



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Eightieth session**

Summary record of the 1811th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 18 October 2021, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the eightieth session of the Committee.

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

2. **Mr. Cissé-Gouro** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that he applauded Committee members' continued efforts to protect women and girls despite the difficult circumstances brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan had raised fears of a return to the brutal and systematic oppression of women and girls. At a General Assembly side event in September 2021, the High Commissioner had deplored practices such as the exclusion of women from the public sphere and girls above the age of 12 from school and the segregation of male and female university students. Furthermore, the High Commissioner had noted that the Ministry of Women's Affairs had been disbanded and its offices taken over by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

3. The Secretary-General had made it clear that the United Nations would engage with the Taliban to promote human rights in Afghanistan with special attention to the rights of women and girls. The High Commissioner had recalled that women must enjoy freedom of movement, full access to basic services and the ability to participate meaningfully in public life and decision-making and to live free of gender-based violence. The Office stood with the women and girls of Afghanistan.

4. At the forty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner had recalled that peace and security were inherently associated with the human rights of women and girls. She had warned against casting women in conflict and post-conflict situations in the role of victim: women had a critical part to play as human rights defenders, journalists, peacebuilders and community leaders. She had urged the Council to work closely with the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and to strengthen its engagement with civil society, including women's organizations and women peacebuilders.

5. Since the adoption of the General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, the Committee had regularly sent recommendations to States parties to help counter the disproportionate effects of conflict on women and girls and ensure their participation in peace and reconstruction efforts. The Committee had worked closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict on important initiatives, such as a forthcoming joint declaration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child on protection and assistance for children born of rape in conflict situations and their mothers.

6. The 33rd meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had been held in June 2021. The Chair of that meeting had submitted detailed proposals for consideration by the treaty bodies that focused on the development of a reporting calendar, including the option of using targeted reviews, the continued harmonization of working methods and the use of technology to boost the efficiency, transparency and accessibility of the treaty body system. If necessary, the High Commissioner would facilitate another meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, in order to reach consensus on those issues.

7. The annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council at its forty-eighth session had focused on the digital gender divide in the context of COVID-19. The Council had adopted a resolution on child, early and forced marriage in times of crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic, that took note in its preamble of the guidance note issued by the Committee aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic on women and girls.

8. **The Chair** asked whether the Office could share its view of how the Committee's work was likely to proceed in the near future given the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. **Mr. Cissé-Gouro** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, since it was unclear how the pandemic would develop, all options remained open. Although a full return to in-person meetings would be preferable, since they had a greater impact, the secretariat would continue to support the Committee to meet both in person and remotely, using technology as appropriate.

10. **Mr. Safarov** said that, with reference to the limitations on the Committee's work during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a lack of resources, particularly in terms of secretariat support for work on inquiries. If the instruments presented by the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto could not be implemented due to technical and financial limitations, that would undermine the trust of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the public in the Committee.

11. **Mr. Cissé-Gouro** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the secretariat would continue to support the work of the Committee but there was a lack of resources. Despite repeated appeals by the treaty bodies for an increased budget, and the appeal by the Secretary-General, no change in funding had been forthcoming.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/80/1)

12. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the seventy-ninth and eightieth sessions of the Committee

13. **The Chair** said that, since the previous session, the number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention had remained at 189. Similarly, the number of States parties having accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time had remained at 80. In accordance with the provisions of the amendment, acceptance by 126 States parties was required in order to bring it into force. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol had remained at 114. Seven States parties had submitted periodic reports since the beginning of the previous session: El Salvador; Germany; Japan; Norway; the Philippines; Slovakia; and Slovenia. Sao Tome and Principe had submitted its combined initial and second to fourth periodic report. Three States parties, Mauritius, Mexico and New Zealand, had informed the Committee of their decision to submit their next periodic reports under the simplified reporting procedure.

14. In September, she had spoken about the Committee's draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls at the Second World Conference of Indigenous Women and had given a presentation at a Peruvian conference on eliminating discrimination against women. She had been interviewed by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and had participated in a panel of gender experts and indigenous women leaders at the Second Ibero-American Summit of Indigenous Women. At the Third Regional Congress on Women in the Context of Migration in Mexico City, she had given a presentation on the work of the Committee to promote the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and had also conducted a training event on the Convention for representatives of the national machinery for the advancement of women. In October, she had presented the Committee's report and participated in interactive dialogue with Member States at the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

15. **Ms. Rana** said that, in July, she had participated in a high-level regional dialogue on rights and choices – the theme of World Population Day in 2021 – which had taken stock of the follow-up to the Nairobi Summit on the International Conference on Population and Development. In August, she had participated in a South Asian conference on solidarity to advance the women and peace and security agenda and an Asia-Pacific regional dialogue on surrogacy, at which case studies had been presented. In September, she had participated in a video recording on strengthening inclusive infrastructure for peace in the era of COVID-19 as part of Geneva Peace Week and had conducted training on the Convention for provincial leaders in Nepal. She had also participated in a training session on women's human rights in

the context of climate change, disaster risk reduction and gender inequality, a workshop for legal aid providers on eliminating gender discriminatory attitudes and behaviours and enhancing access to justice for women, and a workshop on treaty body reporting with the Government of Bhutan. Along with Ms. Nadaraia, she had held a briefing for Kazakh NGOs on the follow-up report due to be submitted by the Government of Kazakhstan in November 2021.

16. **Ms. Bethel** said that she had participated in a training session for a professional women's organization in the Bahamas in August and had worked with the Bahamas Sexual Health and Rights Association in October, with a focus on article 12 of the Convention and issues involving the age of consent and access to reproductive health care.

