and supportive of equality between women and men. The outcomes of global conferences and the resolutions and agreed conclusions of intergovernmental bodies were policy instruments for action at the national and international levels towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

7. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women created legal obligations for States parties to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights of women. As a legally binding treaty, the Convention created entitlements for rights holders on the one hand — in this case, women — and obligations for ratifying States to give full effect to the provisions of the Convention, on the other hand. The Convention encompassed the full range of rights and enshrined women's entitlement to enjoy those rights on a basis of equality with men, without discrimination. Consequently, the Committee considered legislative, regulatory and other appropriate means taken by States parties, and their effect on equality between women and men. In doing so, the Committee paid consistent attention to the two dimensions — economic considerations and social policies — that were necessary for progress towards the goals of the Convention, and which were also critical for reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

8. The Under-Secretary-General pointed out that the Committee regularly found that de jure and de facto discrimination against women persisted in basically all States that reported to the Committee. The Committee's responsibilities to monitor the adherence of States parties to their obligations under the Convention, through the reporting process, and its constructive dialogue with States parties confirmed that that form of monitoring and supervision by an international body of experts was an essential aspect of the protection of the rights of women. In the constructive dialogue with representatives of reporting States, the Committee identified positive developments and addressed gaps in implementation where a State party's efforts fell short of Convention requirements. While implementation strategies for global policy instruments could complement strategies designed to implement the

Convention as a whole, the commitments of Governments and action resulting from global conferences did not, however, reduce States parties' obligations under the Convention. The Optional Protocol to the Convention offered an international avenue of redress and constituted an essential new tool for women to remedy discrimination. It should also provide a significant incentive for States parties to intensify their efforts at the national level to eliminate and prevent discrimination against women in law and in practice, and to ensure that women had access to justice in an effective, affordable and expeditious manner. The Committee's work under the Optional Protocol would set important precedents of encouragement for women around the world.

9. The Under-Secretary-General attributed great importance to the Convention and the work of the Committee and expressed his appreciation that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which he headed, had the responsibility of providing the Committee with substantive servicing. He assured the Committee of the continuing full support of the Department, in particular that of the Division for the Advancement of Women, and of his personal support for its work.

10. In addressing the Committee at its 629th meeting, on 12 January 2004, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women welcomed the Committee's new member, Ms. Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah, who had been nominated to complete the term of office of Justice Akua Kuenyehia, who was one of seven women elected to the International Criminal Court.

11. The Special Adviser placed the Committee's mandate in the larger context of the work of the United Nations and the increasingly systematic attention given to gender equality in policy discussions in the United Nations. In the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly had recognized that gender equality was essential to combating poverty, hunger and disease, and for sustainable development. Her Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued to monitor the degree of attention given to gender perspectives in efforts aimed at achieving those goals, in addition to goal 3, on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Special Adviser remarked that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the work of the Committee were instrumental also for progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Member States were planning to undertake a comprehensive review of progress made in implementing all commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and its Goals in 2005. She encouraged the Committee to consider its contribution to that event so as to ensure that attention was paid to gender dimensions. That event would coincide with the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. A questionnaire had been sent to Governments in preparation for the latter review, and reports submitted since 1995 by States parties to the Convention would also be used as a source of information in preparing the review.

12. The Special Adviser reported that the Convention and gender equality had received significant attention during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. A number of States had discussed the status of their reporting obligations and the Committee's past or impending consideration of their reports. States had also provided updates about national measures to strengthen implementation of the

Convention. The Division had prepared several reports, including one on the status of the Convention, and another on violence against women migrant workers. A biennial report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas reviewed, for the first time, the Committee's contribution to improving the situation of this particular group of women in the framework of the implementation of article 14 of the Convention. The report concluded that the Committee's work complemented that of intergovernmental processes and encouraged Governments, international organizations and other actors to use the Convention and the Committee's concluding comments when formulating policies and designing programmes in support of sustainable rural development. In his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had highlighted human trafficking and its severe impact on women and girls. The entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on 29 September 2003, and of its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, on 25 December 2003, provided a new instrument in the fight against trafficking in women and girls.

