

As Delivered

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Opening statement

By

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Distinguished experts of the Committee  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to address you at the opening of the thirty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to extend a warm welcome to all of you and to wish you a Happy New Year. I am delighted to see you, Madame Chairperson, preside over this session of the Committee.

We begin this New Year building on the momentum and achievements that resulted from the intense activity by Member States, United Nations entities, international organizations and NGOs since you adjourned your 33<sup>rd</sup> session.

In his report to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, “*In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*”, the Secretary-General called on us to “act boldly and act together to make people everywhere more secure, more prosperous and better able to enjoy their fundamental human rights.”

First among the achievements is the historic consensus of the 2005 World Summit where Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that progress for women is progress for all and that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals. Echoing the Secretary-General’s call, the Heads of State at the World Summit also reaffirmed the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and inter-relatedness of all human rights and resolved to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world.

The review and appraisal of implementation in 2005 made it clear that progress has been made in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women at national level, particularly in such areas as:

- Establishment of specific policies and strategies, and plans of action, for gender equality;
- Greater diversity and effectiveness of mechanisms established to promote gender equality;
- Increased participation of women in the economy;
- Improved access to education for women and girls;
- Greater attention to women's participation in the public sector;
- Increased attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls;
- Greater recognition of women's role in peace and security;
- Increased mechanisms to protect and promote women's rights; and
- Significant progress in promotion of women's rights, with 180 States being party to the Convention, and 74 also to its Optional Protocol.

Despite these gains, women continue to encounter challenges in accessing and benefiting from opportunities in the economic, social and political spheres, including in employment.

World leaders expressed the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the 2005 World Summit, resolving to eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by:

1. Eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education;
2. Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own property and housing ;
3. Ensuring equal access to reproductive health;
4. Promoting women's equal access to labour markets, employment and labour protection;
5. Ensuring equal access to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology;
6. Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; and
7. Increasing women's representation in Government decision-making bodies.

The World Summit also placed strong emphasis on human rights and the rule of law. The world leaders:

- resolved to improve the effectiveness of the human rights treaty bodies, including through more timely reporting, improved and streamlined reporting procedures and technical assistance to States to enhance their reporting capacities and further enhance the implementation of their recommendations;
- also resolved to integrate the promotion and protection of human rights into national policies and to support the further mainstreaming of human rights throughout the human rights system; and
- acknowledged the need to pay special attention to the human rights of women and children and an undertaking to advance them in every possible way, including by bringing gender and child-protection perspectives into the human rights agenda.

World leaders also recognized the need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law at both national and international levels. They called upon States to continue their efforts to eradicate policies and practices that discriminate against women and to adopt laws and promote practices that protect the rights of women and promote gender equality.

I wish to further highlight the prominence given in the World Summit to the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and their commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

These commitments are indeed a firm basis for moving ahead. The challenge is to translate them into reality, building on the gains that have been made so far.

Distinguished experts,

I am extremely pleased that the Assembly at its 60<sup>th</sup> session approved your request for additional meeting time so as to enable you to more effectively, and in a more timely manner, discharge your critical role in monitoring women's enjoyment of their human rights in the States parties to the Convention. The accountability of States parties for the fulfillment of their obligations under the Convention is critical to women's realization and enjoyment of their human rights.

that of solely victims of war to one of active participants as peacemakers, peace-builders  
and

Discrimination against women persists – in States that