

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**by**  
**Ms. Silvia Pimentel**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against**  
**Women**  
**at the**  
**Forty-ninth session**

**11 July 2011**

**Excellencies**  
**Distinguished colleagues**  
**Ladies and Gentleman**

I am very pleased to welcome you to United Nations Headquarters in New York for the forty-ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The number of States parties to the Convention is now 187. Nauru acceded to the Convention on 20 May 2011. I am happy to report that since our last session in January 2011, Albania, the Czech Republic, Nauru and Kuwait deposited their instruments of acceptance to the amendment to the Convention, which currently has 64 Contracting States, and Ghana and the Seychelles have deposited instruments of ratification to the Optional Protocol on 3

February and 1 March, respectively. There are now 102 States parties to the Optional Protocol. Both the Bahamas and Morocco withdrew reservations to the Convention as well.

### **Distinguished Colleagues,**

It has been more than four months since the forty-eighth session ended. I wish to highlight some of the activities that I have engaged in as Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee and other issues that may be of interest to the Committee.

Immediately following the forty-eighth session, I travelled to New York to address the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at its opening meeting on 22 February. The CEDAW Secretariat prepared a report on the results of the forty-sixth, forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions of the Committee that was provided to the Commission. Both the advanced, unedited version of the report and my address to the Commission have been previously circulated to the Committee by e-mail. Ms. Bailey was also present at the fifty-session of the CSW where she presented a paper on “Access and Participation of Girls in Education, Training, Science and Technology for the Promotion of Women’s Equal Access to Decent Work.”

I have also transmitted the Committee’s Report to the General Assembly on its forty-sixth, forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions. I would also like to mention

that the Report of the Secretary-General on the Status of the CEDAW Convention covering the period August 2009 to July 2011 has been finalized and transmitted to the General Assembly. I want to thank the Secretariat for preparing these three extensive reports.

While in New York, I also met with Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of UN Women. Both Ms. Rasekh and Ms. Simonovic joined me. In addition, Ms. Isha Dyfan, the Chief of the Women's Human Rights and Gender Section, and Ms. Gaynel Curry, Gender and Women's Rights Advisor from OHCHR also attended the meeting. I was very satisfied with the meeting during which we discussed ways and means to further cooperation and coordination between our organizations to strengthen national capacity and develop new strategies for gender equality and the advancement of women based upon our Convention. We also spoke about input by CEDAW into UN Women's strategic plan. Our input to UN Women's strategic plan was formally communicated to Ms. Bachelet by letter dated 11 April.

With respect to UN Women, it has since wrapped up its global listening tour on advice about how to shape the group's first strategic plan. Under the new strategic plan, UN Women's offices at country level will be providing on-demand support to governments to report to CEDAW. UN Women hopes to develop a strong programme of technical assistance that would help the country offices to respond to government requests. These programmes would involve

expert missions, including CEDAW members, for meetings that would guide governments in setting-up a multi-sectoral process to draft reports; expert missions, including CEDAW members, to conduct “mock sessions” to prepare the government to engage in the constructive dialogue with the Committee; and internet access to comprehensive guidance on how to support both the reporting process and implementation of the Committee’s concluding observations.

I was also invited to present a paper on “Women’s Leadership for Citizen’s Democracy” at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington, DC. This was the first hemispheric forum on the subject and was held by OAS jointly with UN Women and the Ibero-American General Secretariat.

I additionally attended the 12<sup>th</sup> Inter-Committee Meeting from 27 to 29 June and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Chairpersons from 30 June to 1 July along with Ms. Halperin-Kaddari. These meetings focused on, *inter alia*, the structure of the dialogue between States parties and the treaty bodies, the structure and length of concluding observations, the mode of interaction of treaty bodies with stakeholders, and the report of the Inter-Committee Meeting working group on follow-up to concluding observations, decisions on individual complaints and inquiries, and the report on the working methods of the human rights treaty bodies relating to the State party reporting process. All of the related documents will be circulated during this session.

Committee Members have also been involved in CEDAW related activities as well as other panel discussions and seminars relating to women's issues in both their capacity as members of the CEDAW Committee and in their personal capacities.

Ms. Gabr and Ms. Zerdani participated in a CEDAW workshop in Rabat, Morocco from 15 to 16 March sponsored by UN Women and the Economic Commission for Africa. In addition to covering the Convention, the issue of withdrawing reservations and the importance of becoming party to the Optional Protocol, the workshop also focused on the political involvement of women in North Africa. Following the workshop, I sent letters to both the Governments of Egypt and Tunisia highlighting the concerns of the Committee with respect to women's rights and involvement in the reform process following the political developments in both countries. I am pleased to inform you that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt replied stating that Egypt stands ready to take the necessary steps to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as enhance their role in the reform process. These letters were circulated intersessionally.

Ms. Bailey also presented a paper at the Third Meeting of the Conference of States parties to the Mechanism to Follow-up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women which was held from 24 to 25 March in Guatemala.

Ms. Popescu participated in a capacity-building seminar for parliamentarians in Burkina Faso on Parliament's role with respect to implementation of the CEDAW Convention and follow-up to concluding observations of the Committee. She also participated in a regional seminar for parliamentarians of western and central African countries on legislation on violence against women and girls. Both seminars were organized by the International Parliamentary Union and the National Assembly of Burkina Faso at the end of March.

Also in March, OHCHR organized a regional workshop on follow-up to the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review and recommendations of other human rights mechanisms in Brussels. Ms. Simonovic participated on the panel addressing treaty bodies and follow-up. She also attended a technical consultation for States parties in Sion on 12 and 13 May. Ms. Simonovic participated on the panel covering State party reporting. The High Commissioner was also present. Her closing remarks, which highlighted the main points of discussion, were circulated intersessionally to Committee members. Ms. Simonovic additionally was invited to participate in an expert meeting on preventing statelessness among children on 23 and 24 May, organized by UNHCR and the Open Society Initiative.