13. At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 58/145 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in which it had decided to biennialize consideration of the question. The General Assembly had also adopted, for the first time, a resolution on the elimination of domestic violence against women (resolution 58/147), which called, inter alia, on States parties to the Convention to include in their reports to the Committee information on legal and policy measures adopted and implemented to prevent and eliminate domestic violence against women. Another resolution requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, in close cooperation with all relevant United Nations bodies and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (see resolution 58/185). The Division for the Advancement of Women would lead the preparation of the study, which was expected to be completed within two years.

14. Turning to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Special Adviser noted that the Commission would review two thematic issues at its forty-eighth session, in March 2004, namely "the role of men and boys in gender equality" and "women's equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building". The Division had convened two expert group meetings to prepare the discussions and assist the Commission. One meeting, on the role of boys and men in gender equality, was held in Brasilia in October 2003, and the other, on peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and ensuring participation of women, was held in Ottawa in November 2003. The Special Adviser pointed out that her Office was organizing an expert group meeting on enhancing women's participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries, to be held in Glen Cove, New York, in late January 2004. The findings of that meeting would provide input to the Commission's deliberations in March and to the review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the fourth anniversary of its adoption, in October 2004.

15. The Special Adviser informed the Committee that she had addressed the Human Rights Committee at its seventy-eighth session, on 15 July 2003 in Geneva, and had held a useful and constructive exchange with members of that Committee

on a wide range of issues. She had also held discussions with the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights on the joint work programme between that Office and her Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Acting High Commissioner had also participated in a panel showcasing gender mainstreaming in various areas during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, in July 2003. A fifth Joint Workshop of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which she chaired, and the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) had been held in Paris in July 2003. The workshop focused on gender and post-conflict reconstruction and lessons learned from Afghanistan and elsewhere, and aimed to contribute to increased effectiveness of multilateral and bilateral support for post-conflict reconstruction through the enhanced integration of gender perspectives into that work. In that regard, the Special Adviser noted that the ratification of the Convention by Afghanistan in March 2003 had greatly propelled the issue of women's equal rights and had helped in the successful inclusion of a relevant provision in the new Constitution of Afghanistan. Lastly, her Office had participated in the first session of the newly established Committee on Women at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Beirut in December 2003.

16. Also at the 629th meeting, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women welcomed members to the thirtieth session of the Committee and extended a particular welcome to the Committee's new member, Ms. Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah. The Director informed the Committee that, since its last session, in July 2003, San Marino had ratified the Convention, on 10 December 2003, bringing the total number of States parties to the Convention to 175. Six States parties, namely Poland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and the Philippines, had acceded to the Optional Protocol, bringing the total number of accessions to 59. Three additional States parties had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Committee's meeting time, namely Croatia, the Philippines and Uruguay, bringing the total number of acceptances to 43. France had lifted its reservation relating to article 5 (b) and 16 1 (d) made upon ratification. While that increase in the number of States parties was a very welcome development, it also posed new challenges to the Committee to ensure full attention to its mandate under both the Convention and the Optional Protocol within the limited meeting time currently allocated to the Committee.

17. The Division's technical assistance activities aimed at implementation of the Convention remained a critical part of the Division's overall efforts in support of the protection and promotion of the human rights of women. They also aimed to contribute to timely reporting by States parties to the Convention. Since the last session, a subregional workshop on reporting under the Convention had been organized for 13 African countries, hosted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania in Arusha from 11 to 13 September. The Committee's former Chairperson, Ms. Charlotte Abaka, and Ms. Ineke Boerefijn, senior researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, served as resource persons. The Division also organized a judicial colloquium from 9 to 11 September, also in Arusha, for judicial practitioners from 11 African countries on the use of international human rights law, specifically the Convention, in domestic courts. Justice Unity Dow of the High Court of Botswana, retired Justice Sujata Manohar of the Supreme Court of India, and Ms. Ineke Boerefijn of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights served

