



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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

Summary record of the 2029th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 29 January 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-seventh session of the Committee.

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

2. **Mr. Ori** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that promotion of women's rights had constituted a key element of the Human Rights 75 initiative to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had shone a spotlight on unpaid and low-paid care work done by women and girls and on the need to bolster women's participation in public and political life. The Human Rights 75 high-level event, convened by OHCHR on 11 and 12 December and co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland, had brought together representatives of Governments, organizations in the United Nations system and civil society to discuss the future of human rights, peace and security, digital technologies, development and the environment. Some 56 of the 157 pledges made by Member States at the event, presented in the form of a virtual "pledging tree", had related to women's rights and gender equality. The Committee could help translate those pledges into concrete action through its constructive dialogues with States parties and through the guidance it would provide in its draft general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. Women's rights must feature prominently in preparatory work for the Summit of the Future.

3. OHCHR continued to support the treaty body strengthening process. At the thirty-fifth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, held in May and June 2023, the Chairs had indicated broad support for a predictable calendar of State party reviews, harmonization of working methods and the increased use of digital tools, as set out in a working paper prepared by OHCHR. Discussions held among the Chairs in December 2023 on outreach to civil society had further set the stage for 2024. However, budgetary constraints, coupled with the prolonged liquidity crisis, were set to have an adverse impact on the proper functioning of the treaty body system and risked further increasing the backlog of periodic reports, individual communications and urgent actions for consideration by the treaty bodies. In November 2023, the High Commissioner had underscored the urgent need for Member States to provide the resources needed to overcome those challenges, stressing that the Office had reached a point where it must align its deliverables with existing capacity. OHCHR and the treaty bodies shared the strategic goal of mobilizing support from Member States to support the strengthening and harmonization of the work of the treaty bodies on the basis of the working paper and on the Chairs' conclusions in that regard. Decisions to be taken by Member States in 2024 on the main pillars of the treaty body strengthening process, in particular on issues requiring additional financial and human resources, would determine the trajectory of the treaty body system.

4. As of 22 January 2024, as a consequence of the termination of the business continuity plan implemented in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the United Nations Office at Geneva had ceased servicing all hybrid and virtual meetings taking place at the Office except for mandated hybrid meetings, such as official dialogues between the treaty bodies and States parties. The disruption caused by the sudden announcement to discontinue hybrid meetings, including the impact on the work of the treaty bodies, was deeply regrettable.

5. **Ms. Rana** said that hybrid meetings had enabled States parties and civil society organizations to participate in the Committee's work. She therefore wished to know why the decision had been taken to discontinue hybrid meetings, particularly as OHCHR had made the increased use of digital tools a priority in the treaty body strengthening process.

6. **Mr. Ori** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the entire United Nations system had been affected by the ongoing liquidity crisis stemming from the delayed payment of contributions by some Member States. While some of the steps taken in response to the crisis did indeed appear to counteract the Organization's

efforts to reduce pollution from air travel and promote digital uplift, they had been necessary measures to address what was hopefully a temporary situation. Some of the constraints on financial and human resources would affect not just the digital aspects of the work of OHCHR but also its ability to support the treaty bodies in the delivery of their respective mandates. The members of the Committee might wish to encourage the Governments of their countries of origin to pay any contributions owed. OHCHR would keep the Committee informed of developments with regard to the financial situation.

7. **Mr. Safarov** said that women and girls were increasingly experiencing rights violations, becoming refugees and dying as a consequence of conflict, poverty and disease, and the current situation was making it difficult for the treaty bodies to deliver on their mandates and take advantage of new technologies.

8. **Ms. Haidar** said that, while she shared Ms. Rana's concerns regarding the discontinuation of hybrid meetings, she recognized that the measure was part of the response to broader financial challenges facing the Organization. Nonetheless, given the impact that budget cuts were having on the Committee's work, it would be helpful if OHCHR could share more detailed information with the treaty bodies, in particular their Chairs, on how decisions on cuts were made, which would give the treaty bodies time to prepare for the impact of such decisions.

9. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had always been concerned about the lack of communication from the Organization to the wider public about work done by organizations in the United Nations system, including the achievements of the human rights treaty bodies. As a consequence, when situations such as the current liquidity crisis arose, populations did not call on their Governments to fulfil their obligations to the United Nations. The Committee might explore how communication could be improved in order to reach more citizens of Member States.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/87/1)

10. *The agenda was adopted.*

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

11. **The Chair** said that, since the last session of the Committee, the number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention remained at 189 and the number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) remained at 80. There were 115 States parties to the Optional Protocol. The Committee had received periodic reports from Argentina, Czechia, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Lesotho and Luxembourg, and the number of States parties opting out of the simplified reporting procedure remained at 13.

12. On 1 November, she had attended an informal briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for States parties on the treaty body strengthening process, which had resulted in consensus among States on many of the proposals presented in the working paper prepared by the Office. On 3 November, along with Ms. Mikko, she had met with the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to discuss the possibility of establishing a two-year cooperation framework between UN-Women and the Committee, as well as the issue of gender architecture and the Committee's involvement in the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

13. On 16 November, she had given a presentation on behalf of the Committee on challenges and opportunities for women and girls with disabilities at a high-level ministerial meeting on the rights of persons with disabilities organized by the Government of Spain during its presidency of the Council of the European Union. On 21 November, she had spoken at the Conference on Women and Justice, hosted by the Government of Spain, to address access to justice for women belonging to disadvantaged groups. Together with the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI), she had organized the sixth Spanish forum and first European forum on women and girls with disabilities. That event had been held between 24 and 26 November and had been attended by the European Commissioner for Equality, with whom she had met to discuss issues of

interest to the Committee and the European Union. On 29 November, she had appeared before the European Parliament to address harmful practices against women and girls with disabilities in the European Union.

14. On 5 December, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, she had been invited by the Asociación de Mujeres Ciegas (Blind Women's Association) of El Salvador to give a talk on inclusion of women with disabilities and living a life free of violence. On 6 December, she had participated in a virtual meeting between the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies and the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization. On 7 December, she had represented the Committee at a hybrid meeting between the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies and the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. On 11 and 12 December, she and Ms. Gbedemah had taken part in the Human Rights 75 high-level event in Geneva.

15. On 11 January, she had met with the Chair of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women. She and Ms. Tisheva had participated in a meeting of the Platform on 18 January, at which it had been unanimously decided that the Committee and the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention would act as co-chairs of the Platform from March 2024. Representatives of both Committees had met for the first time on 24 January in preparation for that role. In the past few days, she had met with OHCHR representatives and the Chair of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies to prepare for an informal meeting of Chairs that had been organized by the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities, Fundación CERMI Mujeres (the organization of women with disabilities in Spain) and Fundación ONCE (the organization of blind persons in Spain) and was scheduled to take place in Madrid between 21 and 23 February. The drastic measures taken in response to the economic challenges faced by the United Nations would be discussed at that meeting. On 23 January, she had met with the Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of OHCHR to discuss the Committee's concerns regarding the severe cutbacks that posed a risk to the Committee's ability to deliver on its mandate. Lastly, she had witnessed votes taken at the Spanish Congress and Senate, on 18 and 25 January, respectively, on the amendment of article 49 of the Spanish Constitution to replace the term "disminuidos" ("the handicapped") with "personas con discapacidad" ("persons with disabilities") and include a reference to women with disabilities.

16. **Mr. Safarov** said that he had participated in a conference on women's rights and empowerment organized by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, including a side event for non-governmental organizations that had focused on gender equality. On 25 November 2023 he had participated in discussions on stereotypes and gender-based violence at a symposium in Singapore, and he had travelled to Baku to attend an international conference on the prevention of domestic violence on 6 and 7 December.

