

“United Nations efforts in pr

women's equality and establishes a focused, women-specific human rights regime. Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1979, the Convention now has 185 States parties which are obligated to translate its provisions into practice. Currently, there are eight Member States of the United Nations, including the United States, which have not yet ratified the Convention.¹

The Convention provides for women's equal enjoyment with men of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in the public as well as the private sphere, including within the family. It requires from States the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men. Towards this end, States parties are mandated to pursue, 'by all appropriate means', and 'without delay', a policy of eliminating discrimination against women. Adherence to the Convention fosters a climate – both internationally and nationally - where violations of the rights of women will not be tolerated.

Accountability by States for adhering to their treaty obligations is ensured by a Committee of 23 experts, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which reviews reports that all States parties must present on a regular basis. In its concluding observations, the Committee identifies gaps in implementation and provides country-specific guidance on further steps required to accelerate compliance with the Convention's provisions.

In addition to this general monitoring mechanism, the *Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention* constitutes an opportunity for individual women, or groups of women, to seek redress for alleged violations of their rights under the Convention, once certain admissibility criteria are fulfilled. The Optional Protocol also gives the Committee authority to initiate inquiries into grave or systematic violations of the rights enshrined in the Convention. These procedures offer an international recourse for women who have been denied justice at the national level and are an additional impetus for States to ensure that adequate and accessible domestic remedies for violations of the rights of women are in place. The Committee has highlighted, through the use of the Protocol, the need for more effective national remedies for women and the need to repeal discriminatory laws, policies and practices.

Other human rights instruments also support the elimination of discrimination and the realization of the principle of equality of women and men. For example, the Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights obligate States parties to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the respective instrument. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is particularly pertinent to the situation of girls, while the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force last year, sets out as one of the Convention's principles equality between men and women and devotes a specific article to women and girls with disabilities. The monitoring bodies under all these treaties

¹ [Member States that are not party to the Convention: Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga, United States of America. The Holy See is also not a State party. Cook Islands is a State party to the Convention, but not a Member State.]

The United Nations *Security Council* set a milestone in 2000 when it held its first ever discussion on women and peace and security. In the resulting resolution 1325 (2000), the Council called for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in armed conflict, and to put an end to the impunity of perpetrators. Last

multifaceted challenge of development cuts across a vast array of interlinked issues — ranging from gender equality through health and education to the environment.]

The historic United Nations conferences and summits held in the 1990s which provided a comprehensive global normative and legal framework and strengthened these linkages – also, for the first time, mapped out a broad vision of shared development priorities. These priorities were crystallized into the eight *Millennium Development Goals*, including Goal three on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. It is clearly recognized that gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but is also a critical means for achieving all the other MDGs, including goal 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; goal 2, to achieve universal primary education; goal 4, to reduce child mortality; goal 5, to improve maternal health; goal 6, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; the 1990s extreme poverty conditions can be

decision-making in different areas of public