as resource persons. The participants adopted a declaration of commitments on the role of the domestic judge in the application of international human rights law at the domestic level, which was available on the Division's web site. The Division had assisted the Government of Mali, at its request, in the review of its combined second to fifth periodic report. Ms. Ahua Ouedraogo, a former member of the Committee, had conducted a series of technical meetings with officials from various ministries on the form and content of reports in order to clarify the provisions of the Convention, identify remaining gaps in the draft and possible sources of information, and establish a timetable for finalization of the report of Mali.

18. A financial contribution from the Government of New Zealand for technical cooperation activities in support of Convention implementation in countries emerging from conflict had enabled the Division to initiate work with Afghanistan and Sierra Leone aimed at raising awareness and understanding of Convention rights and the resultant obligations of States parties, and at enhancing the capacity of government officials to implement the Convention. The Division had also received a financial contribution from the Swedish International Development Agency for the preparation of a Convention implementation kit which would consist of an implementation manual and a training kit. The Division had financially supported the meeting of the Committee's drafting group, held in October 2003 in Berlin, to finalize the revised draft general recommendation on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

19. The Division, together with the Committee's Chairperson, had participated in a one-day briefing session for parliamentarians, on 4 October in Geneva. The meeting had been a follow-up activity to the joint publication by the Division and the Inter-Parliamentary Union of the Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention, which had been launched in April 2003. The Division hoped to build on that experience in the future. The Division had participated, on behalf of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, in a two-day conference, organized and hosted by the Government of Croatia and the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Dubrovnik, on 25 and 26 October, on the implementation of the Convention in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The event had been spearheaded by three members of the Committee, Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic, Ms. Victoria Popescu and Ms. Krisztina Morvai, and the Committee's Chairperson served as the keynote speaker. Finally, the Director reported that the Division had participated in a two-day brainstorming session convened by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, on 7 and 8 December 2003 in Istanbul, on the future direction of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. The Committee was scheduled to meet with the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, during the thirtieth session.

20. Turning to the Committee's efforts to keep the efficiency and effectiveness of its working methods under review, the Director noted that timely reporting and timely consideration of reports received were one aspect of the Convention's full implementation at the national level. At the current session, the Committee would consider options for effective consideration of reports. A second aspect of enhanced implementation at the national level concerned the common efforts of all treaty bodies to ensure that reporting did indeed fulfil that purpose. In follow-up to the second inter-committee meeting, held in June 2003, the Committee would have an opportunity to discuss with a representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights steps taken by the secretariat to implement the recommendations

of that meeting in relation to draft guidelines for an expanded core document for consideration by each Committee and adoption by the third inter-committee meeting in 2004, and in relation to greater harmonization of the reporting guidelines for each treaty body.

21. The Director concluded by reviewing the Committee's work for its thirtieth session. It would consider the initial reports of two States parties, Bhutan and Kuwait, as well as the periodic reports of six States parties, namely Belarus, Ethiopia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and Nepal. The Committee would continue its work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and review its working methods, including the option of meeting in parallel working groups for consideration of periodic reports (see CEDAW/C/2004/I/4 and Add.1 and 2). The Committee was planning to adopt general recommendation No. 25 with regard to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on temporary special measures. In accordance with its tradition and practice, the Committee would meet with non-governmental organizations and with representatives of entities of the United Nations system to hear information about the implementation of the Convention in the reporting States. The Director assured the Committee of the full support of the Division for the Advancement of Women in its work.

C. Attendance

22. All twenty-three members of the Committee attended the thirtieth session. Ms. _____ attended from _____.

23. A list of the members of the Committee, indicating the duration of their terms of office, appears in annex ___ to the present report.