Ms. Patten was invited to participate in the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan from 7 to 9 April, organized by the Government of Azerbaijan,

UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the Council of Europe, Council of Europe North-South Center and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Ms. Patten was also recently in Xian, China for a CEDAW training held from 27 to 29 June.

Ms. Neubauer was invited by the UN Women office in Belgrade, Serbia, as a CEDAW expert, to an event organized on 10 March 2011 at the National Parliament, aimed to enhance the knowledge among the members of the Council for Gender Equality and the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, representatives of NGOs and other stakeholders about CEDAW, the reporting process, and how this process and the Committee's concluding observations could be best used for advocacy and for keeping institutions accountable for obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Upon invitation by the UN Women Sub-Regional Programme Office in Almaty and the UN Women Programme Office in the Republic of Moldova, Ms. Neubauer also provided expert advice to enhance implementation of the Convention at the national level, to promote the Optional Protocol, and to contribute to the finalization of the 4th and 5th combined State report under CEDAW as well as to support the UN Women Moldova team in furthering the agenda of women's human rights and gender equality in the context of on-going preparation of UN Development Assistance Framework for 2013-2017. Ms. Neubauer met with many high level officials and her visit received impressive media coverage.

Based on the initiative of Ms. Ameline and upon invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, Ms. Neubauer and Ms. Ameline participated at a workshop on "*CEDAW in the European Union*" held on 19 April 2011, which brought together representatives of the European Union institutions, international and European human rights and women's NGOs and the French Government.

In June 2011, Ms. Neubauer prepared a briefing paper for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament on "*How could the CEDAW Convention be implemented in the EU legal framework?*". The briefing paper serves as a basis for a forthcoming discussion in FEMM on action that the Committee might initiate in order to enhance the role of CEDAW in future gender equality policy development and implementation in the European Union.

Ms. Jahan was invited to participate in a workshop on gender, nutrition and the right to food on 20 May at the University of Hohenheim, in Stuttgart, Germany organized by FIAN International (FoodFirst Information and Action Network) with the support of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food. In her presentation, Ms. Jahan highlighted the broader issue of gender discrimination and inequality as having implications for the realisation of women's right to food, noting that women and girls are more severely affected not only in the community or state, but also within their own households when food sources are threatened. At the meeting, it was also noted that the



Convention does not adequately addressed women's right to food, and it was suggested that the Committee may wish to keep this in mind in its concluding observations or could possibly consider a general recommendation in this regard.

Ms. Awori was invited by the Women's Rights and Gender Section and the Rule of Law Section of OHCHR to speak at an expert meeting on gender and witness and victim protection on 26 to 27 May, where she spoke about the investigation process, the judicial process and legal reform in the context of witness and victim protection, using the Gujarat massacre as an example.

Ms. Rasekh was invited by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to participate in a discussion at the Human Rights Council on 10 June relating to conflict-related violence against women. Ms. Rasekh and Ms. Simonovic also briefed the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice on 10 June. I also sent letters to the Working Group members, some of whom are former CEDAW members, congratulating them on their appointments and inviting them to meet with the Committee at our October session. (The members are Ms. Emma Aouij, Ms. Mercedes Barquet, Ms. Kamala Chandrakirana, Ms. Frances Raday and Ms. Eleonora Zielinska).

Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla was invited by UN Women to participate in a roundtable discussion in Cairo, Egypt on women's participation in democratic transitions in Latin America.

Ms. Schulz participated in a round table discussion entitled "Celebrating Women's Rights : Higher Education as the Pathway to Gender Equality and Decent Work", organized by the Committee on the Status of Women on 8 March in commemoration of International Women's Day 2011. She also participated in a round table discussion for the launching of the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights on 6 May. Ms. Schulz also met with representatives of IWRAW-Asia Pacific in Kuala Lumpur on 1 June.

I would kindly ask those Committee members who participated in panel discussions, seminars and in expert meetings during these past few months to please provide copies of your statements to the Secretariat so that they can be circulated to the Committee during the session.

### **Distinguished Colleagues,**

We have a very full, but interesting agenda during this session. The Committee will consider eighth periodic reports. During the first week, the Committee will consider the reports of Costa Rica, Zambia, Italy and Ethiopia, and during the second week, the Committee will take-up the reports of the Republic of Korea, Nepal, Djibouti and Singapore.

The Committee will also consider cases under the Optional Protocol to the Convention and discuss various issues, such as the draft general recommendation on the economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution, the

draft joint CEDAW/CRC general recommendation on harmful practices and the draft general recommendation on access to justice. The Committee is also holding a general consultation on the draft general recommendation on women in armed conflict and post conflict situations. A number of impressive speakers will kick-off the discussion and it is expected that input will be received from a broad array of stakeholders.

The Committee will also consider reports and information received under its follow-up procedure to concluding observations. We will also meet with many non-governmental organizations, representatives of national human rights institutions and parts of the UN family. I would like to pay particular tribute to these stakeholders who provide such valuable input into our work.

### **Colleagues and friends,**

At our last session, we formally inducted new members to the Committee, however, one new member was unable to attend. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome, on behalf of the entire Committee, to Ms. Maria Helena Lopes de Jesus Pires of Timor-Leste, who will be inducted at this session.

I also would like to convey that Ms. Jaising informed me that she will not be able to attend this session.

At this juncture, I would also be delighted to hear from Committee members who have represented the

Committee at official meetings or undertaken work related to the activities of the Committee.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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