

CLOSING REMARKS

BY

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Forty-first session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Dear Colleagues

We have thus come to the end of the forty-first session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It is customary for the Chairperson to sum up the work completed and out come achieved, as well as to offer reflections on our proceedings.

In many respects, this forty-first session was especially remarkable. The workload was enormous and on top of that we lost one working day. Yet, we managed to accomplish all of the work that was before us. We considered the periodic reports of eight States parties namely: Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, and Yemen, and had very successful constructive dialogues with the States parties.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend my sincere appreciation and congratulations to the eight States parties for their reports, the written responses to the lists of issues and questions of the Committee, their oral presentations and responses to the questions and comments of the Committee experts during the constructive dialogue. This dialogue, and the Committee's observations, will provide a solid basis for further work by all States parties in order to enhance their implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol to achieve full enjoyment by women of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Dear Colleagues

During these three weeks, the Committee has discussed continuing discrimination against women in different fields, the persistence of stereotypes, gender pay gap, problems faced by rural women, and specific laws and provisions which discriminate against women and girls. As always, we have paid attention to each of these issues and elaborated recommendations for narrowing and closing gender equality gaps. In many instances, we have highlighted the obligations of the States parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. We have created additional momentum for the States parties to enact or amend legislation, discriminatory penal and criminal laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women, and to raise public awareness of this issue, in line with the Secretary-General's campaign to confront this profound violation. We have also stressed the importance of States parties introducing temporary special measures provided for in article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention and explained in general recommendation 25 to accelerate the realization of the principle of equality between women and men.

The high level of attendance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) once again made a significant contribution to our work and I sincerely encourage them to continue with their advocacy for the promotion and protection of women's human rights and the implementation of the Convention. I also wish to stress the important role which the United Nations entities play in supporting the implementation of the Convention and the work of the Committee. National human rights institutions also have a significant role to play and we have had the benefit of inputs from several during this session. I particularly encourage more national human rights institutions to follow the Committee's work.

Dear Colleagues

In addition to adopting eight concluding observations, we have made progress on two general recommendations which the Committee is currently preparing, namely on migrant women and on article 2 of the Convention. We also have taken action on matters relating to the Optional Protocol and reviewed the results of the seventh inter-committee meeting and the twentieth meeting of chairpersons. Significantly, we have already been able to share the outcome of this session in an informal exchange of views with States parties to the Convention. This was an excellent opportunity to highlight the Committee's new Convention-specific reporting guidelines, its statement on national human rights institutions and policy on over-due reports. Where the latter is concerned, the Committee has decided to send reminders with specific time-lines for report submission to States parties whose initial reports are five years overdue (Afghanistan, Djibouti and Solomon Islands and whose periodic reports are ten years overdue (Bulgaria, Panama, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Zimbabwe). At the same time, we encouraged States parties to take advantage of the possibility of the technical and advisory services available through OHCHR, DAW and UNIFEM. I encourage all NGOs and entities of the United Nations system to offer their support to these States parties so that all overdue reports can be prepared in a timely manner, and through a consultative process. We also met with a representative of the Division for the Advancement of Women, who briefed us on the Secretary-General's Campaign to eliminate violence against women and on progress towards developing a coordinated data base on violence against women as well as indicators to measure such violence. We also met with senior members of UNICEF to discuss coordination between our Committee and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

With our concluding observations that we have adopted, and the momentum gathered in the process of preparation of the State party reports and shadow reports, all these stakeholders now have a strong basis for the next phase of Convention implementation, it is of critical importance that this opportunity is used to the maximum extent. I therefore call on the NGOs, and the entities of the United Nations to continue their full and effective support to all efforts of follow-up and implementation. In this context, I am pleased to inform you that during this session the Committee has worked hard to make its concluding observations more concrete and specific. It has also introduced a follow-up procedure and adopted titles, or subject headings, to make its concluding

observations more user-friendly and implementable. We look forward to enhanced progress in implementation.

Dear Colleagues

Allow me to pay a special tribute to the staff that has supported us: OHCHR Geneva and New York, the interpreters, conference services, precis writers and public information officers.

In closing, I wish you all a safe journey home and I look forward to seeing you at the forty-second session in Geneva.

The forty-first session has come to the end.

Thank you all.