



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

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

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Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

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on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Note by the secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. The present report contains information relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Section II contains information on developments in the human rights regime, including the human rights treaty bodies, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Section III relates to working methods of the Committee and other relevant issues. Section IV provides information on reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions and on reports that have been received but not scheduled for consideration. A list of States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is contained in annex I to the present report. Annex II contains a list of States parties whose reports had been submitted but not yet considered or scheduled for consideration by the Committee as at 1 May 2013.

II. Developments in the human rights regime

A. Human rights treaty bodies

2. The Human Rights Committee held its 105th session from 9 to 27 July 2012, its 106th session from 15 October to 2 November 2012, and its 107th session from 11 to 28 March 2013. At its 106th session, on 25 October 2012, the Committee held a half day of general discussion on the preparation for a general comment on article 9 (Liberty and security of person) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The purpose of the general comment is to provide appropriate and authoritative guidance to States parties and other actors on the measures to be adopted to ensure full compliance with the rights protected under this provision.

3. At its forty-eighth session, held from 30 April to 18 May 2012, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights discussed and adopted a statement on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, where it highlighted the links between the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the work of the Committee and environment and sustainable development. It also endorsed two open letters, which were addressed to States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, one on economic, social and cultural rights and the economic and financial crisis, and the other one on the importance of the link between the post-2015 development agenda and human rights. In particular, the Committee highlighted the link between development goals and States parties' legal obligations under the Covenant so that the responsibilities of development actors can also be better defined. It recalled that human rights principles and treaty norms, including non-discrimination, equality between men and women, participation and inclusion, and transparency and accountability, must be borne in mind in this process. Also at its forty-eighth session, the Committee discussed the process of drafting general comments on the right to sexual and reproductive health and on article 7 concerning the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work. At its forty-ninth session, held from 12 to 30 November 2012, the Committee continued discussing its working methods and adopted a decision on the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies ("the Addis Ababa guidelines"), adopted by the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies at their

twenty-fourth meeting, held in Addis Ababa June 2012 (see A/67/222 and Corr.1, annex I). The Committee completed the second reading of its draft rules of procedure for a communications procedure under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant during its forty-eighth session, and adopted the rules of procedure at its forty-ninth session.

4. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held its eighty-first and eighty-second sessions, from 6 to 31 August 2012 and from 11 February to 1 March 2013, respectively. At its eighty-first session, the Committee made a statement on treaty body strengthening and adopted a statement on the Addis Ababa guidelines referred to in paragraph 3 above. On 28 August 2012, it held a thematic discussion on racist hate speech as well as informal meetings with United Nations system agencies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the eighty-second session, the Committee went back to its previous pattern of three-week sessions (after it had held four-week sessions owing to additional session time granted for a limited period of time).

5. The Committee against Torture held its forty-ninth session from 29 October to 23 November 2012. During the session, all dialogues with States parties were webcast by a coalition of NGOs. The Committee adopted a general comment on article 14 (redress, compensation and rehabilitation for victims of torture) (see CAT/C/GC/3). The Committee adopted two statements, one on the Addis Ababa guidelines, and the other one on the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the strengthening of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

6. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its sixtieth session from 29 May to 15 June 2012. The Committee continued its preparation of the general discussion on the rights of all children in the context of international migration, to be held during its sixty-first session, in September 2012. The Committee also continued to discuss its draft general comments on the best interests of the child (art. 3, para. 1); the right to health (art. 24); the right of the child to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic life (art. 31); and on business and child rights, as well as the draft joint general recommendation/comment on harmful practices, developed with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

7. The Committee held its sixty-first session from 17 September to 5 October 2012. During the session, the Committee held a retreat in Sion, Switzerland, to discuss issues related to its methods of work. The Committee established a working group on the revision of methods of work. The Committee decided at its sixty-first session that the theme of the day of general discussion in 2014 would be "Media, social networks and the rights of the child". The day of general discussion will be held on 26 September 2014, during the sixty-seventh session of the Committee at Palais des Nations.

8. The Committee held its sixty-second session from 14 January to 1 February 2013. During the session, the Committee decided to hold a day of general discussion every two years. It reviewed its rules of procedure and incorporated the Addis Ababa guidelines into its rules of procedures. The Committee also continued its discussion on how its cooperation with various relevant bodies could be further strengthened with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

9. The Committee on Migrant Workers held its sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth sessions from 16 to 27 April 2012, from 10 to 14 September 2012 and from 15 to 26 April 2013, respectively. At its sixteenth session, the Committee discussed its methods of work, harmonization of treaty body working methods and other issues arising out of the ongoing treaty body strengthening process. In particular, the Committee decided to review the emerging list of proposals regarding treaty body strengthening and the outcome document of the Dublin II Meeting on strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system. At its seventeenth session, the Committee decided to hold a day of general discussion on the importance of migration statistics for treaty reporting and migration policies, and agreed to invite interested States, organizations and individuals to participate in that discussion. The day of general discussion was held on Monday, 22 April 2013, during the eighteenth session of the Committee.

10. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its seventh, eighth and ninth sessions from 16 to 20 April 2012, from 17 to 28 September 2012 and from 15 to 19 April 2013, respectively. At its seventh session, the Committee discussed various issues related to its working methods including, inter alia, the functioning of the working groups established by the Committee and the feasibility of holding of a day of general discussion in April 2013. The Committee considered its first individual communication under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, No. 3/2011, H.M vs. Sweden (CRPD/C/7/D/3/2011). At the eighth session, the Committee discussed how to strengthen cooperation with United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, NGOs, including disabled persons' organizations, and other competent bodies, to enhance the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Committee also reviewed the progress of work of the various working groups established to draft general comments on accessibility (art. 9) and legal capacity (art. 12). Another working group on access to public transportation and airline policies was also established and will report to the Committee but will not prepare a general comment. The Committee held a half day of general discussion on women and girls with disabilities on 17 April 2013, during its ninth session, and adopted a statement on women and girls with disabilities. At the general discussion, Committee member Patricia Schulz participated in a panel discussion on the intersectionality of gender and disability.

11. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances held its third session from 29 October to 9 November 2012 and its fourth session from 8 to 19 April 2013. At the third session, the Committee decided to include, as an annex to its rules of procedures, the Addis Ababa guidelines. It also adopted a statement on treaty body strengthening, and a methodology relating to its reporting procedure and its relationship with NGOs. On 2 November 2012, the Committee held a thematic discussion on the principle of non-refoulement, expulsion and extradition under article 16 of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, in closed meeting. On 7 November 2012, it held a thematic discussion on trafficking and enforced disappearances, also in closed meeting, with the participation of experts from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which was also attended by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. On 8 November 2012, the

Committee held its second thematic discussion on the responsibility of States and the role of non-State actors, again in closed session. At its fourth session, the Committee discussed its methodology and process for the adoption of lists of issues and the consideration of reports; methods of work related to reporting and ratification strategy; methods of work related to its collaboration with the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, in particular on urgent actions; and methods of work related to its engagement with civil society.

B. Twenty-fourth meeting of Chairs of human rights treaty bodies

12. The twenty-fourth meeting of Chairs of human rights treaty bodies was held in Addis Ababa from 25 to 29 June 2012, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/202. The Chairs considered the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies (A/66/860) and endorsed the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of the members of the human rights treaty bodies (“the Addis Ababa guidelines”). They engaged in a dialogue with the African human rights mechanisms, institutions and stakeholders, as well as with ministries of the Government of Ethiopia. They also adopted decisions and recommendations. The report of the Chairs, including the decisions and recommendations of the Chairs, is contained in the note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of human rights instruments (A/67/222 and Corr.1).

13. Some of the more pertinent decisions and recommendations of the Chairs included the endorsement of the vision contained in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on treaty body strengthening. The Chairs expressed their support for the valuable proposals contained in the report, in particular the proposals for a comprehensive reporting calendar ensuring reporting compliance with treaty obligations, a simplified reporting procedure, page limitations relating to the reporting process and the use of modern technologies such as webcasting and videoconferencing. They affirmed their commitment to promote the recommendations contained in the report and called upon States to provide additional financial resources to ensure the effective implementation of the calendar. The Chairs also recommended that each treaty body should carefully review the recommendations addressed to the treaty bodies in the report and compare them with their current working methods in order to determine what steps were required for the implementation of the recommendations. They stressed that such implementation should be undertaken in coordination with the other treaty bodies and recommended that each treaty body should keep the meeting of Chairs informed on a biannual basis about the progress made.

14. The Chairs stressed that although the process on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system as launched by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/254 was intergovernmental in nature, the treaty bodies had a central role to play regarding the future of the treaty body system and, as such, their presence during the deliberations of the open-ended intergovernmental process was essential. They recommended that the treaty bodies, as “relevant United Nations bodies”, should participate in the deliberations as resource persons and were confident that States would make such arrangements.

15. The Chairs endorsed the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of human rights treaty bodies (“the Addis Ababa guidelines”). In addition,

the Chairs strongly recommended that the guidelines be promptly adopted by the respective treaty bodies, inter alia, through inclusion, in an appropriate manner, in their rules of procedure.

16. The Chairs reaffirmed their previously recognized role during the period between sessions in facilitating representation and coordination of common activities such as consideration and adoption of joint statements, while noting that the autonomy and specificity of the treaty bodies must be respected. The Chairs also reiterated the recommendation that they should adopt measures on those working methods and procedural matters which were common across the treaty body system and had previously been discussed within each committee, and that such measures would be implemented by all the treaty bodies unless a committee subsequently dissociated itself from them.

