

Check against delivery

**Closing remarks
by
Ms. Dubravka Šimonovi
Thirty-seventh session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
New York, 2 February 2007**

Dear colleagues,

We have thus come to the end of the thirty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I

ratification of the Convention – to work, without delay, for the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men.

We have been able to see a good amount of progress in these last three weeks. We were impressed by the significant number of new laws, such as comprehensive gender equality laws, equal treatment laws, or laws on domestic violence, which several of the reporting States adopted since they were last examined by this Committee. We have also been able to assess the scope and content of gender equality policies, or gender perspectives in national development policies, that are significant vehicles for promotion of gender equality. We have heard about programmes and activities to improve women's access to health, education and economic opportunities, to full and equal participation in public life and decision-making and to protection from all forms of violence.

We once again benefited enormously from the inputs from many dedicated civil society organizations that keep the pressure on Governments to work for women and we encourage all reporting States to strengthen consultation with women's NGOs in the follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments.

Such progress, however, is not yet as consistent and systemic as we would like it to be and as is required for compliance with Convention obligations. We have seen many gaps and challenges. They differ in specifics and in scope, but the overall and structural challenges are similar: There are significant gaps in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress is insufficient. The impact of laws, policies and programmes is not consistently assessed, which makes it more difficult to respond to new needs, or correct unsuccessful approaches.

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Much more could be said about trends and specificities in the implementation of the Convention in the 15 States we have examined. But let me briefly turn to a couple of other issues we dealt with during this last session.

The first point I want to make pertains to our work in chambers. I trust that I speak for all of us when I say that this experience has been a very positive and satisfying one overall. Let me add that we have also taken a critical look at our own performance, and we will take these lessons into the August session where we will again meet in chambers. I want to underline that this working method has allowed us to indeed tackle the backlog of reports that await consideration. This conclusion is an extremely important one, as we now have the opportunity to engage much more actively with those States parties that have not submitted their initial reports, although they ratified the Convention many years ago, in some instances as much as 25 years. We have decided to invite four States parties to submit their reports by March 2008, for consideration in early 2009. Should these reports not be submitted, we will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the absence of a report. I am confident that these States will indeed prepare their reports.

We have also carefully reviewed our current and future workload, and have come to the conclusion that three annual sessions, at least one of which in parallel chambers, is required for the Committee to effectively implement all its responsibilities, and in a timely and effective manner, on a consistent basis. I appeal to all States parties to the Convention and to all Member States of the United Nations, to support the Committee in this request.

The second point I would like to make is linked to our future work, and specifically to the servicing arrangements for the Committee and the locations of its future sessions. The Committee met with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the question of the transfer of responsibility for servicing the Committee from the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee proposed that the current arrangements pertaining to the dates of the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions, in May and August of this year, as well as the location and servicing will remain in place, and looks forward to the new arrangements that will be made for 2008.

Dear colleagues,

This was my first session as Chair of this Committee. I am grateful to all of you for having given me this opportunity, and I am especially grateful to my colleagues in the Bureau for their wise counsel and advice on the many issues that we have tackled.

My appreciation also goes to our Secretariat, to Ms Mayanja and Ms Hannan, and the team that has supported us over these past three weeks.

I wish you all a safe trip home, and I look forward to seeing you on 14 May here at United Nations Headquarters.

Thank you very much.