



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-first session

### Summary record of the 1850th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 7 February 2022, at 11 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Acosta Vargas

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*The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.*

### **Opening of the session**

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

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

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that he had worked in recent months with the Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the impact of the treaty bodies' activities at the national level. An initial study of the impact of the treaty bodies on 20 countries throughout the world had been published in 2002. The Office was currently working to expand the project so that it encompassed all States parties to the human rights treaties and engaging in consultations with a wide range of bodies, including the media, civil society, national human rights institutions, the business sector and faith-based leaders.

3. The dialogues to be held during the Committee's current session with eight States parties would help to remedy the backlog of State party reports accumulated during the pandemic. He hoped that the situation would become more predictable so that the treaty bodies could continue with their scheduled work.

4. The Committee had decided at its eightieth session in November 2021 to request an exceptional report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan since 15 August 2021. Women were being systematically excluded from social, economic and political spheres across Afghanistan, as stressed by the Committee in a joint statement issued with other human rights experts in January 2022. They were largely prohibited from working and many were compelled to be accompanied by a male relative whenever they left their residence. The United Nations Children's Fund reported that 60 per cent of the 4.2 million Afghan children who had left school were girls and that girls' secondary school attendance had drastically declined, even in provinces where they were allowed to attend school. The decline was partly due to the absence of women teachers, since girls could only be taught by women in several parts of the country.

5. In addition to the exclusionary and discriminatory policies, Afghan women, men, girls and boys were facing a humanitarian disaster of unprecedented proportions. With the arrival of winter, they faced severe poverty and hunger, and deteriorating public services, particularly health care. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than half the Afghan population required urgent food assistance. The humanitarian crisis disproportionately affected women-headed households and children. The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights had informed the Human Rights Council on 14 December 2021 that people in vulnerable situations were taking desperate measures, including child labour, the marriage of children to ensure their survival, and even the sale of children.

6. During the Security Council open debate on the theme "Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes", held on 18 January 2022, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had deplored the fact that many Afghan women human rights defenders had been forced to flee or go into hiding, often after repeated threats. Moreover, they had been excluded from decision-making on matters that affected their lives and families and prevented from fully exercising their right to participate in all spheres of civic and public life. She had urged the Security Council to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan, including against women and girls, were held to account in order to create conditions for sustainable peace. She had also called on States to use their influence with the Taliban to encourage respect for human rights.

7. The High Commissioner had held a meeting with the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies in November 2021 to discuss various issues, including the treaty body strengthening process. The Chairs had outlined their respective proposals on the following three issues: the development of a predictable review calendar that maximized synergies and complementarities across treaty bodies and ensured full reporting compliance, including the

possibility of replacing every second review with a focused review; the ongoing harmonization of working methods; and the digital transition, including the use of new technological developments to increase the efficiency, transparency and accessibility of the treaty body system. The High Commissioner had urged the treaty body system to produce a consolidated and unified proposal, building on commonalities in the three areas recommended by the co-facilitators of the 2020 treaty body review. She added that the proposal should be bold and creative, demonstrating the determination of all treaty bodies to strengthen and rationalize the treaty body system, and to attract the necessary support and funding from Member States. She indicated that she was prepared to support them in taking the issues forward, if and when consensus was reached.

8. The next Secretary-General's report on the status of the treaty body system was due to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. The Secretariat had launched a call for contributions so that a comprehensive proposal could be presented in the Secretary-General's report and considered by Member States. A proposal submitted by all treaty bodies on a consensual basis would prove stronger and attract a wider audience. OHCHR therefore encouraged the Committee to continue its consultations in an inclusive and open manner and to empower the Chair to represent its views at the forthcoming meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies.

9. The Committee's online day of general discussion in June 2021 on the rights of indigenous women and girls had been widely attended by States parties, human rights mechanisms, indigenous representatives, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and academia. The Committee had rapidly produced a comprehensive first draft of the general recommendation on the subject, thanks to the commitment of its working group on indigenous women and girls. A call for comments on the first draft, which had been launched in December 2021 on the OHCHR website, had led to the receipt of comments and constructive feedback from numerous stakeholders, which would be shared with the working group during the current session. He trusted that the Committee's continued engagement in that important activity, including by mobilizing support for consultations at the regional level, would lead to the adoption of the general recommendation by the end of 2022.

#### **Adoption of the agenda and the organization of work (CEDAW/C/81/1)**

10. *The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the eightieth and eighty-first sessions of the Committee**

11. **The Chair** said that it was with deep sadness that she must inform the Committee of the passing of Ms. González Martínez on 29 January 2022 in Mexico City. She had been a member of the Committee from 1982 to 1992 and from 1997 to 2004. During her tenure as Chair in 1999 and 2000, the Committee had commemorated its twentieth anniversary and had adopted general recommendation No. 24 on women and health. She had also played a key role from 1975 to 1989 in the adoption of the Convention.

