

15th session of the Human Rights Council

Panel discussion on elimination of discrimination against women

Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Date and venue

Monday 20 September 2010, 10:00-13:00, Room XX, Palais des Nations

Mandate

Pursuant to HRC resolution 12/17 of September 2009, OHCHR was requested to prepare a “thematic study on discrimination against women, in law and practice, and on how the issue is addressed throughout the United Nations human rights system.” In the same resolution, the Human Rights Council decided to address the thematic study at its 15th session, and to hold a half-day discussion on the issue in order to consider taking further possible action on discrimination against women.

Background

International human rights law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and includes guarantees for men and women to enjoy their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights equally. While all fundamental human rights instruments reaffirm the principles of non-discrimination and equality, article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women specifically commits State Parties “to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.”

In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, governments undertook to “revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex.” In 2000, at the Special session of the General Assembly to review the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the World Conference, States set 2005 as the target for removing discriminatory legislation against women.

In 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women reviewed the commitments undertaken at the fourth Beijing World Conference and concluded that “legislative and regulatory gaps, as well as a lack of implementation and enforcement of legislation and regulations, perpetuate *de jure* and *de facto* inequality and discrimination.”

In its resolution 6/30 adopted in December 2007, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed, *inter alia*, the principle of gender equality and the need for a comprehensive approach to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. In 2009, the Council reaffirmed “the obligation of States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise”, expressed “concern at the fact that, despite the pledge made at the Beijing World Conference on Women and the review by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session to modify or abolish remaining laws that discriminate against women and girls, many of those laws are still in force and continue to be applied”, and called upon States “to fulfill their international obligations and commitments to revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex” (resolution 12/17).

The 2010 review of the Beijing Platform for Action recognized that progress had been made in many countries, but that discrimination against women continues in law and in practice and women’s *de jure* and *de facto* equality has not been achieved in any country in the world.

Focus and objectives

The consideration of discrimination against women is a vital element in furthering the commitment of the Council to advancing women's rights and gender equality.

The panel of experts will discuss the findings and recommendations of the thematic study and formulate concrete recommendations on further measures to be taken by the Human Rights Council to fight discrimination against women in law and practice.

Opening statement: Ms Kyung-wah Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Moderator: H.E. Ambassador Sihasak Phuanketkeow
President of the Human Rights Council

Panelists:

- Ms. Victoria Popescu (expert member of CEDAW)
- Ms. Rashida Manjoo (Special Rapporteur on violence against women)
- Ms. Lee Waldorf (Human Rights Advisor, UNIFEM/UN Women)
- Ms. María de los Ángeles Corte Ríos (General Director of the Center for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, House of Representatives of Mexico)
- Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn (Professor of Law)
- Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda (General Secretary of YWCA)

Format

The opening addresses and the presentations by the panelists will be followed by an interactive discussion. This discussion will be divided, in principle, into two slots of 60 minutes each (45 minutes for comments and questions from the floor, followed by 15 minutes for comments and replies by panelists). The interactive debate will be followed by concluding remarks from the moderator. The modalities of the panel are: 7 minutes for panelists, 3 minutes for Member States and 2 minutes for Observers. Dependant on the number of speakers inscribed, the moderator may readjust the speaking time appropriately in order to enhance the interactive nature of the discussion. The interactive debate will be followed by concluding remarks by the moderator.

Outcome

The panel discussion will contribute to the Human Rights Council's consideration of adopting further action on discrimination against women.

Reference documentation

- Human Rights Council Resolution "Elimination of discrimination against women", A/HRC/RES/12/17
- OHCHR Report, *Thematic study of the Office of the High Commissioner on discrimination against women, in law and in practice, and how the issue is addressed throughout the United Nations human rights system*, A/HRC/15/40