

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Thirty-eighth session
14 May to 1 June 2007

AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON ACTIVITIES
UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE THIRTY-SEVENTH AND THIRTY-EIGHTH
SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Distinguished colleagues,

I am happy to present a brief report on my activities since the thirty-seventh session which we adjourned in early February. I will first report about those that I undertook in my capacity as Chairperson, and will also briefly mention some other activities that might be of interest to the Committee.

Let me at the outset recall that after we adjourned, the sad news reached us of the death of Ms Angela King, former Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Let us pay tribute to Ms King, a strong advocate for women's rights whose legacy will stay with us, as we have pointed out in our letter addressed to her family.

Upon the invitation by the Commission on the Status of Women, I represented the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in my capacity as Chairperson at its fifty-first session last March.

As part of the enhanced working methods of the Commission on the Status of Women, I was invited to make a keynote presentation to launch the Commission's general debate on the priority theme entitled "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". This was the first time that the Commission had keynote speakers to launch the debate on the priority theme, and I believe that the invitation to the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination was also a result of our recommendation from the thirty-sixth session on "Input to the Commission on the Status of Women in regard to priority themes." In that recommendation, we suggested that the Committee could contribute an analysis of its consideration of the theme concerned, drawing from our work under the Convention, especially concluding comments and general recommendations.

My keynote address has previously been circulated to experts and is available today, so let me highlight only a few points. I emphasized States parties' general obligations to eliminate discrimination against *all* women, and to do so *without delay, by all appropriate means*. Starting from the fact that violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights that persists in every country, I elaborated on the manner in which the Committee monitors implementation of the Convention pertaining to the girl child under several articles, and especially articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) on stereotypes, article

10 on education, including its link to article 11 on employment, article 12 on health and article 16 on marriage and family relations. I also discussed the Committee's attention to violence against girls and trafficking. Finally, I highlighted the Committee's attention to the impact of measures taken, and the need for adequate data to track progress over time.

In line with the Committee's suggestion that our overall experiences and findings could be conveyed to the Commission, including through participation in any panel discussion organized in conjunction with the consideration of the theme, Committee expert Ms Shanthi Dairiam was invited to participate in a panel on "Capacity building on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes for the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child". Many of the speakers in the general debate referred to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and actions taken by States to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child.

I also made a statement on the main outcomes of the recent sessions of the Committee, the text of which is likewise available to experts. I touched upon the following issues: The Committee's working methods, and in particular its meetings in parallel chambers, the Committee's meeting time, its efforts to enhance reporting by States parties, its work under the Optional Protocol, and the servicing arrangements for the Committee. I highlighted the Committee's request to hold three annual sessions, at least one of which with parallel chambers, beyond the current biennium, as needed, in order for the Committee to efficiently execute its mandate under the Convention.

In addition to these two statements, I had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion co-hosted by the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNICEF on violence against women and children together with an expert of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. I focused on the work of the Committee, in its examination of State party reports, regarding the persistence of various forms and manifestations of violence against women and the girl child around the world. I noted that the Committee consistently voices concerns about States parties' failure to respond adequately and holistically to such violence, and gave a synopsis of the main concerns raised by the Committee. I noted that these issues are also flagged in the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. Referring to the Secretary-General's report before the Commission on the Status of Women on the priority theme, several speakers indicated the desirability of the preparation of a joint general recommendation on the girl child by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Likewise, I participated in a panel discussion on trafficking, co-sponsored by the Council of Europe, where again I took the opportunity to reflect on the work of the Committee under article 6 of the Convention on suppression of trafficking in women.

Let me, at this point, express my appreciation to the Division for the Advancement of Women for the effective support extended to me in my participation in the work of the Commission.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to mention two other activities that might be of interest to you. The first is an expert group meeting on article 2 of the Convention which was organized by IWRAW Asia Pacific, in collaboration with the University of New South Wales, as a contribution towards the Committee's work on a general recommendation on this article. I participated in my capacity as expert of the Committee and member of the working group on the general recommendation on article 2. The meeting explored the possible form and content of such a general recommendation and put forward to the Committee's working group a series of elements and issues that could be usefully addressed. Several other experts also participated, namely the Chair of the Working Group, Mr Flinterman, and Ms Shanthi Dairiam. I am sure the Committee will have an opportunity to hear a more detailed briefing about the outcome of the meeting later in the session.

Lastly, I would like to mention to experts a seminar that took place last week, hosted by the Government of Croatia and organized as part of the Council of Europe campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence. The seminar was part of a series of five regional workshops that are convened by the Council of Europe's Task Force to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, which I have the honour of vice-chairing. The theme of the event in Croatia was on "Men's active participation in combating domestic violence". Participants included representatives from seven Member States of the Council of Europe, invited experts as well as a significant number of national participants from Government, Parliament, the judiciary and civil society. We had a very useful exchange of experiences and of good practices. We were very grateful to you, Ms Mayanja, for your participation in this event, as it underlined the complementarity of the efforts of the United Nations system and those at the regional level. We were also pleased that Ms Brautigam was able to attend and make a presentation on the Secretary-General's study on violence against women and follow-up action thereto.

Dear colleagues,

Thank you very much for your attention. I look forward to any comments or questions that you might have on my report in the course of this session, during which we will examine initial reports of eight States parties, and start a constructive dialogue with them on the implementation of the Convention.