



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Seventy-fourth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1718th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 21 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Gbedemah

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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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 seventy-fourth session of the Committee.*

Statement by the representative of the Secretary-General

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that 2019 marked the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the twentieth anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. On receiving the 2019 Hillary Rodham Clinton Award at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had said that, although women's equality and rights were guaranteed under international law, the struggle to achieve elementary justice in the form of equal opportunities was far from over; in reality, women continued to be much poorer than men, with fewer opportunities, less access to basic services such as education, and far less freedom to make their own choices and raise their voice. The High Commissioner found it deeply troubling to see that, instead of moving forward, some States and many lobby groups were pushing back on women's rights.

3. It was also 25 years since the groundbreaking International Conference on Population and Development had been held in Cairo in 1994. At that conference, 179 governments had agreed to a progressive, comprehensive Programme of Action, the first to place women's reproductive rights at the centre of an international agreement on population. Previously, population policy had been dominated by strategies seeking to control women's fertility and meet demographic targets, with little recognition of women's sexual and reproductive autonomy or human rights. The new Programme of Action had recognized the right "to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health" and "to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence", and yet, 25 years on, the High Commissioner was alarmed that there seemed to be a renewed obsession with controlling and limiting women's decisions over their bodies and lives.

4. OHCHR planned to work with the custodians of the Convention, and with the other human rights mechanisms, to move forward on women's rights. The Political Declaration adopted at the General Assembly's High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage on 23 September 2019 had represented an important step towards halting attempts to undermine and push back on women's sexual and reproductive health rights. In her statement to the High-level Meeting, the High Commissioner had emphasized that sexual and reproductive health care services were essential to empowering women to make their own decisions about their lives, and central to establishing universal health coverage.

5. Against the strong opposition of 19 Member States, a group of 58 States had negotiated a text that stressed that universal health coverage must ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference and the Beijing Platform for Action. That included universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services such as family planning, information and education. In the Political Declaration, governments had committed to achieving universal health coverage as a fundamental component of those Sustainable Development Goals that were related not only to health and well-being, but to poverty eradication, decent work and economic growth, and gender equality.

6. Recalling that the Chair, in her capacity as Chair of the thirty-first annual meeting of Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, held from 24 to 28 June 2019 in New York, had informed the Third Committee of the Chairs' joint vision for the future of the treaty body system, he noted that that vision embraced plans for wider availability of the simplified reporting procedure, a predictable schedule of reviews and greater coordination and discipline in order to reduce unnecessary duplication. The vision for the review of the treaty body system by the General Assembly in April 2020 also included the possibility of increasing the capacity of treaty bodies to review States by working in chambers, working groups or country teams, and referred to the benefits of conducting dialogues with States at

the regional level, including through smaller teams of Committee experts. Such arrangements would ultimately depend on the provision of adequate resources, which was a duty of the Member States.

7. The issue of resources remained challenging. As the Secretary-General had recently explained, the Organization's troubling financial situation was affecting its ability to fully finance mandated activities from the regular budget. The Secretary-General had stressed that, while the Organization had been containing expenditure since the start of the year and would have to further contain non-post expenditure, for example by limiting official travel to the most essential activities, the ultimate responsibility for solving the liquidity crisis lay with the Member States, which had paid only 70 per cent of the total amount needed for regular budget operations in 2019, translating into a serious cash shortage for the year. Moreover, the availability of cash resources to entirely fund the 2020 budget remained questionable.

8. At its forty-second session, the Human Rights Council, in its annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout its work, had focused on the theme of gender-responsive initiatives to accelerate gender equality. In her opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights had emphasized that advancing gender equality was a much more reliable predictor of peace than a country's gross domestic product (GDP) or level of democracy. It was an economic multiplier, which eliminated barriers to women's workforce participation, drove economic growth, stability and resilience and promoted women's leadership.

9. In the human rights system itself, progress towards gender equality in appointments to the various mechanisms had been slow; women remained underrepresented, tended to speak up less than their male counterparts, and were concentrated in mandates focusing on women's or child rights issues. In that regard, he noted that the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council had been mandated to prepare a report on women's representation in human rights bodies and the special procedures.

10. The Human Rights Council had also decided to convene a high-level discussion at its forty-third session to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, with a particular focus on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25).

11. Three reports had been presented to the Council on specific human rights violations affecting women and girls and the differentiated impact of those violations in conflict and humanitarian contexts. The independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar had issued a thematic report on sexual and gender-based violence; the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen had dedicated a chapter of its report to women's and girls' human rights; and the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi had presented detailed findings of its investigations.

12. His Office was looking forward to the panel to be organized on 25 October by Plan International to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Convention and the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He wished the Committee every success in its work.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/74/1)

13. *The provisional agenda contained in document CEDAW/C/74/1 was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the seventy-third and seventy-fourth sessions of the Committee

14. **The Chair** said that the number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention since the previous session had remained at 189. On 22 July 2019, Saudi Arabia had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time, bringing the number of States parties having accepted the amendment to 80. In accordance with the provisions of the amendment, acceptance by 126 States parties was required in order to bring it into force. Benin had become a party to the Optional Protocol, bringing the number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to 113.