17. **Ms. Akizuki** said that, in July, she had spoken at a symposium organized to mark the date on which the Convention had entered into force in Japan. In August, she had participated in the Japanese interministerial study group on communications. She had given a lecture on drafting gender-sensitive policies at a workshop on gender mainstreaming organized by a local government body, which had taken place in September.

18. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that she had participated in a round table on violence against women with disabilities as part of a full-day discussion on the human rights of women organized by the Human Rights Council and in a webinar for the Latin America region on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health rights, also organized by the Council and other United Nations treaty bodies. With the Chair, she had participated in public consultations on a United Nations Children's Fund disability strategy. She had attended a seminar on the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities organized by the University of Sarajevo and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and a course on health care for women with disabilities who were victims of gender-based violence. She had also taken part in a campaign by Plan International to mark the International Day of the Girl Child and in training on the Convention and its strategic importance in defending women's rights.

19. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had given a statement on the occasion of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons and delivered a keynote address on the impact of illegal migration on vulnerable groups at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. She had also participated in a number of training courses, including a course for the staff of shelters for women and girl victims of trafficking in persons and a course for Egyptian diplomats on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Her speaking engagements had included a meeting of the Women Consultative Council of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, a meeting of managers of hotlines that received complaints from women victims of trafficking, a virtual discussion on that group with UN-Women Egypt and an event in Vienna on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

20. **Mr. Safarov** said that he had participated in a regional webinar on rights-based access to inclusive services for persons with disabilities who had suffered gender-based violence, a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on women's economic empowerment, training for political parties, NGOs and unions on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and training on gender equality in the civil service.

21. **Ms. Chalal** said that she had briefed the Northern Ireland Assembly on the Committee's joint statement with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its jurisprudence in connection with proposed legislative amendments that would remove the right to abortion in the case of serious fetal malformations. She had also delivered a presentation on the Committee's general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration to the Algerian authorities.

22. **Ms. Narain** said that she had shared the Committee's views at a civil society advocacy workshop on marriage and property rights in Africa and Asia. She had also given a presentation on the role of judicial officials in upholding States' obligations in ensuring access to justice for women's economic rights at a regional judicial colloquium for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, and on an international framework on violence against women at an event organized by the United Nations country office in Mauritius.

23. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she had participated in the launch of guidance on online policies and practices in the gender-responsive implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, liaised with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences regarding ongoing cooperation with the Committee and assisted in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations to her country, Bulgaria, by highlighting the Convention's provisions, and the Committee's practice, in the area of gender-based violence.

24. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had discussed the Committee's statement to the media on the implications of the new Taliban government for women in Afghanistan and the Afghan delegation's last appearance before the Committee in a television appearance in Trinidad and Tobago.

25. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that in Ghana, she had incorporated the Committee's perspectives into training that she had delivered on campaigning, lobbying and advocacy for women political leaders and for young people. She had also carried out work in relation to the Women's Manifesto for Ghana. At the international level, she had participated in a virtual round table organized by the Columbia Journal of Transnational Law on the importance of the ratification of the Convention by the United States of America and conducted training sessions on the Convention as part of a webinar series on the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

26. **Ms. Haidar** said that she had participated in a webinar for the Middle East and North Africa region on general recommendation No. 38 and an interview on trafficking in women and girls that had addressed that general recommendation and article 6 of the Convention. She had attended an event organized by the International Forum of Indigenous Women, at which she had interacted with representatives of groups of indigenous women, and contributed to a documentary, co-funded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and a Danish organization, on women peace activists in the Middle East, with a specific section on Lebanon.

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that she had attended a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the role and place of women in society and a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the extremely effective process used to draw up parity legislation in Nigeria. She had also worked with the Government of the United Kingdom on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and with the French Government on a violence prevention policy and the situation of Afghan women.

28. **Ms. Manalo** said that the restrictions in place in her region during the COVID-19 pandemic had hindered her work as a Committee member. She had created plans and programmes for her university to promote the human rights of women and girls that included mandatory training for university staff.

29. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she had delivered a number of statements and participated in various panels and events with a range of bodies, including organizations of women executives, youth leadership forums and NGOs such as ActionAid.

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

30. **Ms. Chalal**, speaking in her capacity as the Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the eightieth session, said that the pre-sessional working group had met remotely on 1 to 3 and 5 March 2021. It had prepared lists of issues and questions with regard to the reports of China, Hungary, Mauritania, Namibia, Uganda and the United Arab Emirates and lists of issues prior to reporting for Bhutan, Chile and Italy. 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 Hungary and the United Arab Emirates, which had not submitted one, and the periodic reports of the States parties, with the exception of the three States that would use the simplified reporting procedure. 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. 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.

31. **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, deciding instead to consider at its eightieth session the reports of Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, the Russian Federation, South Africa, South Sudan, Sweden and Yemen, whose consideration had been postponed at previous sessions.

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

32. **Ms. Chalal** (Rapporteur on follow-up), briefing the Committee on follow-up reports received from States parties, said that at the end of the seventy-ninth session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments had been sent to the Governments of Angola, Australia, the Bahamas, Colombia, Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nepal, the Niger, Suriname, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

33. First reminders regarding overdue follow-up reports had been sent to the Governments of Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guyana and Mozambique. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Austria on time, Ethiopia with a three-month delay, Fiji with a delay of 13 months, Liechtenstein with an 11-month delay, Qatar on time, Serbia with a delay of one month and the United Kingdom with a three-month delay. The country rapporteurs for Fiji, Liechtenstein, Qatar, Serbia and the United Kingdom were invited to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports. She was seeking volunteers to assist in the assessment of the report submitted by Austria.

34. During the current session, first reminders regarding the submission of follow-up reports should be sent to the Governments of Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Seychelles.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.