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**INTRODUCTION OF THE ARUBAN PART OF THE REPORT
OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

by

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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Item: Consideration of the FOURTH REPORT OF ARUBA

Re: CEDAW/C/NLD/4/Add.1

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor for me to introduce to you on behalf of the Government of Aruba the Aruban part of the report.

Please allow me to introduce the other member of the Aruban delegation, Ms. Olivia Croes, Advisor Legal Affairs and Treaties Division at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Chairperson of the intergovernmental Aruban Human Rights Committee.

The Aruban delegation is relatively small considering the broad scope of the Convention. Nevertheless, we sincerely hope that we will be able to answer as many questions and concerns possible that the Committee has regarding Aruba's fourth report.

Since the writing of the report there have been a number of new developments in Aruba relating to the implementation of the Convention, which we would like to share with the Committee.

The government's social policy aims at improving the socioeconomic position of vulnerable groups in society, including women. To this end, it focuses on improving existing social support networks by decentralizing government services and strengthening civil society organizations. The aim is to cater more adequately to the needs of less privileged and vulnerable groups in society, thereby encouraging their participation in society.

In this regard the government has designed a program to strengthen women's position. The primary focus has been to re-integrate specifically

welfare recipients, the majority of which are women, in the labor market. The drafting of legislation, which creates guidelines and supports programs for childcare, will also support women's integration in the labor market. It is also important to mention that maternity leave in the private sector has been extended to 12 weeks, and the benefit increased to 100%, making it equal to the public sector. New legislation will also provide special measures to support working women who breastfeed. Furthermore, the construction of affordable housing and the introduction of a special fund facilitating low-income people to rent and buy their own house has made it possible for more women to have access to affordable housing.

The National Bureau of Women's Affairs has continued to focus on awareness raising of gender equality concerns at different levels. A variety of projects have been organized to this end at the community level and in schools. At the community level, empowerment training focused on improving women's status and gender awareness training was given to the media in order to tackle gender stereotyping. At the school level, lectures on gender issues were given to support the new curriculum, which includes an approach to prevent stereotyping and to encourage emancipatory education.

The intention of the government is to strengthen the national machinery in order to mainstream gender concerns across the board. Recently, it was decided to merge the Bureau of Women's Affairs with the new Human Rights Coordination Center at the Department of Social Affairs thereby focusing on a rights based approach in programming. The government has earmarked Afl. 750.000 (US\$ 417,000) for 2006-2009 to strengthen gender mainstreaming and rights based programming.

I am also happy to mention that the Facultative Protocol to the CEDAW Convention became effective for Aruba in August 2002 as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as of October 2006.

In January 2002 the New Civil Code of Aruba came into force, abolishing a large number of discriminatory provisions relevant to this Convention.

Also, in August 2003, new legislation on sexual offences entered into force for Aruba, amending, extending or introducing penalties for sexual offences and a number of other related provisions. The most important changes in this regard were the extension of the right of complaint to a larger group and the extension of the period for reporting sexual assaults. The new law also contains provisions on marital rape, trade in and possession and distribution of child pornography, forced prostitution and stalking. Under the terms of the new law, incitement to child prostitution carries a heavier penalty, as does trafficking in children. The new law also increases the sentence on the ban of brothels in case of minors and forced prostitution. Furthermore, the provision on the prohibition of trafficking in women has been changed to a prohibition on trafficking in human beings. Also legislation implementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Protocols has been introduced, extending the terms on which human trafficking is punishable and making human smuggling a punishable offence.

Finally, it is important to mention that a Victim Support Center was established in August 2005. The center has specifically employed a female

social worker in order to facilitate assistance to women who are victims of crimes. They can receive emotional and legal support through the center.

The government has adopted and will continue to adopt the necessary measures to guarantee a more just society based on gender equity. Any comments or recommendations from the Committee will help us in this important task and will receive proper attention. We look forward to a fruitful dialogue with the Committee.

I thank you for your attention.