Three States parties had submitted their periodic reports, namely Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Russian Federation and Senegal.

15. During the intersessional period, she had taken part in the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women in Panama City in July, on the theme of the role of the international monitoring mechanisms in guaranteeing the right to a life free from violence for women and girls. She had presented the Committee's perspectives on gender-based violence against women.

16. In September, at the Regional Consultation on developing a Southern African Development Community (SADC) model law on gender-based violence, she had presented an overview of key developments in international legal standards on gender-based violence against women.

17. In October she had presented the Committee's annual report to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and had participated in a panel discussion organized by the Permanent Missions of Costa Rica and Switzerland to the United Nations and the Geneva Human Rights Platform, at which she and the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had briefed delegations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the vision of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies for the 2020 review of the treaty body system.

18. Also in October she had attended the 141st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Belgrade, Serbia, where she had presented the Committee's perspectives on eliminating discrimination in law.

19. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that in September, at the request of the OHCHR country office, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), she had provided technical assistance to Guatemala on the integration of women with disabilities in gender policies. In Riga, Latvia, she had presented the Committee's list of issues on that country's periodic report to women's organizations and organizations of women with disabilities. She had also run a training session on the Convention for similar organizations from all the Baltic States.

20. **Ms. Rana** said that, at the end of August, she had attended the tenth annual conference of the South Asia Women's Network, on the theme of gender empowerment for sustainable development and the issues and challenges facing the women of South Asia. She had presented her perspectives on the Convention and initiatives to link it with efforts to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. From 5 to 9 September she had taken part in a workshop at Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, hosted by the Global Network of Women Peace Builders for Bangladeshi and Indonesian members of the Girl Ambassadors for Peace and Rohingya women and girls. In addition to facilitating regional cross-learning, knowledge sharing and solidarity building, particularly with a view to countering violence in those countries, the workshop had sought to develop a joint advocacy strategy to improve the situation of Rohingya women and girls in both countries.

22. In Nepal in August, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, she had convened a meeting to explore how Nepal could present its gaps, challenges and achievements at all United Nations-related events in 2020.

23. In September, also in Nepal, she had attended a consultation programme on drafting civil society commitments for the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, where she had presented the linkages between the International Conference on Population and Development and the Convention. In preparation for Beijing+25 – the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – she had convened two provincial conferences and, in October, one national conference.

24. She had attended the United Nations General Assembly in September as a member of her Government's delegation and had moderated a side event on accelerated action on

universal health coverage in least developed countries, hosted by the governments of Nepal, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Malawi.

25. **Ms. Gabr** said that, in Lebanon, with Ms. Haidar, she had taken part in a four-day event organized by the League of Arab States to assist delegations and NGOs from Arab States in preparing their official and shadow reports to the Committee.

26. Her country's interministerial committee on trafficking and migrant smuggling, of which she was the Chair, had prepared an educational video on trafficking and smuggling, exploitation for sexual purposes and organ sale.

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that she, too, had attended the United Nations General Assembly as a member of her country's delegation. In her capacity as a Committee member, she had taken part in preparatory events for Beijing+25, which would take place in 2020. Indeed, women's rights and the Convention were at the heart of the agenda for 2020, which also marked the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. At the national level, she had organized working groups aimed at ensuring the dissemination of the Convention in all schools, an initiative that she hoped could become an example of good practice.

28. **Ms. Leinarte** said that, in August 2019, she had participated in a one-day technical meeting in Finland concerning the Committee's draft general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. In September 2019, she had presented an overview of the Committee's activities and its draft general recommendation at the 2019 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, Poland, organized by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Lastly, she had attended a Human Rights Council side event organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Permanent Missions of Austria, Germany and Lithuania.

29. **Ms. Bethel** said that, in early August 2019, she had been involved in a number of teleconferences with representatives of OHCHR in Latin America and the Caribbean in preparation for an upcoming regional meeting on the Committee's draft general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. She had finalized a paper, due to be presented in Malaysia in November 2019, on marital rape in Commonwealth countries and, in particular, the efforts being made to amend the legislation and the Committee's position on gender-based violence. She had also been the keynote speaker at an event in Florida marking the 100th anniversary of Zonta International, a global organization of professionals that sought to empower women worldwide through service and advocacy.

30. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that, in August 2019, she had given a presentation on indigenous women's rights under the Convention at a consultation with indigenous peoples, organized by the Women's Human Rights Institute and the National Institute for Higher Studies in Quito, Ecuador. In September 2019, she had participated in two panel discussions. One, organized by the Peruvian judiciary's Gender Justice Commission in Lima, had highlighted the Convention and women's access to justice; the other had been a Women's Link Worldwide event entitled "Sexual and reproductive rights in contexts of humanitarian crisis: Venezuelan women at risk", held in Washington D.C. On 4 October 2019, she had accompanied the Chair to the United Nations General Assembly, in New York, and had also taken part in an event organized by the International Indigenous Women's Forum and Madre, a non-governmental organization (NGO).

31. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she had participated in a workshop on implementing Security Council resolution 1325, organized in Nigeria by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). In early October, she had taken part in a panel discussion on how to strengthen women's involvement in public-private partnerships, organized by the Australian Government and the Nigerian Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission. She had also attended an International Trade Centre "SheTrades" event on the theme of investment in trade, technology and financial inclusion. She had highlighted areas of linkage with the Convention and encouraged the development of a closer working relationship between the International Trade Centre and the Committee. Lastly, she had worked closely with the

Nigerian Government on a resolution commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Convention, which was soon to be adopted.

32. **Ms. Akizuki** said that, in July 2019, she had given a presentation regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights and women's economic empowerment at a symposium in Japan. She had delivered a lecture entitled "Sustainable Development Goal 5: Women's empowerment" at the tenth China-Japan-Republic of Korea Youth Forum in August.

33. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had participated in an event at the CEDAW South to South Institute, organized by the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago and attended by women's organizations and civil society from the entire Caribbean region. She had given a presentation on the theme of the backlash against women's human rights. She had also been invited to join a regional advisory group on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.4.1., on the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location, and had joined the board of the Coalition Against Domestic Violence of Trinidad and Tobago.

34. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she had played a role in organizing the official visit to Bulgaria of Dubravka Šimonović, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, which had taken place on 14–20 October. She had given presentations in her country, Bulgaria, on the joint statement of the Special Rapporteur and the Platform of United Nations and regional independent mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights regarding the link between violence against women and child custody. She was currently involved in preparations for a conference in Bulgaria to mark the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and the country's first national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. She had also arranged a moot court session, to be led by Ms. Leinarte, for young lawyers at the Women's Human Rights Training Institute, in Bulgaria. Taking place immediately after the current session, it was aimed at building the capacities of lawyers to litigate women's human rights cases by working on hypothetical cases brought under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Lastly, she had participated in drafting a handbook on gender-based violence with a focus on migrant women and women seeking international protection.

35. **Ms. Manalo** said that, at the national level, the Philippine Women's University, of which she was dean, had developed a gender equality tool and launched a programme aimed at ensuring that all schools and universities had at least one course on gender equality. In her capacity as Chair of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Myanmar, she had met with the Indonesian Foreign Minister to discuss the human rights situation of Rohingya women in Myanmar's Rakhine State and Bangladesh and, in particular, the multiple forms of discrimination they faced. Lastly, she had given a talk on women in business and entrepreneurship at a Zonta International club in Indonesia and had led a workshop on the rights of migrant women.

36. **Ms. Verges** said that she had been involved in launching a network of 20 NGOs advocating for women's rights. Its objective was to create a forum for dialogue with religious groups for the purpose of harmonizing the interpretation of religious texts in areas relating to women's rights, particularly sexual and reproductive health and education. She had participated in a round table on education, where she had highlighted the obligations of States parties under article 10 of the Convention and raised awareness of the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education. She had assisted the Mauritanian Ministry of Justice in drafting a plan of action to incorporate a gender perspective into its activities and had recently received an invitation from the Government of Mauritania to attend the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, on 12–14 November 2019.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

37. **Ms. Ameline**, introducing the report of the Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the seventy-fourth session ([CEDAW/C/PSWG/74/1](#)), said that the group had met from 11 to 15 March 2019 in Geneva to prepare lists of issues and questions regarding the

reports of Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Seychelles, and lists of issues prior to reporting for Ecuador, Sweden and Uruguay.

38. The preparation of the lists of issues and the questions had been informed by the reports of the States parties, information provided by the States parties in follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on their previous reports and the core documents of all but Iraq and Seychelles. The working group had also drawn on the Committee's general recommendations, draft lists of issues and questions prepared by the secretariat and the concluding observations of the Committee and other treaty bodies. The working group had received written and oral information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, NGOs and national human rights institutions. The final lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

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

39. **Ms. Nadaraia** (Rapporteur on follow-up) said that, at the Committee's seventy-third session, she had met with representatives of Tanzania and Myanmar, whose follow-up reports had been overdue. Follow-up letters outlining the assessment of follow-up reports had been sent to the Governments of Albania, Belarus, Canada, El Salvador, Honduras, the Philippines, Switzerland and Trinidad and Tobago.

40. First reminders about overdue follow-up reports had been sent to the Governments of Ireland, Micronesia, Rwanda and Sri Lanka. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Armenia with a seven-month delay, Bhutan with a six-month delay, Burundi with a six-month delay, Germany on time, Italy on time, Jordan with a two-month delay, Kuwait on time and Ukraine with a four-month delay. The country rapporteurs for Burundi, Jordan, Italy, Kuwait and Ukraine were invited to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports. Volunteers were sought to assist in the assessment of the reports submitted by Armenia, Bhutan and Germany.

41. During the current session, first reminders should be sent to Barbados, Costa Rica, Montenegro, Niger, Nigeria, Romania and Thailand.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.25 a.m.