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**Statement by Ms. Ayse Feride Acar
Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women**

**Statement to the Third Committee
of the 59th Session of the
General Assembly**

Item 98, advancement of women

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Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

and other members of civil society, academia and business and professional associations. It is also essential, especially in federal States, that officials at the State and local levels be informed of the results and the Committee's concerns and recommendations. The international community likewise needs to play its part in follow-up: United Nations entities at the country level should actively support Governments' efforts at implementation and follow-up.

During its consideration of the reports of States parties at its thirtieth and thirty-first sessions, the Committee noticed a series of factors in all reporting States that continue to constitute challenges to the achievement of gender equality. These include social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and the persistence of prejudices and customary and other practices, or stereotyped roles of women and men. While these factors take different forms in different countries, they exist everywhere. It is essential that State parties address forcefully and creatively their obligation, under articles 2(f) and 5, to eliminate *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination against women based on such factors.

The Committee also found that particular socio-economic circumstances had a particularly salient impact on the situation of women. The Committee emphasized *vis-à-vis* several reporting States that, as these countries tackled economic crises, or emerged from conflict to proceed on a path of development, gender equality must not be relegated to the backburner. In fact, the Committee asked these States parties to make the promotion of gender equality an explicit component of their national development plans and policies, in particular those aimed at poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The Committee made it clear that realization of *de facto* equality of women is not only an obligation of these States that they have accepted voluntarily with ratification of the Convention, but equality of women and men is also a critical means if these States are to make progress in their sustainable development.

There were several other common trends in implementation in the reporting States. Legislative gaps and the persistence of *de jure* discrimination is still the case in some states. Likewise, women's *de facto* situation continues to be characterized by inequality in relation to many of the rights protected under the Convention. Also, the Committee was especially concerned about the situation of vulnerable groups of women who in most instances experience multiple forms of discrimination. The Committee has noted especially the situation of rural women, migrant and minority women, as well as older women, among others, and called on States to step up their efforts to ensure compliance with the Convention and these women's full enjoyment of their rights under the Convention.

Let me turn to other results of the Committee's two sessions of 2004. The Committee adopted General Recommendation 25 on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, on temporary special measures. I urge all States parties to carefully study this General Recommendation and draw attention to the fact that, in the Committee's view, temporary special measures such as quotas, time bound targets and calendars, as well as sex-specific stipends are not to be considered discrimination. They are, rather,

part of a necessary strategy by States parties to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality for women.

The Committee continued to monitor the situation of women in Iraq, and issued two statements. In both instances, the Committee finds it paramount that all activities in the development of the country be in full compliance with the Convention, especially as Iraq is a State party to the Convention.

Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to report that the Optional Protocol to the Convention is now an operational instrument. At its thirty-first session, the Committee adopted its first decision in response to a complaint under the Optional Protocol declaring a complaint against Germany inadmissible. Three further communications have been registered.

The Committee also completed its first inquiry under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. This inquiry was carried out in Mexico on the matter of the killings and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juarez. While the Committee's substantive report on the matter will be issued at a later stage I would like to commend the Government of Mexico for its effective cooperation with the Committee throughout the inquiry and I look forward to their sustained support in the follow up of the Committee's recommendations.

The Optional Protocol plays a critical role in ensuring implementation of the Convention at the national level. This instrument is first and foremost an incentive for States parties to ensure that effective and timely remedies are available to women at the national level to obtain redress for their grievances. I urge States parties to disseminate widely information about the Protocol so that women who believe that their claims are not adequately addressed through domestic means may avail themselves of this remedy by an international body. I commend those States who have, and are, cooperating with the Committee as it considers complaints from individuals and undertakes inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of the rights of women.

Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

During the past year, the Committee also continued to further enhance its working methods, and significant progress was made in regard to several aspects which I will briefly summarize. Much of that work was accomplished in an informal meeting

have allowed the Committee to focus for a sustained period of time on specific questions which cannot be accommodated during its regular two annual sessions.

As a result of these deliberations, the Committee has implemented a number of measures to achieve greater efficiency without jeopardizing the usefulness of the constructive dialogue with reporting S295 -1.1 reate.he usefulnyv-nLmody w

through the General Assembly, to address constraints in dealing with the workload of the Committee and they have been effective in responding to backlogs. Yet the fact remains that this Convention has 178 State parties, the second largest number of all human rights treaties. Its Optional Protocol now has 67 State parties and the Committee's work under the Optional Protocol is expected to increase significantly in the near future. Currently, 45 state reports are awaiting consideration. If all States parties would report on time, some 44 reports would be received annually. As it is, recent trends indicate that approximately 24 reports are submitted annually (in 2000: 24; in 2001: 11; in 2002: 29; in 2003: 24; in 2004 (1 October): 23), whereby the Committee is able to consider those of 16 States annually. The numbers thus indicate that fast accumulating backlogs are to be expected. The Committee is very much aware that the time lag between States' submission of their reports and the Committee's consideration of these reports acts as a disincentive for States' cooperation with the human rights treaty system in timely manner.

The Committee, for its part, feels that the value and quality of the constructive dialogue it has with States parties must be preserved if the dialogue is to live up to the expectations that all stakeholders have invested in this process of monitoring States' adherence to their international treaty obligations. It is in light of these th States partj-27.10001 Tb Twm0.00