



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Eighty-third session**

Summary record of the 1909th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 10 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the eighty-third session of the Committee.

Opening statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Ori** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), said that he wished to commend the Committee for its tireless efforts to address the situation of women and girls in armed conflict, including through the two task forces that it had set up to focus on such situations in Ukraine and Afghanistan. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the Human Rights Service of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan had reported on serious violations of the rights of women in both countries. Ms. Rana had taken part in an enhanced interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan in September 2022, during the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council.

3. At that session, the Council had held its annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective, which had focused on overcoming gender-based barriers to freedom of opinion and expression, freedoms that were essential for women to be able to participate in public life on an equal footing with men. However, their participation continued to be restricted, with gender stereotypes increasingly exacerbated by populist, misogynistic and fundamentalist discourse; women human rights defenders, journalists, politicians and other women active in the public sphere facing stigmatization, harassment and outright attacks; discriminatory legislation, policies, practices and religious and cultural norms fuelling rights violations; and persistent technology-related gender disparities. Also at that session of the Human Rights Council, the Committee's draft general comment on the rights of indigenous women and girls had served as a background document for a panel discussion on the rights of indigenous people in the context of social and economic recovery plans related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and food security.

4. The Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had agreed in June 2022, at their thirty-fourth annual meeting, to establish an eight-year predictable cycle for the State party reporting process, which would hopefully allow for more sustainable resource allocation. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report on the status of the human rights treaty body system to the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly (A/77/279), to implement the predictable schedule, increased resources would be needed for the treaty bodies and their secretariats to ensure adequate support for all mandated activities under the relevant treaties. A collaborative approach, including outreach efforts by treaty body experts in their own countries, would be needed to ensure that Member States provided the necessary support. The Office was currently conducting a costing exercise for the implementation of the Chairs' conclusions for approval by the General Assembly. It should be noted that any additional resources that were approved would not be available until 2024.

5. **Ms. Ameline** said that she welcomed the progress made in the treaty body strengthening process. The strengthening of the treaty bodies should be considered a strategic priority given the direct relationship between the rule of law and peace. She hoped that Member States would consider during the current session of the General Assembly that strengthening of the treaty bodies in general and the Committee in particular to be a major step forward and indeed a strategic priority.

6. **Ms. Gabr** said that the Committee had fought hard to uphold the human rights treaty body system and played a key role in protecting human rights as well as the rights of women, which had an impact on all other human rights. At a time of intractable political and economic crisis, the rights of woman must not be forgotten. The Committee had steadfastly carried out its mandate, and she trusted that it would continue to have the support of States and the Secretariat.

7. **Ms. Haidar** said that respect for human rights was crucial for the rule of law. The treaty bodies played an important role in ensuring that respect, as they monitored the implementation of treaties that were among the few sources of binding human rights

obligations. However, they were being weakened by inadequate resources and logistical challenges, among other factors. Even simple matters such as travelling to Geneva had been made extremely burdensome for treaty body members. The fact that the Committee had to function with ever-decreasing resources caused a great deal of stress for all concerned. Together, the Committee and OHCHR must explore ways of bringing resources back to an acceptable level.

8. **Mr. Safarov** said that he welcomed the attention drawn to the Committee's task forces on Ukraine and on Afghanistan. He also welcomed the reference to gender disparities related to digital technologies and the negative consequences for women and girls, an issue that received insufficient attention. It was important for the treaty body strengthening process to move forward and for there to be more coordination between all the treaty bodies, including, for example, through joint general recommendations.

9. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she welcomed the progress being made in the treaty body strengthening process and the introduction of the eight-year predictable cycle. It was disconcerting that opportunities for women's participation in the public sphere were shrinking because of conflicts, COVID-19 and the economic situation. The current situation should instead be used as an opportunity for strengthening women's economic rights and promoting their inclusion in the public sphere.

10. **Ms. Reddock** said that it was important for there to be communication with stakeholders so that they would begin to see the treaty body system as an ally and a mechanism that could support them, particularly in a challenging global context. She wished to learn more about how OHCHR could support implementation of the Convention at the country level.

