

In this anniversary year, the Committee wishes to recognize the enthusiastic cooperation which reporting States have consistently demonstrated in the constructive dialogue. This is a clear indication that States parties see this process not only as a formal requirement under international law, but also as a useful and rewarding part of an ongoing review of the status of women. On this occasion, the Committee wishes to underline the critical contribution of full and timely reporting under the Convention to its effective implementation at the national level.

The Committee wishes to highlight the importance it attaches to the availability of the right to petition, as well as of an inquiry procedure, under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. It welcomes the fact that 67 States parties to the Convention have thus far ratified the Optional Protocol, providing individual women and groups of women with a means of redress for claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention, and invites all other States parties to do likewise. The Committee emphasizes the positive role which it expects the Optional Protocol to play in the national implementation and realization of the provisions of the Convention.

Over the last 25 years, the proper and consistent implementation of the Convention has proven to be a most effective tool for women in their quest for equality. It will continue to play this pivotal role in the fight against old and persistent forms of discrimination against women and in staving off new forms of inequality, subordination and disadvantage. The Committee urges Governments, civil society and women's groups, and all individuals committed to equality between women and men to use the Convention to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality for women.

The Committee calls on all States parties to hold public debates about equality for women on December 18 – the anniversary day of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1979 –, and launch new initiatives to increase compliance with the Convention.

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