

Closing remarks
by
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Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
at the thirty-eighth session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
New York, 1 June 2007

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished members of the Committee
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to congratulate you, Madam Chairperson, and all the members of the Committee on the successful completion of the work of the thirty-eight session. You have done so thanks to the commitment and hard work of all experts, under the able stewardship of the Bureau and guided by you, Madame Chairperson. You have had a productive session and once again shown your dedication and commitment to discharge effectively all the responsibilities entrusted to you under the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Madam Chairperson,

You have held successful constructive dialogues with eight States parties, namely: Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Syrian Arab Republic and Vanuatu. All these States reported for the first time. You have studied voluminous materials submitted by the respective States parties, by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. You have engaged in a constructive dialogue with representatives of the States parties that has further clarified the real situation of women, and the status of compliance with the Convention. Each of the reporting States was examined with care, and your many diverse and sometimes difficult questions and comments not only reflected your detailed knowledge but also provided a framework for better implementation of the Convention at the national level in the reporting States. Your concluding comments will provide a solid basis for further work by all States parties to enhance women's enjoyment of their human rights.

I extend my sincere appreciation to these States parties for their reports, the responses to the lists of issues and questions of the Committee and for their willingness to hold a constructive dialogue with the members of the Committee about the status of the implementation of the Convention.

In accordance with your working methods, you examined the status of implementation under each of the articles. You assessed the constitutional and legal frameworks in place, and their relationship to the Convention. You examined the status of the Convention in the domestic legal system of reporting States, and its application and enforceability, as well as possible conflicts between Convention provisions and statutory, customary and religious laws.

Other areas examined included the continuing prevalence of many forms of manifestations of violence against women, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in women and girls. While a number of States have in place temporary special measures, in most of the States considered at this session, women's participation in public life remains low. You highlighted that one of the reporting States, Mozambique, has a woman Prime Minister, and also ranks among the top ten countries in the world in terms of women Parliamentarians.

You drew attention to lack of data disaggregated by sex, persistence of stereotypical attitudes, women's disadvantages in the labour market and in the educational field, and poor health. You have also given careful attention to the situation of vulnerable groups of women, in particular rural women. In all instances, you have provided detailed guidance to States parties on measures to be taken to eliminate discrimination and accelerate realization of women's de facto equality, as required by the Convention.

United Nations entities and specialized agencies once again contributed valuable information to the reporting process, as did non-governmental organizations.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee

You have confirmed your previous request for extension of meeting time to three annual sessions, as a permanent measure, as well as the need for parallel chambers during one annual session in 2008 and 2009 each, as a further temporary measure to eliminate the remaining backlog of reports awaiting consideration. You have discussed aspects of your working methods in your continuing efforts to keep them as efficient and effective as possible and continued discussion on both general recommendations on article 2 and on migrant women. You have also continued to undertake work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Madam Chairperson

We are very heartened by the avid interest the Committee has shown in the United Nations reform processes as they pertain to gender equality and empowerment of women. I was very grateful for the opportunity to update you on the current status of proposals and intergovernmental discussion, and appreciated your important and thoughtful comments. The Secretary-General has entrusted his Deputy, Ms Asha Rose Migiro to

oversee the system-wide coherence agenda and to represent the United Nations in intergovernmental consultations on the Panel's recommendations.

Madam Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee

I am grateful to you and the entire Committee for the good work you are doing to promote the human rights of women all over the world. I also take this opportunity to congratulate you Madam Chairperson for your leadership and the excellent manner in which you have conducted this session of the Committee. I would welcome any reflections that you may have on this session, so that we can better support you in the future work of the Committee.

Some of you will stay on for a few more days: the five members of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol will continue to deliberate the cases. You, Madam Chairperson, and two Committee members will be attending the sixth Inter-Committee meeting and the Meeting of Chairpersons in June 2007, in Geneva. This will be another opportunity to bring to bear the Committee's views within the human rights treaty bodies system.

I wish you, Madam Chairperson and all members of the Committee a safe journey home. I sincerely hope that you will find time to rest before we will welcome you back to New York for the 39th session, in parallel chambers, in July.

Thank you very much.