D. Solemn declaration

24. At the 629th meeting, before assuming her functions, Ms. Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah, who had been nominated by her Government and approved by the Committee, in accordance with article 17.7 of the Convention, to complete the remainder of the term of office of Ms. Akua Kuenyehia, made the solemn declaration provided for under rule 15 of the Committee's rules of procedure.

E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

25. The Committee considered the provisional agenda (CEDAW/C/2004/I/1) at its 629th meeting. The agenda was adopted as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Solemn declaration by a new member of the Committee.
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
4. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-ninth and the thirtieth 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.
8. Activities of the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
9. Provisional agenda for the thirty-first session.
10. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its thirtieth session.

F. Report of the pre-session working group

26. At its ninth session, the Committee decided to convene a pre-session working group for five days prior to each session to prepare lists of issues and questions relating to the periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the subsequent session. The pre-session working group for the thirtieth session of the Committee met from 21 to 25 July 2003.

27. The following members, representing different regional groups, participated in the working group: Ms. Huguette Bokpe Gnacadja (Africa), Ms. Aída González (Latin America and the Caribbean), Ms. Salma Khan (Asia), Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic (Eastern Europe) and Ms. Regina Tavares da Silva (Western European). The pre-session working group elected Ms. Aída González as its Chairperson.

28. The working group prepared lists of issues and questions relating to the reports of the following States parties: Belarus, Ethiopia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Nigeria.

29. At the 629th meeting, Ms. Aída González introduced the report of the pre-session working group (see CEDAW/PSWG/2004/I/CRP.1 and 2 and Add.1-5).

G. Organization of work

30. At the 629th session, the Chief of the Women's Rights Section, Division for the Advancement of Women, introduced item 6, implementation of article 21 of the Convention, and item 7, ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee. Under item 6, two specialized agencies, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had submitted reports in accordance with article 22 of the Convention (CEDAW/C/2004/I/1 and Add.1 and 3). The text of a revised draft general recommendation on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, prepared by the Committee's drafting group was available to members of the Committee (CEDAW/C/2004/I/WP.1). Under item 7, a report on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/2004/I/4) summarized relevant developments since the Committee's previous session. Addendum 1 to that report contained an overview of the Committee's current working methods. Addendum 2

responded to the Committee's request to prepare, for discussion at the thirtieth session, a note on the implications and possible modalities of the consideration of reports of States parties in two parallel working groups or chambers. Also before the Committee was a report on the status of submission of reports by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, including a list of reports that had been submitted but not yet considered by the Committee. Those matters would be taken up by the Committee as a Working Group of the Whole.

31. At the 629th session, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang (Republic of Korea), addressed the Committee.

III. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions

32. The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Feride Acar, thanked Mr. Ocampo, Ms. King and Ms. Hannan for their opening statements. She extended a warm welcome to Ms. Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah, who would be completing the term of office of Ms. Akua Kuenyehia, who had been elected to the International Criminal Court.

33. The Chairperson briefed the Committee on her attendance at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in October 2003, when she addressed the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The participation of the Committee Chairperson in the work of the General Assembly constituted an important element in linking the work of the treaty Committee with the political processes of the United Nations. It was an important reaffirmation that policy and treaty-based approaches to gender equality and the advancement of women must go hand in hand for true and sustainable progress to be achieved. As the goal of universal ratification of the Convention remained to be achieved, the annual participation of the Committee Chairperson in the General Assembly was a much needed reminder for all States parties of commitments to universal ratification, by the year 2000, of the Convention. Member States had agreed to that goal at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, and reaffirmed it at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

34. The Chairperson indicated that she had briefed the General Assembly about the work of the Committee under article 18 of the Convention, and had noted some of the common trends and challenges the Committee had identified during the consideration of reports and the Committee's recommendations thereon. She had referred to the Committee's concern about the status of women's human rights, as enshrined under the Convention, in the post-war era in Iraq, a State party to the Convention. She had informed the Assembly about the Committee's concern in relation to the non-reporting by States parties, and the steps taken by the Committee to address those delays, including her letter to those 29 States parties whose initial reports were five years overdue on 18 July 2003, and her letter to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to encourage him to support States parties in the implementation of their reporting obligations. She had highlighted before the Assembly the Committee's continuing commitment to enhancing its working methods, including the Committee's decision to examine, at its thirtieth session, the option of considering periodic reports in parallel working groups rather than in plenary.