17. The Chairs expressed appreciation for the fruitful dialogue held with the African human rights mechanisms, institutions and stakeholders in Addis Ababa, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the East African Court of Justice, the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States, and international and regional governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations. They encouraged each treaty body to give appropriate attention to the joint recommendations stemming from the dialogue. Concrete suggestions were made to enhance synergies between both systems, such as information exchange, joint awareness-raising events to promote ratification of human rights treaties and optional protocols under both systems and timely reporting to the respective monitoring bodies; the issuance of joint statements on matters of common concern; the involvement of the African human rights mechanisms in the drafting of general comments on issues of common concern; and ensuring mutual follow-up on the implementation of country-based recommendations, including through the sharing of good practices and the organization of joint workshops. The Chairs also highlighted the need for United Nations treaty bodies, the African Commission and Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and subregional courts to examine their respective bodies of jurisprudence in order to ensure coherence and avoid the fragmentation of international human rights law. To that effect, joint training activities and judicial colloquiums were also encouraged.

18. The Chairs also reiterated their recommendation that the meeting of the Chairs be held every other year in different regions in order to raise awareness of the treaty bodies' work by strengthening linkages and synergies between international and regional human rights mechanisms and institutions. They also decided that their twenty-fifth meeting, to be held in 2013, would focus on: (a) the issue of strengthening the treaty bodies and, in particular, the implementation of the recommendations contained in the High Commissioner's report; (b) the participation of national human rights institutions in the work of the treaty bodies; and (c) the possibility and feasibility of developing a register of interests for each treaty body.

C. Treaty body strengthening

19. The treaty body strengthening process was initiated in 2009 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who called upon all stakeholders to initiate a process of reflection on ways to strengthen the treaty body system. A number of consultations were organized by stakeholders in direct response to the High Commissioner's call. In 2012, consultations for States parties were organized in Geneva, on 7 and 8 February, and in New York, on 2 and 3 April.

20. The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/254 of 23 February 2012, requested the President of the Assembly to launch an open-ended intergovernmental process on treaty body strengthening, which the Assembly extended to its next session, pursuant to resolution 66/295 of 17 September 2012. In order to implement the above-mentioned resolutions, the President of the General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representatives of Indonesia and of Iceland to the United Nations in New York as co-facilitators for the treaty body strengthening process.

21. In June 2012, the High Commissioner submitted a report compiling the proposals made during the consultation process (see A/66/860). The objective of the compilation is to identify synergies and potential for future common ground. One of the key proposals reflected in the report is to install a comprehensive reporting calendar.

22. At its fifty-second, fifty-third and fifty-fourth sessions, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was updated on the strengthening of the treaty body system process. Following its review of the main proposals contained in the High Commissioner's report on treaty body strengthening as well as of the implications of the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies, the Committee, at its fifty-fourth session, adopted a statement on the report, in which it expressed concern that the treaty body system has reached its limits within the present resources available and noted that it has already implemented a number of the measures proposed in the report; it also incorporated the Addis Ababa guidelines in its rules of procedure. The most salient measures taken by the Committee to implement the other proposals in the High Commissioner's report include: establishment of country task forces for the examination of States parties' reports; clustering by themes of questions asked during the dialogue; reduction of the length of standard paragraphs in its concluding observations; use of a template with subject headings for concluding observations; issuance of summary records only in English; and public webcasting, on a trial basis, of its dialogues with States parties.

23. In the context of the intergovernmental process of the General Assembly, Member States engaged in a first round of informal negotiations from 16 to 18 July 2012 in New York. In her address to the meeting, the High Commissioner stressed the importance of how the process would complement Geneva-based efforts by financially supporting the expansion of the treaty body system and, at the same time, preserving its independence. The debates were lively and many welcomed the report of the High Commissioner. The comprehensive reporting calendar proposal received much attention and questions, as did capacity-building with regard to reporting and implementation. The co-facilitators had invited the Chair and Vice-Chair of the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Chairs of treaty bodies to attend the meeting; their inside knowledge and experience of the system were useful to the debates.

24. In their progress report submitted to the President of the General Assembly, the co-facilitators recommended that a comprehensive cost review of the treaty body system should be provided in a background note to the renewed intergovernmental process by the end of 2012. Such a background note could contain detailed information on a number of costing issues, including the cost of the current system, including for conference services and documentation, as well as the additional resources required to clear the current backlog, the assessed allocation needed to fully service the current system and the unit cost of each element of the treaty body system. The recommendation builds on those contained in the report of the Secretary-General on measures to improve further the effectiveness, harmonization and reform of the treaty body system (A/66/344).

25. The second round of informal negotiations of Member States took place on 19 and 20 February 2013 in New York. Among the issues discussed were: the simplified reporting procedure; submission of common core documents and regular updates; replacing summary records with webcasting, captioning and digital records; the use of videoconferencing for the dialogues of treaty bodies with States parties; and the nomination and election of experts to the treaty bodies. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Nicole Ameline, participated in part of the discussions by videoconference.

