

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

**1 October 2012**

**Excellencies**  
**Distinguished colleagues**  
**Ladies and gentleman**

I am very pleased to welcome you to the United Nations Office at Geneva for the fifty-third session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. As you are aware, 2012 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Committee's work for the advancement of women, and we have a very special commemorative event planned on 18 October in the afternoon organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Organization of the Francophonie.

It has been less than two months since our last session ended and I wish to update you on the status of the Convention and Optional Protocol, and also 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.

Turning to the Convention, I would like to report that the number of States parties remains at 187. On 18 July 2012, Thailand withdrew its reservation to article 16 of the Convention on matters relating to marriage and family relations. The amendment to the Convention currently has 66 Contracting States. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol also remains at 104.

Following the fifty-second session, I attended a national forum relating to violence against women on 15 August 2012 which had as its theme – 6 years after the Maria da Penha Law on domestic and family violence, which was held in the State of Paraiba in Brazil. My speech focused on the CEDAW Convention as the basis to empower women to address in a holistic way the problem of domestic violence, as well as General Recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. On 27 August 2012, I spoke at a major event in San Paulo entitled “Women Who Build” where I focused on the Convention and the general recommendations as vital tools to strengthen women’s civil and political participation in building a better society.

I am also currently writing an introduction to a book that will be launched at the International Symposium Against Trafficking in Person in October, which will be held at the Federal Regional Court in San Paulo. The Introduction will of course highlight the CEDAW

Convention and other human rights treaties. Lastly, I am also rewriting in Portuguese an article which was part of a book entitled “The Circle of Empowerment – Twenty-five Years of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women” produced by Ms. Hanna Beate Schopp-Shilling and Mr. Cess Flinterman.

## **Distinguished Colleagues,**

We have a very full, but interesting agenda during this session. The Committee will consider a total of five State parties’ reports. Regrettably, I note that the Government of Serbia informed the secretariat that it would not be in a position to present its report at this session, as scheduled due to very recent changes in the Government. During the first week, the Committee will consider the reports of Chile, Togo and Equatorial Guinea in that order. During the second week, the Committee will take up the reports of Comoros and Turkmenistan.

The Committee will also consider cases under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. It is noted that at the Committee’s fifty-second session in New York, the Committee adopted one recommendation in relation to the admissibility and merits of a communication, *Isatou Jallow v. Bulgaria*.

*Isatou Jallow v. Bulgaria* was a communication submitted by a Gambian woman and her minor daughter living in Bulgaria, who were victims of domestic violence. She claimed that the State party did not provide her and her husband with the same protection from domestic violence, as her husband’s application under the national legislation against domestic

violence was duly considered while hers was ignored. The Committee found that the author's allegations of domestic violence were not investigated in violation of article 2, paragraphs (d) and (e), read in conjunction with articles 1 and 3 of the Convention; that the State party failed to take all appropriate measures under article 5, paragraph (a), and article 16, paragraphs 1 (c), (d), and (f) of the Convention when an emergency protection order that separated the author from her daughter was issued by a court without due consideration of her claim that she and her daughter were in need of protection against domestic violence; and that proceedings before the court were unreasonably prolonged and violated the State party's obligation under article 2, paragraphs (b) and (c), read in conjunction with articles 1 and 3, of the Convention.

The Committee will additionally review the draft general recommendation on the economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution with a view towards its adoption at this session. The Committee will also be briefed on progress with respect to several other draft general recommendations, including the CEDAW/CRC joint general recommendation on harmful practices, the general recommendation of the human rights of women in conflict and post-conflict and the general recommendation on access to justice. It is expected that the concept note for the general recommendation on access to justice will be endorsed by the Committee at this session so that arrangements can proceed with the day of general discussion which is tentatively scheduled for February 2013. It is also expected that the concept note relating to the general recommendation on rural women will also be endorsed by the Committee at this session.

The Committee will moreover consider reports and information received under its follow-up procedure to concluding observations, and will also discuss the Committee's working methods together with the report of the High Commissioner on treaty body strengthening. Many of the recommendations contained therein are already part of the Committee's working methods and other recommendations are being considered.

We will furthermore meet with many non-governmental organizations, representatives of national human rights institutions and parts of the UN family and other organizations. I would like to pay particular tribute to these stakeholders who provide such valuable input into our work.

The Committee will moreover meet with the Human Rights Committee and discuss both treaty body strengthening and their respective jurisprudence relating to individual complaints. This is the second meeting with the Human Rights Committee and we welcome the close cooperation with them on areas of mutual interest. The Committee will also meet with the High Commissioner regarding the Committee's July session in New York where UN Women is headquartered and where many NGOS also have their main offices. At the last session, the Committee was informed that the July session would be moved to Geneva for budgetary reasons. The Committee was not consulted on this issue and feels strongly about maintaining

the session in New York and has wide support from civil society in this regard.

**Colleagues and friends,**

I would like to convey that Ms. Jaising informed me that she will not be able to attend this session, and Ms. Popescu will only be able to join us for the second and third weeks of the 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. I would like to kindly remind Committee members to provide copies of all statements to the Secretariat so that they can be circulated to the Committee during the session.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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