



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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

Summary record of the 1969th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 8 May 2023, 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-fifth 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, in February 2023, the Committee had held a half-day of general discussion on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, as the springboard for the development of a general recommendation on that issue. The discussion had been attended by representatives of 50 States parties, as well as by representatives of civil society organizations and other interested stakeholders.

3. The campaign organized by OHCHR to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would draw additional attention to women's participation in decision-making, as that subject would be the thematic spotlight of the campaign for June. In highlighting that issue, the campaign would raise awareness of the importance of women's equal participation in political and public life and the inseparable link between such participation and women's rights to equality in family life, freedom from gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and economic empowerment. On a closely related subject, OHCHR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union would be holding a round-table discussion on parliaments and women's rights on 22 June.

4. On 18 and 19 September 2023, Member States would be attending the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would serve to reinvigorate global commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment was integral to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the achievement of transformative change. However, gender equality was under threat from the rise of conservative narratives surrounding women's role in the family and the reversals brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Only by ensuring the full range of women's rights would it be possible to eliminate discrimination and exclusion, reduce existing inequalities and deliver on the central promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

5. The high-level political forum on sustainable development would mark the start of the one-year countdown to the 2024 Summit of the Future and the discussions concerning the period after 2030. It was gratifying to note that the Committee had made an official contribution to the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development in the form of a statement entitled "Women as leading forces for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the post-COVID-19 world".

6. OHCHR was in the process of finalizing a draft implementation plan for the treaty body strengthening process that concerned the predictable review calendar, the harmonization of working methods and the digital uplift. The plan set out a number of possible options and posed a number of questions for the Chairs to discuss and resolve. It would be considered at the upcoming annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, which would take place between 29 May and 2 June 2023.

7. With regard to the predictable review calendar, for instance, the Chairs would need to decide whether the calendar should be organized in alphabetical order of Member States, or whether meetings with certain treaty bodies should be clustered together to facilitate the preparatory work undertaken by States. If meetings were to be clustered, the Chairs would need to decide whether that approach should be applied to all treaty bodies or only to the covenant treaty bodies, and whether meetings with some of the specialized committees should be held back-to-back. No measures were being considered that might undermine the autonomy or specificity of any treaty body.

8. A further important point to note was that the majority of the questions raised in the implementation plan were for the Member States to resolve, rather than the Chairs. The Member States were the creators and beneficiaries of the treaty body system and they could

not be expected to back the proposed changes if they did not believe that they were in their interest.

9. **Ms. Manalo** said that she wished to know whether OHCHR was planning to hold an event to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which would fall on 10 December 2023. If so, she wondered how the Committee might participate in the event and contribute towards the further promotion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

10. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know whether OHCHR would consider stepping up the support and coordination that its regional offices provided to women and girls who were fleeing conflict situations. He also wondered whether OHCHR might advocate for the adoption of a United Nations-wide gender equality strategy that would provide regional organizations with a model on which to base their own strategies.

11. **Ms. Haidar** said that she wished to know what would be done to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which provided an opportunity to reflect on the inconsistent manner in which human rights standards were applied in countries around the world. It was still not clear whether the Committee would be provided with the human and financial resources that it required to fulfil its mandate under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

12. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to know whether OHCHR and the Committee might find ways of strengthening their cooperation across a range of gender issues, including strategies to support women migrants and women fleeing conflict situations. OHCHR and the Committee might also work together to promote alignment between the Committee's vision of women's status and the vision of the United Nations in general. The status of women should be a central consideration in forthcoming major events such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Summit of the Future.

13. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that cooperation between the Committee and OHCHR existed but could always be strengthened. The best way that the Committee could mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be to continue developing its draft general recommendation on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. The successful completion of the treaty body strengthening process would also be an appropriate way of marking the anniversary, as it would ease the reporting burden on Member States.

14. The challenge was to improve the treaty body system without making any amendments to the existing treaties. The Committee could best support the treaty body strengthening process by empowering its Chair to play a decisive role at the forthcoming annual meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies in New York. In that regard, the Committee might consider holding an informal meeting beforehand, to ensure that its Chair was properly prepared for the annual meeting. Ideally, the plan for implementing the treaty body strengthening process would be ready by the end of 2023, so that Member States would have sufficient time to consider the budgetary and other implications that the new process would have for them prior to the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly in 2024. OHCHR pledged to continue using its regional offices to support women fleeing conflict situations.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/85/1)

15. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth sessions of the Committee

16. **The Chair** said that the number of States parties to the Convention had remained at 189. On 2 May 2023, Honduras had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time, bringing the total number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to 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 Belarus, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Saudi Arabia.

17. In 2022, it had been decided to make the simplified reporting procedure the default procedure for the submission of State party reports to the Committee. A total of 13 States parties had indicated that they wished to maintain the traditional reporting procedure.

18. On 6 March 2023, she had given the Committee's statement at the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York and had attended a number of side events during the session. On 7 March, for instance, she had participated in a meeting with the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, who would shortly be briefing the Committee on the work carried out by UN-Women to implement the Convention and the outcomes of the recent session of the Commission. Also on 7 March, she had met informally with a number of ministers and ambassadors who had been attending the session of the Commission.