26. A third round of informal negotiations was held from 11 to 17 April 2013 in New York. The issues discussed included: an aligned methodology for the dialogue between States parties and treaty bodies; focused concluding observations; further institutionalization of engagement with other United Nations partners; dual chambers; aligned consultation process for the elaboration of general comments; aligned models of interaction among treaty bodies, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations; strengthening the meetings of State parties; the establishment of a treaty body jurisprudence database on individual cases, including information on their follow-up; a joint treaty body working group on communications; review of good practices regarding the application of rules of procedure and methods of work and the adoption of common guidelines; friendly settlements; reprisals; and the treaty bodies' follow-up procedures. In addition, Member States continued to discuss the comprehensive reporting calendar, as well as the costing of the treaty body system, including a coordinated request for additional meeting time, page limitations, and the reduction in annual reports of treaty bodies. Throughout the process, the co-facilitators reiterated that any savings made through any of the measures for treaty body strengthening should be reinvested in the treaty body system and used for capacity-building activities. Egypt, on behalf of the African Group, submitted a proposal for a "nimble calendar" as an alternative to the comprehensive reporting calendar. The Russian Federation, on behalf of the cross-regional group of countries, submitted a proposal for a code of conduct for treaty body experts. On 16 April 2013, OHCHR organized a workshop on developing the capacity of States to report to human rights treaty bodies and to follow up on concluding observations, focusing on African and Caribbean States.

27. On 18 and 19 April 2013, the co-facilitators for the intergovernmental process came to Geneva and briefed the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the treaty body strengthening process. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and its members Ms. Schulz and Ms. Haidar attended some of these consultations.

28. The next round of informal negotiations will take place from 6 to 8 May 2013 in New York, to be followed by the meeting of Chairs from 20 to 24 May, also in New York.

D. Security Council

29. The Security Council adopted various resolutions emphasizing the importance of women's participation in public and political life, in particular during conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. For example, in its resolution 2056 (2012) on peace and security in Africa, the Council called upon all actors in the crisis in Mali to take measures to increase the number of women involved in mediation efforts, and stressed the importance of creating enabling conditions for women's participation and empowerment during all stages of the mediation process. In its resolution 2051 (2012) on the situation in Yemen, the Council emphasized the importance of conducting a fully inclusive, participatory, transparent and meaningful national dialogue conference, including with youth and women's groups.

30. In Security Council resolution 2065 (2012) on the situation in Sierra Leone, the Council welcomed the launch of the National Gender Strategic Plan, the establishment of the National Committee on Gender-Based Violence and the adoption of the Sexual Offences Act. In its resolution 2067 (2012) on the situation in Somalia, the Council welcomed the increased representation of women in Parliament, and underlined the need to strengthen their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. In its resolution 2097 (2013), the Council urged the passing of the Gender Equality Bill in Sierra Leone, including the consideration of necessary amendments to enhance the rights of women, as well as to increase their participation in the political process, including through their full participation both as voters and as candidates.

31. The Security Council also adopted numerous country-specific resolutions that include references, *inter alia*, to gender equality; gender-based discrimination; sexual and gender-based violence and impunity; and justice and the protection of human rights, with a special focus on the rights of women and children.¹

32. In April 2013, the Security Council published its third "Cross-cutting report on women, peace and security", which presents an analysis of statistical information on women, peace and security in country-specific decisions of the Security Council and developments in 2012. The report focuses on a case study on the nexus between sexual violence in conflict and sanctions imposed by the Security Council. It also examines the Council's lack of consistency in including language on the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse of United Nations personnel, in resolutions establishing or renewing mandates for peace missions. The overarching observation of the report is that there has been a significant pushback on issues relating to women and peace and security.

¹ For example, see Security Council resolution 2046 (2012) on the situation in the Sudan; resolution 2048 (2012) on the situation in Guinea-Bissau; resolution 2053 (2012) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; resolution 2062 (2012) on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire; resolution 2069 (2012) on the situation in Afghanistan; resolution 2085 (2012) on the situation in Mali; resolution 2093 (2013) on the situation in Somalia; and resolution 2095 (2013) on the situation in Libya.

E. General Assembly

33. In its resolution 67/187 on the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, the General Assembly recognized that certain groups are entitled to additional protection or are more vulnerable within the criminal justice system, and stressed that the Principles and Guidelines include specific provisions on women, children and groups with special needs, for example, regarding equality in access to legal aid; qualification and accountability of legal aid providers; and implementation of the right of women to access legal aid. It noted that the Principles and Guidelines should not be interpreted as providing a lesser degree of protection than that provided under existing national laws and regulations and international and regional human rights treaties applicable to the administration of justice, including, but not limited to, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

34. In its resolution 67/185 on promoting efforts to eliminate violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families, the General Assembly reiterated the need for a focused and consistent criminal justice approach to crimes committed against migrants, in particular women and children, and requested Member States to ensure the humane treatment of all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, especially women and children, with full protection of their rights. The Assembly called upon Member States to institute measures, as appropriate, to strengthen the entire criminal justice process and to vigorously investigate and prosecute crimes against migrants, including trafficking in persons and other serious offences, especially crimes constituting violations of the human rights of migrants, giving special attention to assisting and protecting victims, in particular women and children.

