

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Thirty-first session
6 to 23 July 2004**

**Closing comments by
Ms. Feride Acar, Chairperson of the Committee**

Dear colleagues,

We have thus completed the work of the thirty-first session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

I will refer to the major areas of work completed by the Committee at this session.

Let me begin with one of the major responsibilities of this Committee, that is the consideration of progress in States parties in the implementation of the Convention. We have considered three initial reports, those of Angola, Latvia and Malta. All three of these reports were significantly delayed, with one outstanding since 1987, another one since 1993, and the third one since 1992. These delays notwithstanding, the Committee was gratified to hold very productive and informative dialogues with the reporting States. We hope that the Committee's recommendations will give further momentum to the work, and commitment, of all actors involved in the practical realization of the Convention: first and foremost the State and all its agents, but also parliamentarians, civil society and women's groups, and the international community.

The Committee was also pleased to consider the periodic reports of Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, and Spain – these three States presented their fifth periodic reports – and Equatorial Guinea, which presented its combined second and third, and fourth and fifth periodic reports. I would like to express my particular appreciation to Argentina, which presented a follow-up report, at the request of the Committee, to its fourth and fifth periodic reports which we had considered in 2002. At the time, the Committee was dissatisfied with the information provided about the impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women. I wish to congratulate Argentina once again for its excellent and timely cooperation with the Committee. As the Committee's request for this type of a report was without precedence, the State party's willingness to respond to this new approach was a much welcome expression of support to the international human rights treaty system. By adhering to the Committee's request and engaging in a constructive dialogue, the State party has not only faithfully adhered to its international obligations under the Convention but also, in a principled manner, strengthened the international monitoring mechanisms as such. For this, we congratulate and thank the Government of Argentina.

We have commenced work on a new general recommendation, which will be on article 2 of the Convention. I would like to thank all those who contributed to our half-day of general discussion on the scope, content and approach of this recommendation.

The Committee focused its attention, once again, on the situation of women in Iraq. We have called on the Interim Government to do its utmost to ensure the equal participation of women in the reconstruction process. As elections are being prepared, the Committee placed particular emphasis on the need fully to adhere to article 7 of the Convention so that women can fully exercise their right to vote and to stand for election, on a basis of equality with men. Furthermore, the Committee also emphasized that the entire legal framework of the country, including its personal and family laws, must be in conformity with the Convention.

At this session, we have also adopted significant changes to our working methods. The 'Utrecht Agreements' as I am sure they will be called in the annals of the Committee cover several areas, and I will single out the following: we agreed to request the General Assembly to authorize additional meeting time for the Committee so as to enable it to implement all its responsibilities in an effective and timely manner. This request includes an additional week for the July session of 2005, and for the two sessions of 2006. As of 2007, we are requesting the Assembly to authorize three annual sessions. I will not reiterate the many reasons for this request, but suffice it to say that the large number of reports that at present await consideration would keep the Committee occupied until the summer of 2007 – not counting any of the reports that we will be receiving between now and then. We have also agreed to consider initial reports in the same format as periodic reports, that is in two meetings, in a direct dialogue, and supported by a list of issues and questions that will be prepared in advance. We have also strengthened the role of the

who have carried the greatest burden to bring this inquiry to a conclusion, for their dedication, professionalism and commitment to the human rights of women.

Dear colleagues,

On a personal note, as we end this session and as all of us may not be here in the Committee in January, let me express my gratitude to all my fellow CEDAW members for having entrusted me with the responsibility and honour to chair this Committee in the past two years. I have cherished the opportunity and will always be very proud to have had this honour. As we come to the end of this session, I would like to thank you for the

hilly t mealsto felfyoun tat. I

had te sweets snsassion ofacc ompalih me cns sed the

CEDAW40.4(wasd m)8.4ae withso me verysnaleontr'f in tnhis onmm(itte'se)TJT#0.0007 Tw(istory. AW)

Ms. Aída Gonzalez Martinez, is a founding member of the Committee who after an absence of several years in the 1990s, returned and served the Committee again with distinction. She was often our institutional memory. She knew and reminded us of well-established practices, and her involvement in the women's movement in the United Nations going back to the Mexico Conference has been a source of inspiration to many of us. As a former Chairperson of this Committee she was knowledgeable, disciplined but also very conciliatory, supportive, warm and friendly. I learned a lot from her and have always cherished her presence.

Ms. Ferrer Gomez, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee and I came here at the same time from far away parts of the world, and with very different experiences and languages. Over the years, as many others did, I came to admire Ms. Ferrer's incisiveness and steadfastness, as well as enjoy her warm personality very much. She has rightfully acquired an impeccable reputation in the Committee as a dedicated and highly competent expert. I know this Committee will always be grateful to her for her professionalism and thoroughness, particularly as she carried out ground-breaking pieces of work for the Committee.

Distinguished audience,

It is always a pleasure to thank Ms. Hannan for the support the Division under her leadership and particularly the Women's Rights Section under Ms. Christine Brautigam, have provided for the Committee during this session. But let me add a special note to that this time around. The exceptional commitment and competence of Ms. Christine Brautigam and her able staff, particularly Ms. Eleanor Solo03 Tw7TwEmanuela Calabrini, have been central in making it possible for the Committee to achieve all the firsts of the thirty-first session. An incredible amount of behind-the-counter labour of this distinguished staff has gone into the preparation and carrying out of the very heavy load of the thirty-first session. I know they are worked to the bone but I want them to know