11. **Mr. Ori** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that because of ongoing conflicts, the current war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and other global challenges, much of the progress that had been made in women's rights had been undone. Although human rights were considered one of the main pillars of the United Nations, only 4 per cent of the Organization's overall budget was allocated to them. With the cold winter months approaching in a number of countries and the rise in energy prices, it was likely that additional challenges, including increases in the cost of living and inflation, would arise and exacerbate inequalities. The response of the United Nations human rights system would have to be politically astute and targeted. The making of grand proclamations could easily lead to feelings of frustration. The current situation called for persistence, open-mindedness and a search for alternative ideas. During his time in the field, he had seen that the main challenges that States faced in implementing their human rights commitments lay not in meeting reporting requirements but in implementing domestic laws and in changing their practices. Although such changes would not happen overnight, if the United Nations human rights system did not keep advocating for them, they would never happen.

12. **The Chair** said that it was important for the Committee's work to be in step with the efforts being made in societies around the world to fight for women's rights. That struggle started with social and feminist movements. The Committee must work closely with such activist movements if it wished to be effective.

Adoption of the agenda and the organization of work (CEDAW/C/83/1)

13. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the eighty-second and eighty-third sessions of the Committee

14. **The Chair** said that she was pleased to announce that Ms. Xia was present in the meeting room for the first time since her election to the Committee and would be participating in the session. Unfortunately, Ms. Chalal would be unable to participate in the first week of the session.

15. There were 189 States parties to the Convention, and 80 had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1). The amendment would have to be accepted by 126 to enter into force. There were 115 States parties to the Optional Protocol. Since the beginning of the last session, the

Committee had received periodic reports from Bhutan, Canada, Estonia, the Netherlands, Oman and Turkmenistan. All 189 States parties had been informed of the decision taken by the Committee at its previous session to make the simplified reporting procedure the default procedure for the submission of State party reports to the Committee; twelve had indicated in response that they wished to maintain the traditional reporting procedure.

16. During the intersessional period, she had, at the invitation of the Gender Justice Commission of the Peruvian judiciary, participated in the second national competition to identify good practices in judicial decisions in the areas of gender equality and gender-based violence. She had also written an article on the protection of indigenous women's rights under the Convention, which would be published in the journal *La Voz Jurídica*; met with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to discuss the Committee's work and achievements and the draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls; presented a statement on behalf of the Committee to and engaged in an interactive dialogue with Member States at the Third Committee; and met with the non-governmental organization Madre to discuss methods for garnering international support for the implementation of the draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls.

17. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that, together with Ms. Rana, she had participated in a learning exchange jointly organized by the Pacific Community, OHCHR and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Support had been provided to States parties in the South Pacific region who were behind in the submission of their periodic reports, and broad-ranging discussions had been held about the Convention, the role of the Committee and issues affecting women and girls in the region. She hoped that the Committee would consider hosting a similar event in the region.

18. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that she had been asked by the Coalition burkinabé pour le suivi de la mise en oeuvre de la CEDEF, which monitored the implementation of the Convention in Burkina Faso, to take part in a training session on a booklet that it had prepared on 16 articles of the Convention for members of the public who had difficulty reading. She had participated in a review of the Persons and Family Code of Burkina Faso. Unfortunately, nothing had come of the results of the review, which included a proposal for the abolition of polygamy, because of the coup d'état that had recently taken place in the country.

19. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that, at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, she had represented the Committee at a side event on 6 July entitled "Addressing the Challenges of Persons Living with a Rare Disease as a Gender Equality, Human Rights and Equity Priority", organized by the OHCHR, Rare Diseases International and the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations. She had also represented the Committee at the fifteenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 8 July and at a meeting with the Working Group on Women and Girls with Disabilities of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 7 September. In addition, she had taken part in the event entitled "*Gabriela Mistral: 100 años de Desolación, diplomacia, igualdad y derechos de la mujer*" (Gabriela Mistral: 100 years of grief, diplomacy, equality and women's rights), organized by the Embassy of Chile in Spain on 26 September.