35. In its resolution 67/171 on the right to development, the General Assembly recognized, inter alia, the important role and the rights of women and the importance of a gender perspective in the process of realizing the right to development. It also noted the positive relationship between women's education and their equal participation in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social activities of their community on one hand, and the promotion of the right to development on the other hand.

36. In its resolution 67/145 on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly called upon Governments, the international community and all other organizations and entities that deal with conflict, post-conflict, disaster and other emergency situations to address the heightened vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking and exploitation and related gender-based violence. It also urged Governments to take appropriate measures to address the factors that increase vulnerability to being trafficked, including poverty and gender inequality, as well as other factors that give rise to the problem of trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriage, forced labour and organ removal, in order to prevent and eliminate such practices. The Assembly further invited the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and both International Covenants to include information and statistics on trafficking in

women and girls as part of their periodic reports to treaty bodies and to work towards developing a common methodology to obtain comparable data.

37. In its resolution 67/144 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly strongly condemned all acts of violence against women and girls, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State, by private persons or other non-State actors, including business enterprises, and called for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence in the family, within the general community and where perpetrated or condoned by the State. It further stressed the importance for States to strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to eliminating such violence. The Assembly called upon States, with the support of United Nations entities, to fully engage men and boys, as well as families and communities, as agents of change in preventing and condemning violence against women and girls, and to develop appropriate policies to promote the responsibility of men and boys in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. It also urged States to continue to develop their national strategies, translating them into concrete programmes and actions aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women.

38. In its resolution 67/48 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the General Assembly recognized the valuable contribution of women to disarmament measures taken at the local, national, subregional and regional levels in the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict, and in promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It recognized that the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control should be further developed. The Assembly urged Member States, relevant regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations and specialized agencies to promote equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, in particular as it relates to the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict, and to support and strengthen the effective participation of women in organizations in the field of disarmament at the local, national, subregional and regional levels. The Assembly further called upon States to empower women to participate in the design and implementation of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts.

F. Human Rights Council

39. The Human Rights Council adopted resolution 22/6 on protecting human rights defenders, in which it expressed particular concern about the systemic and structural discrimination and violence faced by women human rights defenders, and called upon States to integrate a gender perspective in their efforts to create a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights.

40. At its twentieth session, the Council devoted its annual full-day discussions on women's human rights to (a) the issue of remedies and reparations for women who have been subjected to violence; and (b) women human rights defenders. The panel discussion on remedies and reparations drew on the report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on the topic of reparations to women, submitted to the fourteenth session of the Council

(A/HRC/14/22). The panel discussion on human rights defenders examined the vital role played by women human rights defenders and assessed the challenges faced by them across thematic areas and around the world.

41. During the same session, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences presented to the Council a thematic report on gender-related killings of women (A/HRC/20/16). In the report, the Special Rapporteur explained that such killings are not isolated incidents that arise suddenly and unexpectedly, but represent the ultimate act of violence which is experienced in a continuum of violence. The report stated that globally, the prevalence of different manifestations of gender-related killings was reaching alarming proportions. Culturally embedded, these manifestations continued to be accepted, tolerated or justified with impunity as the norm. It also mentioned that States' responsibility to act with due diligence in the promotion and protection of women's rights was largely lacking as regards the killing of women.

42. The Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice presented its first report to the Council (A/HRC/20/28). In the report, the Working Group highlighted its priorities for 2012-2013, namely, discrimination against women in law and in practice in political and public life.

43. The Council adopted resolution 20/1 on trafficking in persons, especially women and children: access to effective remedies for trafficked persons and their right to an effective remedy for human rights violations, in which it recognized that women and children without nationality or without birth registration are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in persons. It reiterated its concerns at, inter alia, the high level of impunity enjoyed by traffickers and their accomplices and the denial of rights and justice to victims of trafficking as well as the lack of effective remedies for trafficked persons, including the possibility of obtaining compensation for damage suffered. It urged States to recognize trafficked persons as victims with specific protection needs from the moment they are trafficked, and to ensure the promotion, protection and fulfilment of their human rights.

44. In addition, the Council adopted resolution 20/6 on the elimination of discrimination against women, in which it acknowledged the initial work undertaken by the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, and took note of the first report of the Working Group. It requested that the Working Group dedicate specific attention to good practices that had contributed to mobilizing society as a whole, including men and boys, in the elimination of discrimination against women, and to give special attention to the importance of the right to education for the empowerment of women and girls in all spheres as well as for ensuring equality and non-discrimination. The Council also adopted resolution 20/12 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including by providing remedies to women who have been subjected to violence. In the resolution, the Council stressed that education plays a key role in efforts to guarantee non-repetition of violence against women and girls by promoting changes in attitudes and behaviour.