19. On International Women's Day, 8 March 2023, she had met with former Committee member Ms. Pramila Patten, who was now the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to explore synergies arising from the framework of cooperation between the Committee and the Special Representative. She had also met informally with Ms. Iris Luarasi, President of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women, to discuss potential synergies between the Committee and the Council of Europe. She had held a further meeting with Ms. Irena Moozova, the Director for Equality and Union Citizenship of the European Commission, to explore ways in which the European Union and the Committee might cooperate on gender equality and women's rights. Also on 8 March, she had met with Ms. Diana Dalton, the Head of Gender and Equalities of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, to discuss gender stereotypes and women's rights. On 9 March, she had met informally with Ms. Sun Xueling, the Minister of Social and Family Development of Singapore, who had reported on the progress made in Singapore in the area of women's rights and gender equality. She had also met with representatives of the European Women's Lobby and Women Enabled International to discuss the Committee's draft general recommendation on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.

20. On 11 March, she had participated in a number of events held to discuss the women's global agenda in Galicia, Spain. On 16 March, in Madrid, she had taken part in a virtual round table on States and their obligation to prevent and eliminate gender-based institutional violence. On 20 April, she had given a lecture on gender and human rights to students at Carlos III University in Madrid.

21. On 25 April, she had spoken about preventing and combating violence against women with disabilities at the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France. Lastly, on 2 May, she had participated as the Chair of the Committee in an online preparatory meeting for the thirty-fifth annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies.

22. **Ms. Mikko** said that, on 8 March, she had appeared in an hour-long broadcast in the Estonian media to discuss her work with the Committee and her other activities as a human rights defender. On the evening of the same day, she had given the keynote speech at a concert held in Tallinn. She had also opened an exhibition about women activists in Zambia.

23. **Ms. Manalo** said that the Philippine Commission on Women would hold a seminar/workshop on 10 December 2023 in honour of the Philippine diplomat Carlos P. Romulo, who had helped to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Her son, who was currently the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, would also help to organize a one-day workshop to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

24. **Ms. Haidar** said that the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union had been held in Bahrain from 11 to 15 March. In a speech to the Forum of Women Parliamentarians on 11 March, she had addressed, inter alia, the issue of women's leadership in the context of insecurity and crises. She had participated in a regional consultation held by the International

Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in Maldives on 18 and 19 March, at which she had focused on currently available jurisprudence concerning gender justice in the context of climate change. OHCHR and the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights had organized a training session on human rights mechanisms in Geneva from 27 to 30 March for activists and academics from the Middle East and North Africa region.

25. **Ms. Bethel** said that, on International Women’s Day, she had participated in a panel discussion in the Bahamas on women in transformative leadership. She had highlighted the draft general recommendation on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. On 25 March, Ms. Akizuki had presented a statement to Equality Bahamas on article 11 of the Convention concerning employment. On 26 April, she had participated in the screening of a documentary on gender inequality in the Bahamas.

26. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she had participated in an International Women’s Day webinar on “Breaking the silence on domestic abuse”, in partnership with the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Alumni Association in Nigeria. She had also taken part in a side event at the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women on an innovative retail incubation scheme. As a guest speaker at the Strategic Women in Energy, Oil and Gas Summit, she had highlighted the issue of women’s leadership in that sector and the need to take into account the norms enshrined in the Convention.

27. **Ms. Morsy** said that, on 7 March, she had participated in the First Regional Review of the Arab Women Development Agenda 2030. On 9 March, she had spoken at a side event of the session of the Commission on the Status of Women on catalysing innovation to end female genital mutilation and child marriage. She had also held a discussion on 9 March with the Executive Director of UN-Women on the importance of ensuring that the proposed United Nations convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes addressed the issue of the use of cyber technology to facilitate violence against women. At the International Finance Corporation’s Law and Gender Conference on 3 May, she had delivered a keynote address on the interplay between the private sector and the judiciary in advancing women’s economic participation.

28. **Ms. Akizuki** said that, on 15 March, she had participated in a panel discussion organized by Women in Law Japan on a path towards a gender-equal future. As mentioned by Ms. Bethel, she had taken part in the Equality Bahamas event on 25 March. On 8 April, she had participated in an online seminar, during which she had highlighted the current status of gender equality in Japan and the role played by the Convention and the Committee in promoting equality.

29. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she had attended a conference of the Mexican National Human Rights Commission on 8 March, at which the content of the Committee’s general recommendation No. 39 on the rights of indigenous women and girls had been discussed. At the Mexican Social Security Institute, she had participated in a meeting on women’s rights in the area of employment. She had discussed the Committee’s role in consolidating the rights of women at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education, the Institute for Women in the State of Morelos and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She had participated in a virtual meeting with UN-Women in Panama on general recommendation No. 39. On 25 April, she had participated in a forum of the Organization of American States on how to guarantee better geographical representation in international organizations.

