

**Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Forty-ninth session**  
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**Statement by**  
**Ms. Rosario G. Manalo, Chairperson,**  
**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Chairperson,  
Excellencies,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women at the opening of this crucial session. I am honoured that this important gathering of Member States and other stakeholders committed to achieving gender equality acknowledges in this visible manner the critical role of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the protection and promotion of the human rights of women.

The forty-ninth session of the Commission will conduct a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly of 2000. These global policy instruments on women's empowerment and gender equality gave unprecedented attention to women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and emphasized the particular role of the Convention in their achievement. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women contributed to both events with assessments of the implementation of the Convention.

It is therefore my pleasure to bring to the attention of the Commission the Committee's statement on the occasion of this 10-year review (contained in document E/CN.6/2005/CRP.1), in which it highlights in particular the important synergies between the implementation of the Platform for Action and the Convention. The Commission's panel discussion later during this session will offer the opportunity to discuss these synergies in detail, and to identify ways in which they can be further enhanced for better national-level implementation of States' legal obligations and political commitments.

The past ten years have seen important advances for women in their pursuit of equality. The Committee congratulates those 35 States that have become party to the Convention since the Beijing Conference. While the total number of States parties now stands at 179, the Committee regrets that this number falls short of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000 called for in the Platform.

The Committee is especially pleased that the Platform's commitment to provide for a right to petition under the Convention was realized in 1999, and congratulates the 71

States that have since become party to the Optional Protocol. Both mechanisms provided for in the Optional Protocol, that is the individual complaints procedure as well as the inquiry procedure, have become operational. The Committee has issued its first decision and views in relation to complaints submitted by individuals under the Optional Protocol, and has completed its first inquiry under article 8. I wish to extend the Committee's appreciation to the States parties who have cooperated with the Committee by submitting their observations and comments. Such cooperation by States parties is not only called for under the Protocol, but an essential prerequisite for the effective functioning of the procedures which States adhere to based on their own sovereign decision.

The Committee encourages all those who have not yet become party to these key instruments for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women to intensify their efforts so that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved soonest, and that the Optional Protocol can become an effective means for redress for women in all States parties.

Chairperson,

Since the Beijing Conference, the Committee has diligently endeavoured to improve its own methods of work to ensure the effectiveness of its constructive dialogue with States parties. It has contributed to the better understanding of the obligations of States parties in relation to various articles and issues of the Convention through general recommendations, most recently on temporary special measures.

At its 32<sup>nd</sup> session in January 2005, the Committee considered the reports of eight States parties. For the first time, initial reports were considered in the same manner as periodic reports so as to enhance the interactive nature of the constructive dialogue. The Committee now prepares lists of issues and questions also for initial reports. I wish to express the Committee's appreciation to States parties who respond to them in a timely manner which greatly contributes to the quality of the dialogue. The Committee continued to receive information from non-governmental organizations on reporting States and extends its appreciation to the important inputs made by these organizations to the implementation and monitoring processes at national and international level. In addition to its statement on the occasion of this 10-year review, the Committee adopted a statement on the gender aspects of the impact of the Tsunami disaster of last December, and called on all those providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to respond fully to the gender-specific needs of women and girls. It has continued work on a general recommendation on article 2, a key provision of the Convention which is expected to further clarify States' general obligations to implement the Convention.

Excellencies,

The increase in States parties to the Convention, the entry into force and use of the Optional Protocol, and States' adherence to their reporting obligations are a source of satisfaction to all who are committed to the rights of women. At the same time, these successes also pose a new set of challenges, in particular for the Committee itself. There

can be no doubt that the Committee's workload has significantly increased in recent years. Notwithstanding the Committee's efforts to streamline and improve its working methods, the point has been reached where the available meeting time no longer allows the Committee to adequately discharge its duties, in a timely manner. The most visible reflection of this constraint is the number of States whose reports await consideration, and which currently stands at 49.

The waiting period of now 3 years until a submitted report is considered creates in itself a disincentive for States to report in a timely manner. Therefore the Committee sought authorization from the General Assembly at its 59<sup>th</sup> session for a solution of the question of its meeting time. I wish to convey the Committee's disappointment with the lack of action on its request, and to inform this gathering of the Committee's intention to discuss this matter further at the upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> session in July 2005, with a view to submitting a further request to the General Assembly for action at its sixtieth session. On behalf of the Committee, I urge the General Assembly at its 60<sup>th</sup> session to consider favourably the Committee's request. That Assembly will undertake a review of the progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration, which also emphasized that gender equality and the empowerment of women are affective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. The Convention remains the most comprehensive international legal instrument for the achievement of gender equality. Effective and timely monitoring of implementation is an integral part in the realization of this goal.

I wish you well in your important deliberations.

Thank you.