35. The Chairperson drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that a total of 33 States parties were awaiting consideration of their reports. Since the closing of the twenty-ninth session in July, 14 States had submitted their reports. That number was sufficient to fill sessions until January 2006, not taking into account additional reports that would be received. Reporting States parties would have to wait an average of two to two-and-a-half years after submission for their reports to be considered by the Committee, and the Chairperson underlined the potentially discouraging impact of that lag in State party reporting.

36. Turning to other activities, the Chairperson reported that, in October 2003, she had briefed a group of parliamentarians in a day-long session on the Convention and its reporting process that had been organized by the Division and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva. The Handbook for Parliamentarians was being translated into the other official languages of the United Nations. It had been translated into Turkish and would be launched shortly in Ankara.

37. The Chairperson delivered a keynote address at a meeting in Dubrovnik, co-hosted by the Government of Croatia and UNIFEM, on 25 and 26 October, on implementation of the Convention in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe. She commended Ms. Šimonovic who, together with Ms. Popescu and Ms. Morvai, had conceptualized the meeting itself, as well as the preparatory work that had been undertaken at the national level in the six participating countries. The meeting in Dubrovnik had been a gratifying experience as it had provided a platform for an effective review and evaluation of some provisions of the Convention, and had constituted an example of cooperation among the different United Nations bodies (the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNIFEM) mandated to address women's human rights and the advancement of women at various levels. She congratulated the organizers and the participants for the success of the effort and looked forward to similar activities in other regions towards ensuring the full implementation of the Convention. The Chairperson expressed her hope that the results of the Dubrovnik meeting would now form a solid basis for an institutional framework for continuing attention to the Convention and its implementation in the six participating countries.

38. In her personal capacity, the Chairperson had participated in, and delivered the keynote addresses in symposiums entitled "Policy dialogue on gender equality 2003", organized by the Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office of Japan, in Tokyo and Okiyama. In the wake of the consideration of Japan's fourth and fifth periodic reports by the Committee in July 2003, the occasion had been a timely and effective opportunity to discuss women's human rights from a global perspective and review international commitments and national action in the presence of large groups of participants from both, Government and civil society, in Japan. She was gratified to observe that the provisions of the Convention and the work of the Committee were held in high esteem and helped provide guidelines for efforts to achieve gender equality in Japan.

39. The Chairperson had also participated in a two-day brainstorming session convened by Ms. Yakin Ertürk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, in Istanbul, on 7 and 8 December, which had brought together representatives of several non-governmental organizations. The participation of representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNIFEM and the Division for the Advancement of Women in that meeting had been an important

reflection of the commitment on the part of those three entities to support the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, especially at a time of notable difficulties in finding consensus at the global level for further policy development in relation to violence against women. Her own participation had allowed her to bring to the discussion the critical work done by the Committee in relation to violence against women and to highlight some of the challenges the Committee had identified through its work. The Special Rapporteur had accepted her invitation to meet with the Committee during the thirtieth session.

40. Once the Loya Jirga in Afghanistan had adopted a new Constitution which included an explicit guarantee of the equal rights of women and men, the Chairperson had issued a statement to the press applauding that historic achievement, and pledging support to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Convention in Afghanistan.

41. The year 2004 would mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention. The occasion should be used to convey to the international community the achievements in protecting and promoting women's human rights and the obstacles that still lay ahead before reaching the goal of universal implementation of the principles of the Convention. Likewise, it should be used to enhance the voice and visibility of the Committee as the legally mandated international "watchdog" of women's human rights. Based on preliminary consultations with the secretariat, plans would be made for an international event to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, in October 2004.