30. **Mr. Safarov** said that he had participated in the launch of two social enterprise brands in Azerbaijan, supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation, as well as in an event aimed at implementation of the Azerbaijan national action plan on combating trafficking in persons and the Committee’s recommendations. On 31 March, he had taken part in a round table on women and cybercrime, organized by the Regional Office for Central Asia of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime together with UN-Women. He had participated as a trainer in a virtual human rights school project organized by OHCHR, the European Union and the youth organization Reliable Future. On 26 April, he had delivered a presentation at a conference on Women and intellectual property: innovations and creativity.

31. **Ms. Xia** said that she had been elected to the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and elected

as Chair of the women's segment, which had discussed women's issues in closed meetings and submitted 70 proposals to be considered by the Government. She had participated in research and a field trip organized by CPPCC to investigate women's burdens in terms of housing, employment and education and had conducted several seminars with women representatives at the grass-roots level. She had also participated in a congress on female entrepreneurs in the Chinese catering industry and chaired an international round table on female entrepreneurs, at which she had presented information on the Committee.

32. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she, too, had participated in the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women and in a side event organized by the American Bar Association and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, which had focused on women's sexual and reproductive health. She had delivered a lecture at the first international congress in Cuba on persons with disabilities as subjects of civil and family law. She had been part of the faculty on two courses for judges and lawyers in March and April, during which she had addressed issues related to the Convention and the Committee's work. On 26 March, she had been elected to the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power.

33. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that on 8 March, International Women's Day, she had participated in a European Union event in Brussels organized by the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the topic of women's political participation. She had highlighted the Committee's forthcoming general recommendation on the same subject and had requested support for its implementation.

34. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she had launched the *Handbook of Feminist Governance* on 27 March at the Australian National University. It comprised state-of-the-art research by 58 leading international scholars and explored the evolution of feminist analytical and organizational principles over the previous 50 years and their introduction into governance institutions in national, regional and global settings.

35. **Ms. Rana** said that, in connection with the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, she had participated as a panellist on 13 March in an event on women, peace and security in Ukraine and, on 14 March, she had been a panellist at an event on "Women at the forefront of justice delivery". On 31 March and 1 April, she had led a session at a workshop in Nepal organized by ICJ on eliminating gender discriminatory attitudes and enhancing women's access to justice. She had also participated in a workshop organized by ICJ on the same subject in Sri Lanka on 10 and 11 April. On 21 April, she had chaired a virtual meeting with the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan and the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls on the forthcoming mission to Afghanistan. On 26 and 28 April she had attended a workshop on peacebuilding organized by the United Nations Development Programme in Bangkok.

36. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she had delivered an address at Harvard University on the importance of ensuring that the United States of America ratified the Convention. She had discussed Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women and peace and security with the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Nations. She had also attended the International Finance Corporation's Law and Gender Conference in Cairo and engaged in a panel discussion with the Chief Justice of Kenya and a member of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on integration of the Convention into judicial reasoning. She had been invited to create a research hub at her university's law school to examine the action taken by the Committee during the previous 10 years to develop jurisprudence based on general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

37. **Ms. Ameline** said that she had participated in many side events during the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which had focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the digital age. In the context of closer cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, she had taken part in a number of videoconferences with various parliaments that were currently more aware of the Committee's action to promote the implementation of the Convention. During a three-day visit to Colombia, she had discussed the problem of trafficking in persons with representatives of the Government.

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

38. **Ms. Ameline**, speaking on behalf of the former Chair of the pre-sessional working group, Ms. Gabr, whose term as a Committee member had ended on 31 December 2022, said that the pre-sessional working group for the eighty-fifth session had met in Geneva from 31 October to 4 November 2022. It had prepared lists of issues and questions concerning the reports of Benin, Guatemala and Singapore, and lists of issues and questions prior to reporting for Fiji, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the State of Palestine and Thailand under the simplified reporting procedure. In preparing the lists of issues and questions, the working group had drawn on the common core documents of the States parties and on their periodic reports, where available. The working group had also drawn on the Committee's general recommendations, the concluding observations of the Committee and other treaty bodies and, in particular, the States parties' follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations. In addition, the working group had received written and oral information from entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions. The lists of issues and questions and the lists of issues and questions prior to reporting had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

39. **The Chair** said that, owing to the backlog of State party reports pending consideration that had accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee had decided to postpone consideration of the reports of the aforementioned States parties. It had decided to consider, at its eighty-fifth session, the reports of China (including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macao Special Administrative Region), Germany, Iceland, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Slovakia, Spain, Timor Leste and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

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

40. **Ms. Stott Despoja**, speaking as Rapporteur on follow-up to concluding observations, said that, at the end of the eighty-fourth session, a follow-up letter outlining the outcome of the assessment of the follow-up report had been sent to Zimbabwe. As no assessments of follow-up reports had been scheduled for consideration at the eighty-fourth session, no reminder letters had been sent at the end of the session.

41. The Committee has received follow-up reports for the current session from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a seven-month delay, from Denmark, on time, and from the Republic of Moldova, with a one-year delay. A follow-up report from Pakistan has also been received, with more than a one-year delay. As that report had been received just before the session, it would be scheduled for consideration at the eighty-sixth session in October 2023.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.