12. Before turning to the activities undertaken in the intersessional period, she wished to inform the Committee that Ms. Al-Rammah, Ms. Bethel, Ms. Chalal, Ms. Manalo and Ms. Xia would be unable to attend the session.

13. The number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention remained at 189. The number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) remained at 80, and its entry into force would require its acceptance by 126. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol remained at 114. Seven States parties had submitted periodic reports since the beginning of the last session: Brazil, Central African Republic; Guatemala; Iceland; Kuwait; Montenegro; and Singapore. Australia had informed the Committee of its decision to submit its next periodic report under the simplified reporting procedure.

14. She had participated in an online panel of the World Congress on Justice with Children on 16 November 2021 and had spoken on girls' access to justice based on general recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice. She had participated in November 2021 as a panellist in a high-level dialogue on women's and girls' right to occupy space

safely, co-hosted by the United Nations Population Fund and the Permanent Missions of Australia and South Africa to the United Nations. She had made a presentation on the Committee's role in the elimination of violence against women, at the invitation of the President of the Constitutional Court of Peru. She had delivered opening remarks at the Women's Tribunal Malaysia on a feminist advocacy project initiated by women's rights organizations. She had participated in panels of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas and the Ixpop indigenous group of Guatemala and reported on progress in elaborating the draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls. In December 2021 she had delivered a speech at a national judicial forum on violence against women and family members organized by the Executive Council of the Peruvian Judiciary and the Law Faculty of the Universidad del Pacífico. She had selected, as a jury member, best practices of judgments in cases of gender-based violence against women, at the invitation of the Gender Justice Commission of the Peruvian Judiciary and the Law Faculty of the Universidad del Pacífico. She had participated in a panel on the theme "Trends in the integration of gender and a human-rights-based approach into national constitutions" at an international seminar entitled "Gender Equality and Constitutions" organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Chile. In January 2022 she had delivered a speech on the links between the Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child at a forum on Childhood, Gender and Human Rights, at the invitation of the Mexican National Institute of Criminal Science and the Ibero-American Centre for the Rights of the Child in Chile.

15. **Ms. Rana** said that, from 28 November to 2 December 2021, she had attended high-level meetings in Luxembourg with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men and others and had presented a keynote speech entitled "Scaling the summit for women's rights" at the University of Luxembourg. On 10 December 2021, she had been a keynote speaker, on advancing gender equality through mechanisms of the Committee, at an international conference organized by the Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres. On 17 December 2021, she had been a panellist at an international conference on gender aspects of transitional justice organized by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and the Austrian Development Cooperation. The conference had been held virtually from Ukraine. On 10 January 2022, she had attended a meeting with civil society and human rights organizations and on 20 January a meeting with United Nations entities working in Afghanistan, organized by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and herself, on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. On 20 January, she had presented the findings of a South Asian study on the impact of climate change on urban home-based workers and had highlighted the Committee's general recommendation No. 37. On 26 January, she had been a panellist at an event organized by the Center for Reproductive Rights on the use of litigation to accelerate the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights across the globe.

16. **Ms. Ameline** said that she had attended a meeting the previous week with the President of the Council of the European Union to discuss objectives such as equal access to sexual and reproductive rights during a crisis. In late January 2022 she had attended a workshop in Cairo on the drafting of reports concerning the Convention and on training courses on women's development held by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). She had participated in meetings with the French diplomatic service on the evacuation of activists from Afghanistan and had attended meetings in December 2021 on women's access to decision-making in sports federations in various parts of the world, particularly in the context of the current Olympic Winter Games.

17. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she had presented reports on the Committee's activities at an academic conference held by the International Human Rights Law Association of Japan and to the study group sponsored by the Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute. She had also delivered lectures on gender equality at Hosei University and Yamagata University.

18. **Ms. Gabr** said that she, too, had participated (remotely) in the OIC workshop aimed at helping members of the Organization prepare periodic reports for the Committee, held in Cairo in January 2022. She had travelled in Egypt, talking to women in rural areas and

schoolchildren about how to protect themselves against exploitation. She had delivered classes on preventing human trafficking at the Institute of Diplomatic Studies, the Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding and the Egyptian Police Academy.

19. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had participated in the relaunch of the affirmative action process in Ghana. She had also been featured in a documentary on activism during the colonial period, which had provided an important platform for women to tell their own stories about their struggles. She had given a presentation on the Committee's approach to tackling discrimination and inequalities at the 2021 Human Rights Week Scientific Colloquium run by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. In December 2021, she had moderated an event hosted by OHCHR in follow-up to regional consultations on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up, which had shone a light on the difficulties faced by countries in submitting reports on time and implementing recommendations.

20. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that she had participated in a conference on the need for urgent action for migrant women, organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Network, and she had taken part in the public hearing on advancing the issue of legal capacity for persons with disabilities, held by the European Economic and Social Committee. She had delivered a presentation on the situation of women with disabilities at an event on fostering inclusion in Europe, held by the Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities of Valencia, and she had participated in an interparliamentary committee meeting on eliminating violence against women, held by the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. She had participated in a webinar on women and girls with disabilities in the context of prostitution and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and in a conference on preventing violence against women with disabilities organized by UN-Women. In addition, she had represented the Committee at an official function organized by the Government of Spain in early December 2021 at which the Government had publicly apologized for the forced sterilization of women and girls with disabilities. In January, she had advocated for the empowerment of women with disabilities at an event held by the European Women's Lobby. She had also participated in a meeting of the informal working group established by the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and had given a presentation on the situation of women with disabilities from the perspective of the Committee at the first Conference on Disability and Social Inclusion in the Euro-Mediterranean Region hosted by the Union for the Mediterranean.

21. **Ms. Haidar** said that she had participated in an expert seminar in the series organized by the Geneva Academy on the role of human rights mechanisms. In collaboration with the University of Geneva, she had examined the complementarity of the mandates held by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding child marriage and birth registration. She had also worked with the Lebanese American University on the role of women peacebuilders in the context of the larger Middle East, with a particular focus on Lebanon. In addition, she had interacted with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and had participated in the January 2022 meeting with different United Nations entities working in Afghanistan on the situation of women and girls, referred to earlier by Ms. Rana. She had also taken part in the OIC workshop on preparing periodic reports, held in Cairo.

22. **Mr. Safarov** said that he had participated in a virtual conference on equal pension rights for women and men in the United Kingdom. In addition, he had participated in a meeting on preventing all kinds of violence and discrimination against women and girls held by the Manisa Celal Bayar University, a conference on regional activities to support social participation in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and a conference on the role of women in post-conflict reconstruction.

23. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she had participated in an event on holding nations to account for gender-based violence against women, hosted by the Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre and the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre.

24. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that, following the signing of an agreement establishing a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burkina Faso, she had represented the Committee at a meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights during the High Commissioner's visit to the country, at which she had advocated the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies and had called on the United Nations to support Burkina Faso in its efforts to promote and protect human rights.

25. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that, in line with the Committee's recommendations, the Government of Georgia had introduced gender quotas for legislative and local elections, which had led to a record-high number of women in local government. Gender-mainstreaming and female economic empowerment programmes had also been introduced. The Gender Equality Council of Georgia had held events to discuss an action plan for 2022–2024 and to support the economic and political empowerment of women, with a focus on current challenges and opportunities. In addition, the Georgian Municipal Service Providers' Association and the United Nations Development Programme had established the Women Councillors Forum, following a meeting with female municipal representatives.

26. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had delivered the keynote address, on violence against women and women's human rights, at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) event marking the beginning of the 16 days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, in November 2021. She had reached a wide audience, providing information about the Committee and encouraging the renewal of their commitment to working with the Committee in future.

27. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonso** said that she had worked with Asia-Pacific Women's Watch and with women from Guatemala on the draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls. She had also participated in a workshop on the rights of female domestic workers in Mexico.

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

28. **Mr. Safarov**, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the eighty-first session, said that the pre-sessional working group had met remotely on 5 to 9 July 2021. It had prepared lists of issues and questions with regard to the reports of Armenia, Djibouti, Finland, Georgia, Honduras and Turkey and lists of issues prior to reporting for Estonia, the Netherlands and the Niger. To prepare the lists of issues and questions, the working group had been able to draw on the core documents of the States parties and the periodic reports of the States parties, with the exception of Estonia, the Netherlands and the Niger, which would submit their periodic reports 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. In addition, the working group had received information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions. The lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

29. **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 eighty-first session the reports of the Dominican Republic, Gabon, Lebanon, Panama, Peru, Senegal, Uganda and Uzbekistan, 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**

30. **Ms. Stott Despoja** (Rapporteur on follow-up), briefing the Committee on follow-up reports received from States parties, said that, at the end of the eightieth session, follow-up

letters outlining the outcome of assessments had been sent to the Governments of Austria, Ethiopia, Lichtenstein, Qatar, Serbia and the United Kingdom.

31. First reminders regarding overdue follow-up reports had been sent to the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Iraq and the Seychelles. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Andorra on time, Côte d'Ivoire with a three-month delay, Guyana with a four-month delay, Iraq with a one-month delay, Kazakhstan on time and Lithuania on time. The country rapporteurs for Andorra, Guyana, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Lithuania were invited to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports. Ms. Narain had volunteered to assist in the assessment of the report submitted by Côte d'Ivoire.

32. During the current session, first reminders regarding the submission of follow-up reports should be sent to the Governments of Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Eritrea, Kiribati, Latvia, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova and Zimbabwe.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 a.m.*