



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-eighth session

Summary record of the 2059th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 13 May 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

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

Statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that, since it was his last opportunity to address the Committee before his retirement, he wished to acknowledge its vital contribution to defending women's rights. In particular, he admired the Committee's efforts to address the imbalance of gender power relations not just at the legal level but by tackling the root causes of inequality at the cultural and political levels.

3. Unfortunately, the progress towards realizing women's rights that had been made in recent decades was currently being undermined and reversed. Autocrats and populists were attacking women's freedoms and sexual and reproductive rights, and men were taking the lead in the development of new technologies, resulting in biased algorithms that could give rise to inequalities in activities like recruitment, the assessment of credit ratings and medical imaging. Encouraging Member States to push back against the pushbacks, the Secretary-General had called on Governments, civil society and the technology industry to help bridge the digital gender divide and sign a global digital compact at the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024, which would provide an opportunity to combat the feminization of poverty. The Secretary-General had also urged Member States to support both a stimulus package designed to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality, and the New Agenda for Peace, in order to strengthen the participation of women in decision-making on peacebuilding.

4. The Committee's draft general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems was a blueprint for addressing the concerns voiced by the Secretary-General. It had generated strong interest among States parties, civil society and academia, and the Committee had received 65 submissions in response to its call for comments on the draft. The preparation of the general recommendation had been an inclusive and participatory process involving expert group meetings on specific issues and regional consultations held in Istanbul, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Barbados and Bogotá. The general recommendation was scheduled to be adopted at the Committee's following session in October, shortly after the Summit of the Future, which itself presented an opportunity to accelerate progress on women's rights, including equal representation in decision-making.

5. In October 2023, the Human Rights Council had recognized that fulfilling the objectives of the International Year of the Family could contribute to achieving gender equality, empowering women and girls and eliminating violence against them. Accordingly, the Council had decided to organize a panel discussion on international law relating to the role of families in promoting and protecting the human rights of their members. It had also adopted a landmark resolution calling on Member States to combat discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons and had asked OHCHR to organize activities on discriminatory laws and policies and acts of violence and harmful practices against intersex persons to take place at its sixtieth session in September and October 2025. On 28 June 2024, during its fifty-sixth session, the Council would hold panel discussions on economic violence against women and girls, and the human rights economy and women's rights.

6. OHCHR had continued its efforts to mobilize support among Member States with the aim of securing a General Assembly resolution on the treaty body strengthening process in December 2024. In that regard, he wished to commend the Chair for her role in helping to convene an informal meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies in February 2024 in Madrid. OHCHR had published an updated version of its working paper on the development of a plan to implement the conclusions of the thirty-fourth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights

treaty bodies and an analytical summary of States' preferences regarding the options contained in that document.

7. OHCHR shared the Committee's concerns about the repercussions of the liquidity crisis facing the United Nations and was doing everything within its power to limit its impact on the work of the treaty bodies. The letter sent to the President of the General Assembly by the Chairs of the treaty bodies had been a very useful tool in that regard. Sufficient funding had been secured to ensure that all treaty bodies would be able to hold their second sessions of meetings in 2024. However, they would not be able to convene their usual working groups prior to those sessions and the fate of their third sessions of meetings was still unclear.

8. **Mr. Safarov** said that it was deeply worrying that the Committee was not able to convene pre-session working groups or deal efficiently with individual communications at a time when a growing number of women and children around the world found themselves in conflict situations and at risk of acts of terrorism and trafficking in persons. The liquidity crisis was having a direct impact on the work of the independent human rights experts within the United Nations system. With the Summit of the Future and the twenty-ninth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change both taking place in 2024, it was time for the United Nations to take a strong stance to ensure the ongoing protection of human rights. He hoped that the necessary funds would be made available for independent experts to continue their work, in spite of the challenges they faced, and that future generations of experts and human rights defenders would enjoy more favourable conditions to perform their functions.

9. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was time to bring about a paradigm shift by reframing the equal participation of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention as both a fundamental right and a solution. Creativity and innovation of that nature were urgently required at a time when the multilateral system faced an internal crisis and fundamental rights were being put under increasing pressure around the world. Furthermore, gender inequality in new technologies, artificial intelligence and the metaverse urgently needed to be addressed in order to prevent the emergence of new forms of systemic discrimination against women. Above all, urgent action was required to enable the human rights treaty bodies and their secretariats to function effectively. Treaty bodies were of critical importance, yet they were currently confronted with an unprecedented volume of work and their ability to carry out that work was in danger of being seriously restricted.

10. **Ms. Haidar** said that part of Mr. Salama's legacy from his time at OHCHR could be seen in the establishment of the Committee's knowledge hub, which was aimed at changing narratives and ensuring that tradition and religion were not used to impede women's rights. She wished to know whether the Committee might be able to work with the International Telecommunication Union or another relevant body with the aim of formulating specific solutions to the issue of inequality in the field of artificial intelligence.

