

Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-fourth session  
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Statement by Ms. Naéla Gabr  
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Mister Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates, colleagues and friends,

I have the honour to present to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women the main outcomes of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

I am delighted to inform you that since I reported to you last year, there has been one new State party to the Convention, bringing the number of States parties to 186, only eight ratifications away from the goal of universal ratification established in the Platform for Action. The number of ratifications to the Optional Protocol to the Convention has also increased bringing the number of States parties to 99. Acceptances of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time have now reached 56. 68 additional acceptances are now required before the amendment can enter into force. This would allow the Committee to hold, on a permanent basis, three annual sessions of three weeks each, and strengthen the effectiveness of the Committee's work. To that effect, I addressed a letter to States parties which have not yet accepted the amendment to encourage them to do so, giving the Committee more flexibility to carry out its function of monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

Mister Chair,

In relation to its methods of work, and following the decision taken at its 41st session to introduce a follow-up procedure to its concluding observations, the Committee appointed a rapporteur on follow-up to concluding observations and adopted a methodology to assess States parties reports received under this procedure.

With regard to enhancing the participation of NGOs into the Committee's work, the Committee met at its forty-fourth session with NGOs to discuss elements which enriched the Statement of the Committee on the role of non governmental organizations which the Committee adopted in January 2010.

The Committee also adopted at its last session a statement on its relationship with parliamentarians aimed mainly at clarifying and strengthening the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the Convention.

Mister Chair,

At its forty-fourth session, the Committee took advantage of its presence in New York to meet with representatives of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), UNIFEM, and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). These exchanges are of utmost importance in our quest to strengthen the existing linkages between the Committee and these entities, in particular in the context of the actual discussions following the General Assembly decision to create a new gender entity. The Committee will strive to ensure that its interaction with the new entity will be effective for a better implementation of the Convention.

In relation to its interaction with the human rights machinery, the Committee continued to work in cooperation and coordination with other treaty bodies on issues of common concern and interest, including through participation in the annual meetings of chairpersons. Following the establishment of a joint CEDAW/CRC working group at its forty-third session, this working group held its first meeting during the last session with a view to defining a common approach between the two committees in promoting the elimination of harmful traditional practices.

A 2-day seminar on the Protection of Women of Concern to UNHCR, jointly organized by CEDAW and UNHCR, took place ahead of the 44<sup>th</sup> session, in July last year. This event, which marked a milestone in the cooperation between the Committee and UNHCR, focused on areas of collaboration such as the relevance of the Convention to women in situations of displacement, asylum, return, and statelessness.

Mister Chair,

Turning now to the Committees' work on the interpretation of the content of the Convention, the Committee has pursued its work on its two draft general recommendations on older women and on economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution. In that context, it met at its forty-fourth session with NGOs and UN entities to discuss elements which could be included in those two draft general recommendations.

Also at its forty-fourth session, the Committee adopted a statement on gender and climate change to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other

global and national policies and initiatives. This statement was adopted in time for the Summit on Climate Change, which took place on 22 September 2009, and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen last December.

Following the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, the Committee adopted a statement on the situation in Haiti, during its 45<sup>th</sup> session calling, among inter alia, for the inclusion of a gender perspective in all humanitarian relief efforts so that the specific needs of women may be adequately addressed. It also adopted a statement on the inclusion of Afghan Women in the process of Peace building, Security and Reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Mister Chair,

2009 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of its Optional Protocol. Commemorations took place at regional level and culminated in the global celebration at United Nations headquarters in New York on 3 December 2009.

While the Convention's 30th Anniversary was an occasion to celebrate its near-universal ratification, share examples of how the Convention has been used to implement women's human rights and achieve gender equality at national level, it was also the opportunity to acknowledge that more efforts are needed to strengthen its implementation if we want to see results on the ground.

The fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action offers the occasion to further assess progress made, identify challenges in its implementation since the last review in 2010, and share best practices which will contribute to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, hence improving the lives of women worldwide. The Committee seized this occasion to adopt, at its last session, a statement on the 15-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In this statement, the Committee acknowledged progress States have made in realizing the human rights of women, such as the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention, the increased attention paid by States parties to create a legal framework that promotes and protects women's rights, including through the introduction of temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of *de facto* equality between women and men. The Committee however highlighted that full equality for women in law and practice has not been achieved in any country in the world. Women continue to suffer profound and pervasive human rights violations, such as gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, including that most private of private spheres, the family. The Committee is also increasingly concerned at the multiple aspects that discrimination against women encompasses, such as age or disability, and that women at risk, such as women in armed conflicts, migrant and indigenous women, are particularly vulnerable.

Mister Chair,

Throughout its work, the Committee has emphasized the strong linkages between the Convention, the Platform for Action and the Beijing+10 outcomes. The Committee has taken these consensus policy documents into account when considering the reports of States parties, and systematically calls on States parties to implement them. In essence, the Committee considers that these consensus policy documents are complementary and provide guidance for States on the steps they must take to realize their legal obligations set out in the Convention so that women enjoy their rights both in law and fact.

Mister Chair,

Allow me to reiterate the Committee's readiness to continue its cooperation with the Commission in pursuing our common goal of the elimination of discrimination against women. On behalf of the Committee, I thank the Commission for the continued support to our work.

I wish you well in your important deliberations.

Thank you.