20. **Ms. Haidar** said that she had participated in an event held by the International Commission of Jurists: a dialogue on promoting women's access to justice with the national judiciary of Nepal, in particular trial and appeal courts. Following up on the Committee's engagement with the Faith for Rights initiative, she had also represented the Committee at a round table on the gender dimension of religion, which had been attended by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, among others; it had been a good opportunity to share knowledge with other United Nations human rights experts.

21. **Ms. Rana** said that she too had participated in the event in Fiji mentioned by Ms. Stott Despoja, after which, since the country played a leading role in the region, she had met with a senior government official and discussed how States parties from the Asia-Pacific region could be encouraged to report to the Committee effectively and in a timely fashion. On 2 September, she had given opening remarks at the annual conference of the Asian Network of

Women's Shelters, focusing on obligations under the Convention and the need to address resilience and trauma recovery. On 13 September, as part of the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council, she had also participated virtually in an enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, sharing observations from her visit to Kabul in April 2022 and providing an update on the Committee's work on the country. In addition, she had been involved in producing the pre-scoping study entitled "Understanding the Mindset and Behavior of Male Perpetrators of Rape", which found that 89 per cent of rapes were committed by male acquaintances of the victims and 67 per cent of perpetrators were unaware of the consequences and legal implications of rape.

22. **Ms. Ameline** said that, as President of the Institut international des droits de l'Homme et de la paix, she had been involved in conducting a pilot project in eastern Madagascar offering public and private bodies training on the Convention. Since the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux had been among the proposals for the celebration of anniversaries in 2022–2023 to be selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, she had also given a number of talks on women and religion. In addition, she had participated in a meeting with the Foreign Ministry of France on feminist diplomacy.

23. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she had given six talks to organizations in Japan, including the Japanese Association of International Women's Rights and the Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan, on the Committee's work and on gender equality trends and challenges in Japan and throughout the world. She had also participated in training provided by OHCHR and UN-Women for United Nations staff members in the Asia-Pacific region.

24. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that the Government of Georgia had recently been given 12 recommendations to help with its application for European Union membership, one of which was strengthening women's rights and gender equality. She had spent the entire period since the previous session working with the Gender Equality Council on proposed innovations, including a new human rights strategy with a strong gender component, an action plan for economic empowerment and an improved quota system to establish gender parity in political leadership roles. She hoped that Georgia could continue its record of setting an example to the rest of the region on gender issues.

25. **Ms. Gabr** said that, in Egypt, she had organized workshops for prosecutors and judges on the women's rights impact of trafficking in persons. She had also given labour inspectors in the country training on forced labour and women working in shelters training on the protection of trafficking victims. In addition, she had, with support from the International Organization for Migration, distributed medical and sanitary kits to migrants under the care of the Egyptian Red Crescent. Moreover, she had worked with the Government on organizing an event to mark World Day against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July and on developing the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons.

26. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that, on 24 September, she had taken part in a webinar on article 6 of the Convention, organized by Equality Bahamas. She had also given the closing statement to the international conference of Child Helpline International, of which she had been appointed Chair of the Supervisory Board.

27. **Ms. Bethel** said that, on 27 to 29 September, she had participated in a training course on human rights and reporting to the treaty bodies, which had been conducted by OHCHR staff who had travelled to the Bahamas. In addition, she too had taken part in the series of virtual meetings organized by Equality Bahamas, celebrating 30 years since the country had ratified the Convention. Furthermore, she had been working on the draft bill that would criminalize marital rape in the country.

28. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had worked with Anti-Slavery International on assessing the compliance of the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana with national and international law. She had also participated in drafting guidelines on ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa by Ghana; the Committee's general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights had been very useful in that process.

29. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that, on 11 July, she had participated in the IV Congress on Women in Migratory Contexts, organized by the Regional Conference on Migration. At a meeting with the Ixpop collective in Guatemala, she had outlined progress on the Committee's draft general recommendation No. 39 on the rights of indigenous women and girls. She had explained the Committee's position on abortion to a forum on its decriminalization in Mexico. At the invitation of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, she had also given a talk on women's political participation in Latin America. She had accompanied the non-governmental organization EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres to present a plan of action entitled "Agenda for access to justice for Maya women in Yucatán". In addition, she had given a talk on the Convention at the Autonomous University of Baja California. Lastly, on 4 October, she had spoken at an event on violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the United Nations Population Fund.

30. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she had participated in an online event presenting the Committee's work to the International Network of People who Use Drugs. On behalf of the National Institute of Justice of Bulgaria, she was working on the first-ever training programme for the country's judiciary on the Convention and its Optional Protocol, which was scheduled for November 2022. In addition, throughout the period since the previous session, she had encouraged the women's movement in her country to provide support for Ukrainian women residing there and to do so in a way that was in line with the Convention's principles and provisions.

31. **Mr. Safarov** said that on 5 and 6 July, he had participated in a side event during the fiftieth session of the Human Rights Council at which the Global Survivors Fund study on reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine had been launched. Also on 6 July, he had taken part in discussions on sexual exploitation and sexual violence during conflict situations with the Ukrainian Network of Women Affected by Violence (SEMA Ukraine). Among other conferences and reports in which he had been involved, he had participated in a round table on the theme "Rethinking human rights protection from the ground up", organized by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

32. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had represented the Committee at the meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 4 July. She had also participated in the series of virtual meetings organized by Equality Bahamas. In addition, in order to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of Trinidad and Tobago, she had taken part in another webinar, giving a presentation on the intersection between women's struggle for autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago since the early twentieth century and the country's parallel struggle for independence.

33. **Ms. Manalo** said that, despite her misgivings about her country's new President, he seemed to be moving in the right direction in relation to women's rights: one of his first steps had been to elevate the Philippine Commission on Women from a small unit of the Department of Justice to a separate body under the Office of the President. Moreover, through her own personal relationship with the new Secretary for Foreign Affairs, she hoped to be able to promote the principles of the Convention; in particular, she hoped it would be possible to hold a session of the Committee in the Philippines, with a view to furthering promoting women's rights across the Asia-Pacific region.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

34. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, speaking in her capacity as the Chair of the pre-session working group for the eighty-third session, said that the pre-session working group had met in Geneva on 28 February to 4 March 2022. It had prepared lists of issues and questions with regard to the reports of Albania, Costa Rica, France, the Gambia, Malawi, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste and a list of issues prior to reporting for Belarus. To prepare the lists of issues and questions, the working group had been able to draw on the core documents of the States parties, with the exception of Sao Tome and Principe, and the periodic reports of the States parties, with the exception of Belarus, which would submit its periodic report in response to the list of issues prior to reporting. The working group had also drawn on the Committee's general recommendations, draft lists of issues and questions

prepared by the secretariat, the concluding observations of the Committee and other treaty bodies, and, in particular, the States parties' follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on their previous reports, with the exception of Sao Tome and Principe, which had only submitted its initial report. In addition, the working group had received information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, NGOs and national human rights institutions. The lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

35. **The Chair** said that, owing to the backlog of State party reports pending consideration that had accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee had decided to postpone the consideration of the reports of the aforementioned States parties, with the exception of the Gambia. It had decided to consider, at its eighty-third session, the reports of Armenia, Belgium, Finland, Honduras, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland and Ukraine, in addition to that of the Gambia.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

36. **Ms. Stott Despoja**, speaking on behalf of the Rapporteur on follow-up, said that, at the end of the eighty-second session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments had been sent to the Governments of Bulgaria, Cambodia, Latvia and Seychelles.

37. As the Committee had been unable to adopt any concluding observations during its seventy-sixth session, which had been held virtually from 29 June to 9 July 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, no follow-up reports had been due for submission in June 2022. Therefore, no reminders had been sent following the eighty-second session and no follow-up reports were scheduled to be considered during the eighty-third session.

38. On 27 June, the Government of Zimbabwe had informed the Committee that it would submit its follow-up report, initially due in February 2022, in November 2022. The assessment of the follow-up procedure, which had been scheduled for adoption during the eighty-third session, had now been rescheduled for adoption at the eighty-fourth session, in February 2023.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.