11. **Ms. Rana** said that she would be interested to hear more about the proposed global digital compact. She wished to know which countries were leading the initiative, whether a text was already available for Member States to sign and whether there was any way for the Committee to engage in the process.

12. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that, by placing a focus on innovative approaches such as peer-to-peer learning, Mr. Salama had helped to show that the activities of the human rights treaty bodies should not be confined to the administration of law or the interpretation of judicial boundaries and legal standards. The Committee was conscious of the need to address the biases and discrimination that existed in the digital world, and she hoped that the global digital compact would prove to be a useful tool in achieving that goal.

13. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that there were major underlying reasons for the crisis facing the human rights system. However, while it was important for States to show their support for the system at the multilateral level, independent expert bodies must also put forward their own innovative solutions. Furthermore, the voice of independent experts served as a vital antidote to the instrumentalization of human rights debates. For that reason, it was crucial for the Chairs of the treaty bodies to remain united and to send a clear message outlining their concerns to Member States and decision makers in New York.

14. **The Chair** said that she wished to publicly express the Committee's appreciation for Mr. Salama's work during his time at OHCHR.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/88/1)

15. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the eighty-seventh and eighty-eighth sessions of the Committee

16. **The Chair** said that the number of States parties to the Convention had remained at 189. The number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention, concerning the Committee's meeting time, had remained at 81. A total of 126 States parties were required to accept the amendment in order to bring it into force. Since the start of the previous session, periodic reports had been received from Angola and Thailand. Since the Committee had decided to make the simplified reporting procedure the default procedure for the submission of State party reports, 13 States parties had indicated that they wished to maintain the traditional reporting procedure.

17. Since the Committee's previous session, she had attended an informal meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies in Madrid, where the participants had discussed the harmonization of working methods and conducted preparatory work for the thirty-sixth annual meeting of the Chairs, to be held in New York in June. She had also attended the first session of the parliament for women with disabilities in Spain, organized by the Women's Branch of the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities.

18. On 5 March, she had spoken about the Committee's work and the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women during an online briefing for civil society organizations. The following day, she had appeared before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where she had spoken about the preparatory work for general recommendation No. 40. On 8 March, she had returned to her hometown in Extremadura, Spain, where she had spoken to primary school students about the meaning of International Women's Day and the importance of the Convention.

19. On 11 March, she had represented the Committee at the opening of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. She had then participated in a series of events over the following week in New York, including an Arria-formula meeting with the Security Council on the links between the Convention and women and peace and security. The Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention and the Committee had co-chaired a meeting of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women. The Platform had also been discussed at four high-level meetings with the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Furthermore, she had represented the Committee at a number of side events during the sixty-eighth session of the Commission, including a meeting on care policy jointly organized by the Committee and UN-Women.

20. On 18 March, she had spoken about the impact that advances in equality had had on women in South Africa at a conference on the state of human rights in that country and, on 21 March, she had spoken about the Convention at a training event in Vigo, Spain. In April, she had participated in a side event at the eighth International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, given a presentation on draft general recommendation No. 40 before the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe and represented the Committee at a meeting on the deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities from the point of view of women with disabilities. Lastly, on 8 May, she had spoken about the equal and inclusive participation of women with disabilities in trade unions at a conference on trade union rights and persons with disabilities organized by the General Union of Workers in Madrid.

21. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she had been appointed as a member of the expert group on the implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of

Poverty and that her concept note on the feminization of poverty and international law – which included reference to draft general recommendation No. 40 – would inform the report of the Secretary-General on the eradication of poverty. In addition, she was serving as co-chair of a high-level legal expert group on gender persecution that was currently conducting a close examination of article 29 of the Convention.

22. She continued to teach classes on artificial intelligence and gender bias in law and had convened meetings between technology sector leaders in an academic setting to discuss how emerging challenges might be addressed with the help of the Convention. She also continued to teach international women's rights and leadership to students of law and public policy at the University of Pennsylvania and other institutions and to write and publish on issues relating to the Convention. She had authored a compendium of the Committee's decisions on complaints under the Optional Protocol, which was now available on the website of the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.

23. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonso** said that she had attended a conference at Boston University School of Law on reproductive rights in Latin America and an event in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, on women's progress in human rights to commemorate International Women's Day. She had spoken in Ecuador about the application of general recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls and had discussed the same subject at events held in Guatemala and Mexico.

24. Along with Ms. Ameline, she had given a presentation on draft general recommendation No. 40 in Bogotá, Colombia. She had attended two events at the Institute for Legal Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, one on the gender perspective in legal proceedings and another on the rights of the child. Lastly, she attended an event organized by the Australian Embassy in Colombia with a view to building a network of women human rights defenders tasked with combating violence in Latin America.