45. The Council also adopted resolution 20/4 on the right to a nationality: women and children, in which it called upon all States to adopt and implement nationality legislation consistent with their obligations under international law with a view to preventing and reducing statelessness among women and children. In the resolution, the Council urged all States to refrain from enacting or maintaining discriminatory

nationality legislation, with a view to avoiding statelessness, in particular among women and children, and to reform discriminatory nationality laws. It requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on discrimination against women in nationality-related matters under national and international law, including best practices of States and other measures that eliminate nationality discrimination against women and avoid or reduce statelessness.

46. During its twenty-first session, the Council adopted resolution 21/6 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights. In the resolution, the Council reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the targets and commitments regarding the reduction of maternal mortality and universal access to reproductive health. It welcomed the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, and called upon all relevant actors to disseminate the technical guidance and apply it, as appropriate, when designing, implementing and reviewing policies and evaluating programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. It requested the Office of the High Commissioner to prepare, from within existing resources, a report on how the technical guidance had been applied by States and other relevant actors, to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-seventh session. It also requested the Secretary-General to transmit the technical guidance to the General Assembly as a contribution to the review of the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

47. At the same session, the Council adopted resolution 21/15 on human rights and transitional justice, in which it recognized the role of women's organizations in the design, establishment and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms. It strongly condemned violence against women and girls committed in conflict and post-conflict situations and recognized that the term "violence against women" is not limited to sexual violence but includes any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. It called for effective measures of accountability and redress where those acts amount to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. It emphasized the need to provide gender-sensitive human rights training in the context of transitional justice to all relevant national actors dealing with victims of human rights violations in order to ensure gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming in the restoration of the rule of law and transitional justice processes. It requested the Office of the High Commissioner to submit to it an analytical study on gender-based and sexual violence in relation to transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations, the effective participation of victims, and the participatory procedures necessary to address the different needs and opportunities of women, men and children, including good practices of States in the field of truth-seeking, justice, reparation and institutional reform.

48. At the twenty-second session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food submitted a report to the Council on Women's rights and the right to food (A/HRC/22/50 and Corr.1), which discussed threats to women's right to food and identified areas requiring urgent attention. The report examined the obstacles women face in accessing the productive resources needed for food production, food processing and value chain development. It called upon

States to effectively respond to women's and girls' needs and priorities in their food security strategies. The Human Rights Council Advisory Committee presented its final study on rural women and the right to food (A/HRC/22/72), which has a special focus on female-headed households and women seasonal workers.

III. Working methods of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Working methods

49. At its fifty-second session, the Committee adopted a decision on the strengthening of the role of the country rapporteur and the adoption of a country briefing note template. The Committee decided that the membership of a country task force should be composed of not less than 10 experts and shall not exceed 14 experts. It also adopted a statement on the need for a gender perspective in the text of the Arms Trade Treaty and a statement on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

50. At its fifty-second session, the Committee adopted a resolution on the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (Addis Ababa guidelines). At its fifty-third session, the Committee decided to entrust the Working Group on working methods with the task to look thoroughly into the Addis Ababa guidelines and assess which elements of the guidelines may be incorporated into the rules of procedure and working methods of the Committee. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee decided to incorporate the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies ("the Addis Ababa guidelines"), adopted by the twenty-fourth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies for incorporation into its rules of procedure.

51. At its fifty-third session, the Committee adopted statements on girls' right to education and on the situation of women and girls in northern Mali.

52. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee elected a new Chair as well as new Vice-Chairs and a new Rapporteur. The Committee decided to allow for public webcasting of its dialogues with States parties during a trial period covering its fifty-fifth and fifty-sixth sessions in July and October 2013, respectively, and to make an internal assessment at the end of the fifty-sixth session in order to determine whether or not to continue the webcasting beyond the trial period. It decided to amend its rules of procedure accordingly by deleting rule 28, paragraph 3, second sentence, which reads: "The Committee shall, if necessary, and before giving such permission, seek the consent of any State party reporting to the Committee under article 18 of the Convention to the filming or other recording of the proceedings in which it is engaged." In accordance with article 20, paragraph 2, of the Convention, the Committee decided that one of its annual sessions from 2014 onwards shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In that regard, it adopted a decision to request the General Assembly to provide the necessary resources to enable the Committee to hold one of its annual sessions at United Nations Headquarters in New York starting from 2014, and to ensure that the Committee is provided with adequate substantive support from its secretariat during those sessions. The Committee decided to make public the reports on its sessions by

posting the report on its website after each session starting from the fifty-fourth session. The Committee also adopted a statement on the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the strengthening of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. The Working Group on working methods was expanded and the Committee appointed a gender and HIV/AIDS focal point.