17. **Ms. Haidar** said that the reduction in the Committee's resources meant that its members must be increasingly creative in their intersessional work. From 7 to 11 November 2023 she had participated in workshops in Geneva as part of the "Faith for Rights" initiative, and on 12 and 13 November she had attended the high-level event to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by a meeting of experts on the future of human rights, the environment and climate. On 22 and 23 November she had attended a regional workshop on a knowledge hub on the Convention, and on 4 and 5 December she had attended an international advocacy strategy workshop in London organized by the Musawah movement.

18. **Ms. Mikko** said that she had participated in a remote meeting with the head of UN-Women and in a meeting on femicide of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In November 2023, alongside representatives of the Governments of Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga, she had attended an event in Fiji at which she had strongly encouraged the Tongan Government to ratify the Convention. She had also exhibited her own photographs on the subject of Zambian women and, in January 2024, had addressed the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group of the Council of Europe on the subject of gender-based violence against women.

19. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she had raised awareness about the Convention at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Monterrey Institute of Advanced Technological Studies. She had attended an event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and had also spread awareness about the Committee's general recommendation No. 39 (2022) in Guatemala and Colombia. On 5 December 2023 she had participated in an event on the rights of women with disabilities in Mexico City, and she had attended an event in Panama to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She had also participated in an event on migrant women in Colombia and Panama.

20. **Ms. Ameline** said that her intersessional work had related mainly to draft general recommendation No. 40 and had included a meeting with the Women's Leadership Institute Australia. Thanks to the efforts of Committee members and the secretariat, the draft general recommendation enjoyed significant support, and the absence of women from economic forums and peace negotiations highlighted the urgent need for it.

21. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she had discussed gender apartheid and related international law at a high-level meeting at The Hague with representatives of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as testifying before the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, together with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, as part of a parliamentary inquiry into gender apartheid. At a conference on women in leadership in the United States of America, she had delivered a statement on the impact of the Convention on that country and the potential of draft general recommendation No. 40. She had also given a statement on draft general recommendation No. 41 at the symposium in Singapore to which Mr. Safarov had referred. She had made a statement to local government leaders from North Africa on the subject of trade, as well as testifying before the Massachusetts House of Representatives on the ratification of the Convention at the state level. Lastly, she had presented a paper at Harvard University on the topic of sexual violence as a tool of war.

22. **Ms. Akizuki** said that she had given a lecture on the status of international human rights in Japan as part of a university course on diplomacy. On 23 December 2023 she had lectured on women's rights and the current status of gender equality at an international human rights academy. On 12 January 2024 she had participated in informal consultations on women and peace and security as part of reforms to the Security Council, during which she had explained the Committee's work in that area; the Committee appeared to enjoy good visibility among key players in the United Nations institutional reform process. She had written several articles to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

23. **Ms. Manalo** said that from 15 November to 2 December 2023 she had participated in workshops in the Philippines that had addressed human rights, social development and the role of diplomacy as part of events to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

24. **Ms. Morsy** said that she had attended several emergency meetings to discuss the impact on Palestinian women and children of the war in the Gaza Strip. On 6 and 8 November 2023 she had been a keynote speaker at the International Conference on Women in Islam, and on 16 November she had met with the head of UN-Women, who had voiced her commitment to the Committee and discussed the humanitarian needs of Palestinian women and children. She had drawn attention to the importance of draft general recommendation No. 40 at an international women's forum in Uzbekistan on 21 November. At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, she had highlighted the role of the Convention, general recommendation No. 37 and draft general recommendation No. 40, including during her keynote address at an event on the role of women in advancing climate change. On 25 January 2024 she had participated in the Executive Council and the Supreme Council of the Arab Women Organization and endorsed its decision to develop a regional training programme on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations.

25. **Ms. Bethel** said that she had participated in the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women. In

November 2023 she had promoted the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention by Caribbean Community States at a forum hosted by Caribbean ministers of social services. On 16 January 2024 she had participated in an event on the Convention, macroeconomics and women's rights.

26. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that her intersessional activities, which had related mainly to organized sadistic sexual violence against girls, had included a keynote statement on the subject at a conference at Radboud University Nijmegen.

27. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she had participated in numerous intersessional activities in Nigeria including, on 30 October 2023, a panel on the role of gender budgeting and statutory budgets in ending sexual and gender-based violence. She had been a facilitator for a training course on gender-responsive security operations and had participated in a panel on ending gender-based violence at a conference on the role of investment in preventing violence against women and girls. She had also spoken at an annual forum on women and peace and security.

28. **Ms. Rana** said that at the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference she had participated in a panel on inequalities, social exclusion and rights and moderated a side event on harnessing lessons learned to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. On 25 November 2023 she had delivered a keynote address at an international women's film festival in which she had highlighted the role of visual media in addressing discrimination and violence against women. On 18 December she had spoken at an online event on dismantling gender stereotypes and the draft general recommendation on that topic. She had given a briefing on the Convention to women parliamentarians in Nepal on 19 December, and on 29 December she had contributed to training on emerging gender issues for senior government officials. On 19 January 2024 she had facilitated a regional meeting in Asia as part of an independent review of the capacity of the United Nations system to deliver on gender equality.

29. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had contributed to training on the Convention and its Optional Protocol organized by the Women's Human Rights Training Institute of Bulgaria and attended the high-level event to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

30. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she had attended the meeting with the Women's Leadership Institute Australia to which Ms. Ameline had referred, as well as delivering a statement at the National Press Club in Canberra to honour the National Foundation for Australian Women.

31. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she had worked to disseminate the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations among judicial officials in Cuba and spoken about the Committee's work in relation to older women and health at an international human rights conference. She had also been working to disseminate draft general recommendation No. 40, for example by making plans for its presentation and debate in the National Assembly of People's Power.

32. **Ms. Akia** said that she had given an address on the gendered impact of climate change at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, where she had also lobbied to ensure that statements made on behalf of the Africa group made reference to women and girls. She had also discussed climate change in peacetime, humanitarian settings and conflict with representatives of the Ugandan Government, prompting it to consider developing a gender-sensitive climate change policy. She had given a statement on shared areas of work of the Committee and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in relation to women's empowerment, peace and security, climate change and equal participation.

33. **Ms. Reddock** said that she had attended several meetings with the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership to prepare for a meeting on draft general recommendation No. 40.

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

34. **Ms. Bethel**, speaking in her capacity as Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the eighty-seventh session, said that the pre-sessional working group had met in Geneva from 30 May to 2 June 2023. It had prepared lists of issues and questions in relation to the reports

of Cuba, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and lists of issues prior to reporting for Papua New Guinea, San Marino, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. To prepare the lists of issues and questions, the working group had been able to draw on the core documents of the States parties, with the exception of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, and the periodic reports of the States parties, with the exception of Papua New Guinea, San Marino, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, which would submit their periodic reports in response to the respective list of issues and questions prior to reporting. The working group had also drawn on the Committee's general recommendations, draft lists of issues and questions prepared by the secretariat, the concluding observations of the Committee and other treaty bodies, and, in particular, the States parties' follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on their previous reports. In addition, the working group had received information from entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

35. **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-seventh session, the reports of the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Greece, Italy, the Niger, Oman, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. It would also make final its provisional concluding observations in relation to the combined seventh to tenth periodic reports of Nicaragua, adopted ad referendum at its eighty-sixth session.

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

36. **Ms. Stott Despoja**, speaking in her capacity as the Rapporteur for follow-up to concluding observations, said that, at the end of its eighty-sixth session, the Committee had sent follow-up letters outlining the assessments of follow-up reports to Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan. Since no concluding observations had been adopted at the seventy-ninth session, no follow-up reports had been scheduled for consideration at the eighty-sixth session and no reminder letters had been sent out at the end of that session. The Committee had received follow-up reports on time from Ecuador, Egypt and Maldives. A follow-up report had also been received from Sweden but, since it had exceeded the word limit, a revised version had been requested, although not yet received. She invited the country rapporteurs for Ecuador and Maldives to assist in the assessment of those follow-up reports and called for a volunteer to assist in the assessment of the follow-up report from Egypt. First reminders regarding the submission of follow-up reports should be sent to Indonesia, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Yemen.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.