25. **Ms. Ameline** said that, with the support of her fellow Committee members, she had successfully held regional consultations on draft general recommendation No. 40 in Istanbul, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Bogotá and a number of other cities. The draft would undergo an initial reading in a matter of days and a regional consultation in Asia would soon be organized.

26. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, during the intersessional period, she had attended a number of events at which draft general recommendation No. 40 had been the main focus, including an international conference hosted by the University of Bern in Switzerland and a workshop under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Namibia on promoting women's participation in the forthcoming elections. In addition, she had delivered two keynote speeches in Ghana: one to law enforcement agencies on human rights in law enforcement; and another on the impact of increased women's activism on the country's development, against the backdrop of the elections to be held in December 2024. Lastly, she had been invited to serve as moderator on a new project in Ghana on women's economic empowerment, which would encompass issues of interest to the Committee, including artificial intelligence.

27. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she had participated in the first regional consultation on draft general recommendation No. 40 in Istanbul, Turkey, and had continued to promote the equal and inclusive participation of women in decision-making systems in her own country, Bulgaria, where both national and European elections would be held in 2024. She had worked with the National Institute of Magistrates in Bulgaria to produce a compilation of the Committee's decisions on individual communications. That compilation was now available on the Institute's website and accessible to all Bulgarian judges and lawyers, which would facilitate the wider dissemination of the Committee's practice within Bulgaria.

28. **Ms. Bethel** said that her work during the intersessional period had been dedicated entirely to organizing and executing a successful regional consultation in Barbados on draft general recommendation No. 40, in collaboration with UN-Women, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Caribbean Women in Leadership, and the Caribbean Development Bank.

29. **Ms. Haidar** said that, having attended several side events during the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, she had observed the impact that the Committee had had at that session and would be interested in exploring ways of enabling the Committee to attend all future sessions of the Commission. She had also attended the regional

consultation on draft general recommendation No. 40 in Cairo, Egypt, which, in view of current regional events and broader trends of polarization worldwide, would be crucial in shaping the draft general recommendation and linking it to Security Council resolution 1325 (2020) on women and peace and security.

30. As a member of an expert group constituted by technology conglomerate Meta on human rights and content policy, she had attended an online meeting in April aimed at defining issues and challenges in that field and would continue those deliberations in an in-person meeting in June. She had participated in the launch of a university diploma programme on religion and human rights with particular emphasis on women's human rights that had been prepared jointly by Saint Joseph University of Beirut and OHCHR as part of its Faith for Rights initiative.

31. **Ms. Morsy** said that she too had participated in the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. She had led an event on making all spaces safe for women and girls and had attended two additional events: one led by Egypt, in partnership with UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), on unified action to combat all forms of violence in the context of digital technologies; and the other led by the G100 group of 100 women leaders on sustainable housing for women in precarious situations and their access to public services.

32. She had also participated in the regional consultation in Cairo, Egypt, on draft general recommendation No. 40, including by leading a session on technology-facilitated violence against women. In addition, she had attended an event in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt on a study of stereotypes and the role of men and women in economic empowerment. She had also launched a project on digital space and human rights in partnership with UN-Women and other United Nations agencies and had begun drafting guidelines on addressing technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

33. **Ms. Rana** said that she had delivered an online training workshop to NGO representatives on the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's general recommendations and possibilities for engaging with the Committee. In addition, she had attended and spoken at numerous events and meetings relating to women and peace and security, including an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council. Lastly, in Nepal, she had led research on transitional justice in that country, examining stumbling blocks and ways forward with a focus on the women and peace and security agenda, and convened a meeting on the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action as part of the Generation Equality Forum. She had also convened two workshops: one with women members of parliament on ending child marriage; and another with chief secretaries of government ministries on integrating the Committee's concluding observations into annual provincial plans and policies.

34. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she had served as a panellist in a discussion held to celebrate International Women's Day, entitled "Inspiring Equal and Inclusive Participation of Women in Political Decision-Making", during which she had spoken about draft general recommendation No. 40.

35. **Mr. Safarov** said that he had attended an international conference in Uzbekistan held on the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Institute of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis, where he had spoken about the Committee and the Optional Protocol to the Convention. He had also attended the sixth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, where he had spoken about advancing women's rights in the future and the challenges faced in the past.

36. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had given a lecture at the University of the West Indies, entitled "Do women still need rights? Reflections on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the twenty-first-century Caribbean", and had worked hard on preparing for the regional consultation on draft general recommendation No. 40. In a small rural community in her country, Trinidad and Tobago, she had co-facilitated a workshop for parents and children on the subject of child sexual abuse.