B. Concluding observations

53. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee decided to shorten and merge several standard paragraphs contained in its concluding observations.

C. Follow-up

54. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee amended the methodology of the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations and adopted a document containing information for States parties and other stakeholders on the submission of reports under the follow-up procedure.

D. Communications

55. At its fifty-second session, the Committee took action on communication No. 32/2011 and adopted views on the admissibility and merits of that communication by consensus. At its fifty-third session, the Committee adopted final decisions in respect of two individual communications submitted under the Optional Protocol. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee extended the terms of the members of the Working Group on communications until 31 December 2014.

E. General recommendations

56. During the fifty-third session, the Committee reviewed the draft general recommendation on the economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee adopted general recommendation No. 29 on article 16 of the Convention (economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution) by consensus.

57. Currently, the Committee is working on several general recommendations:

(a) *Draft general recommendation on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.* Following the fifty-first session, regional consultations, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and OHCHR, were held in Bangkok (27-28 March 2012); Addis Ababa (12-13 April 2012); Istanbul (11 May 2012); Guatemala (29-30 May 2012); and Amman (27-28 January 2013) to solicit input from regional stakeholders on the draft general recommendation. At the fifty-third session, the Working Group met and discussed the draft general recommendation. At the fifty-fourth session, the membership of the Working Group was expanded. The Chair of the Working Group presented the draft general recommendation in plenary and invited the members of the Committee to provide comments;

(b) *Draft joint Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/Committee on the Rights of the Child general recommendation/comment on harmful practices.* At the fifty-second session, the Working Group met with UNICEF and started drafting several substantive paragraphs of the general recommendation. At the fifty-third session, the joint Working Group with the Committee on the Rights of the Child met and reviewed substantive issues of the draft general recommendation/comment. At the fifty-fourth session, the membership of the Working Group on harmful practices was expanded and the joint Working Group held a telephone conference to discuss pending issues as well as comments received from United Nations entities and NGOs on the draft general recommendation/comment;

(c) *Draft general recommendation on access to justice.* The Working Group met during the fifty-second session. A revised concept note was circulated to the Working Group for comments. A meeting took place with OHCHR, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme on coordination and procedures relating to the concept note, the planned half-day of general discussion, the time frame for drafting the general recommendation, and possible regional consultations on the implementation of the general recommendation. At its fifty-third session, the Committee endorsed the concept note on access to justice. At the fifty-fourth session, a half-day of general discussion on access to justice was held and the membership of the Working Group on access to justice was expanded;

(d) *Draft general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum and statelessness.* During the fifty-second session, the Committee decided to split the Working Group on asylum, statelessness and natural disasters into two working groups — one covering asylum and statelessness and the other covering climate change and natural disasters. The Working Group on gender equality in the context of asylum and statelessness worked intersessionally on a draft general recommendation and met to further elaborate the draft recommendation. At the fifty-third session, the Working Group on gender equality in the context of asylum and statelessness met to continue working on the draft, which was revised and circulated to the plenary for comments to be provided intersessionally. At the fifty-fourth session, the Chair of the Working Group presented the (renamed) draft general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum and statelessness in plenary and invited the members of the Committee to provide comments;

(e) *Draft general recommendation on gender equality in the context of climate change and natural disasters.* At its fifty-second session, the Committee decided to elaborate this general recommendation and decided that any work on it would take place intersessionally until decided otherwise by the Committee. During the fifty-fourth session, the membership of the Working Group on gender equality in the context of climate change and natural disasters was expanded;

(f) *Draft general recommendation on rural women.* The Working Group worked intersessionally on a concept note and finalized it during the fifty-second session. At its fifty-third session, the Committee endorsed the concept note. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee decided to hold a half-day of general discussion on rural women during its fifty-sixth session;

(g) *Draft general recommendation on the right to education.* At its fifty-second session, the Committee decided to establish a working group on the right to education for purposes of preparing a general recommendation on the topic. The

Committee also decided that any work on the general recommendation would take place intersessionally until decided otherwise by the Committee. At its fifty-third session, the Committee endorsed an introductory note on education. At the fifty-fourth session, the membership of the Working Group on the right to education was expanded.

F. Inquiries

58. At its fifty-second session, the Committee adopted a decision on modalities and procedures in respect of issues arising under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. Committee members were identified to serve on task forces relating to new requests for inquiries. The Committee discussed the need to decide on a methodology to conduct inquiries and to review the rules of procedure on inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. The Committee requested the secretariat to prepare for the fifty-third session detailed summaries of requests for inquiries, with legal analysis and conclusions, as well as a note on modalities for inquiries, including the possible establishment of a new working group or expansion of the mandate and membership of the existing Working Group on communications to cover inquiries, assistance from the petitions and inquiries section, staffing and resources, additional meeting time, budgetary issues (e.g., the number of visits per year) as well as standard operating procedures.