37. **Ms. Akia** said that, together with the Ministry of Justice and the police in Uganda, and in commemoration of International Women's Day, she had led a televised discussion on the implementation of the Convention to ensure women's rights and gender equality. In addition, she had taught another class on the Convention at Columbia University following the success of her first and had had a fruitful exchange with students on the challenges currently faced by women and girls. Lastly, she had contributed to a discussion convened by the French Embassy in Uganda for civil society organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of the feminist diplomacy of France in promoting women's and girls' rights, including in relation to climate change.

38. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she had delivered a presentation at the aforementioned international conference hosted by the University of Bern and had served as a panellist during an event organized by the National Assembly of Nigeria to commemorate International Women's Day, where she had spoken about driving legislative reforms for gender parity using draft general recommendation No. 40 as a guide. Like her colleagues, she had participated in a number of events as part of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, notably one celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Cities for CEDAW campaign, during which she had spoken about the role of the Convention in transforming cities and communities for sustainable development. She had spoken at other events on a number of important topics, including at the IPU Assembly on the role of parliaments in stemming losses resulting from gender inequalities and at the annual conference of the International Law Association in Nigeria on approaches to public-private partnerships that were informed by the Convention.

39. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she had delivered a presentation on the Committee's role in promoting accountability for perpetrators of crimes, including best practices and results arising from the Committee's concluding observations and general recommendations, at a conference organized by OHCHR at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, Republic of Korea. She had promoted the treaty body strengthening process by acting as moderator at a dedicated event organized by the Lithuanian mission to the United Nations Office at Geneva and by delivering a talk on the subject at the University of Cambridge.

40. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she had participated in several online and in-person panels during the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, including one relating to Indigenous women in Latin America. She was continuing to promote and raise awareness of draft general recommendation No. 40 in Cuba and was currently focusing on groups of women scientists, doctors and researchers as well as some civil society organizations and groups of young women in further and higher education.

41. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she had discussed the Committee's experience of considering individual communications under the Optional Protocol to the Convention at an international celebration of the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. During that event, representatives of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had expressed significant concern about the slow rate of ratification of that Optional Protocol.

42. **Ms. Mikko** said that she had highlighted the importance of the issues contained in draft general recommendation No. 40 to an Estonian development agency and had appeared on Postimees, an Estonian television news channel, to speak about the Convention, the Committee's work and its eighty-eighth session.

43. **Ms. Xia** said that she had discussed the work of the Committee at an international forum and had organized field visits to clinics by women government representatives with a view to formulating recommendations on how the Government might facilitate women's return to work after giving birth.

44. **Ms. Hacker** said that she had given several lectures on the impact on women of the ongoing conflict between Israel, Gaza and Lebanon. She had drawn on general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and had examined the responses of other United Nations agencies to the gender dimensions of conflict. Two weeks thence, she would be launching a new course at Tel Aviv University on the Convention and would include videos produced by members of the Committee on different articles of the Convention.

45. **Ms. Manalo** said that her calls for the Philippine Commission on Women to be elevated from the level of government agency to that of ministry had not been heeded. She was committed to supporting a young Indigenous woman of Muslim faith who had recently passed the relevant examinations to embark on a career in the diplomatic service so that she might serve as a model for all Indigenous women in the Philippines.

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

46. **Ms. Haidar** said that the pre-sessional working group had met in Geneva from 30 October to 3 November 2023. It had prepared lists of issues and questions in relation to the reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Saudi Arabia, and lists of issues and questions prior to reporting for Ireland, Israel, Mauritius, Mexico and Romania under the simplified reporting procedure. To prepare the lists of issues and questions, the working group had drawn on the core documents of the States parties, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, and the periodic reports of the States parties, with the exception of Ireland, Israel, Mauritius, Mexico and Romania, which would submit their periodic reports in response to the respective list of issues and questions prior to reporting. The Committee 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 United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and NGOs. The lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

47. **The Chair** said that, owing to the backlog of State party reports pending consideration by the Committee that had accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee had decided to postpone the consideration of the reports of the aforementioned States parties. It had decided to consider, at its eighty-eighth session, the reports of Brazil, Estonia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Montenegro, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda and Singapore.

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

48. **Ms. Akia**, speaking on behalf of the Rapporteur for follow-up to concluding observations, said that, at the end of its eighty-seventh session, the Committee had sent letters outlining the assessment of follow-up reports to Ecuador, Egypt and Maldives. Reminder letters had been sent to Indonesia, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Yemen as their follow-up reports had been scheduled for consideration at the eighty-seventh session but had not yet been received. The Committee had received two follow-up reports: one from the Russian Federation, which had been received five months late, and the other from Uzbekistan, which had been received on time. She invited the country rapporteurs for the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan to assist in the assessment of those follow-up reports. Reminders to submit follow-up reports should be sent to the Dominican Republic, Gabon, Lebanon, Panama, Peru, Senegal and Uganda.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.