59. At its fifty-third session, the Committee discussed the documents prepared by the Secretariat regarding inquiries, namely a background note, draft standard operating procedures, and a reference paper on the threshold for “grave or systematic” violations.

60. At its fifty-fourth session, the Committee approved an internal document containing standard operating procedures for the conduct of inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. The Committee adopted a decision to request the General Assembly to provide the necessary resources for the Working Group on communications (to be renamed Working Group on the Optional Protocol) to meet for five additional days per year starting from 2014 and to extend its membership from five to seven members during the requested five additional days of annual meeting time in order to enable the Working Group to examine information received under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. The membership of the Task Force on inquiries was expanded.

IV. Reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions

61. States parties’ reports have been scheduled through the fifty-eighth session, to be held in 2014. The secretariat has sent out notes verbales requesting the States parties concerned to confirm the sessions at which they are scheduled. In addition to preferences by the States parties, the secretariat gives due consideration to geographic distribution as well as gives priority to initial reports, where possible. Since the regional groupings themselves are not evenly divided, there may be a larger proportion of States from the African Group and the Asia and Pacific Group scheduled during some of the sessions. It is important to note that Member States as well as other strategic partners have commented favourably on the advanced scheduling of States parties before the Committee, which allows adequate time for

preparing for the constructive dialogues between the States parties concerned and the Committee. It also provides adequate notice for other stakeholders to provide input into the reporting process. The schedule for the fifty-fifth to the fifty-eighth sessions is as follows: the following States parties are scheduled for the fifty-fifth session, in July 2013: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Serbia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the following States parties are scheduled for the fifty-sixth session, to be held in October 2013: Andorra, Benin, Cambodia, Colombia, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles and Tajikistan; the following States parties are scheduled for the fifty-seventh session, to be held in February 2014: Bahrain, Cameroon, Finland, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Senegal and Sierra Leone; and the following States parties are scheduled for the fifty-eighth session, to be held in July 2014: the Central African Republic, Georgia, India, Lithuania, Mauritania, Peru, Swaziland and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Annex I

States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention

Africa

Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan

Asia and the Pacific

Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Niue
Palau (signed on 20 September 2011)
Tonga

Western Europe and other

Holy See
United States of America (signed on 17 July 1980)

Annex II

States parties whose reports have been submitted but not yet scheduled as at 1 May 2013

<i>State party</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered (session)</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Azerbaijan				
Fifth periodic report	9 August 2013	11 March 2013	2009 (44)	15 August 2008 (fourth periodic report)
Belgium				
Seventh periodic report	9 August 2010	2 October 2012	2008 (42)	9 May 2007 (combined fifth and sixth periodic reports)
Brunei Darussalam				
Combined initial and second periodic reports	23 June 2011	30 April 2013	Not applicable	Not applicable
China				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	October 2012	20 January 2012	2006 (36)	4 February 2004 (combined fifth and sixth reports)
Ecuador				
Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports	9 December 2012	11 December 2012	2008 (42)	23 February 2007 (combined sixth and seventh reports)
Eritrea				
Fourth periodic report	5 October 2008	5 October 2012	2006 (34)	8 January 2004 (combined initial to third reports)
Gabon				
Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports (Consideration to include eighth periodic report due on 20 February 2012)	20 February 2008	19 January 2012	2005 (32)	4 June 2003 (combined second to fifth reports)

<i>State party</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered (session)</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Gambia				
Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports	16 May 2010	1 October 2012	2005 (33)	4 April 2003 (combined initial to third reports)
Ghana				
Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports	1 February 2011	12 June 2012	2006 (36)	23 February 2005 (combined third to fifth reports)
Guinea				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	8 September 2011	19 April 2012	2007 (39)	26 July 2005 (combined fourth to sixth reports)
Kyrgyzstan				
Fourth periodic report	October 2012	18 January 2013	2008 (42)	27 February 2007 (third report)
Maldives				
Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports	31 July 2010	13 December 2012	2007 (37)	25 May 2005 (combined second and third reports)
Poland				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	3 September 2010	21 November 2012	2007 (37)	29 November 2004 (combined fourth to sixth reports)
Solomon Islands				
Combined initial to third periodic reports	5 June 2011	30 January 2013	Not applicable	Not applicable
Tuvalu				
Combined third and fourth periodic reports	6 November 2012	6 November 2012	2009 (44)	2 July 2008 (combined initial and second reports)

<i>State party</i>	<i>Date due</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Previously considered (session)</i>	<i>Previous report(s)</i>
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	1 June 2012	21 September 2012	2006 (34)	25 June 2004 (combined fourth to sixth reports)
Viet Nam				
Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports	19 March 2011	30 January 2013	2007 (37)	15 June 2005 (combined fifth and sixth reports)