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**Committee on the Elimination
of Discrimination against Women**

**Meeting with States parties
1 June 2006**

**Ms. Rosario Manalo, Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegations,

It is my honour to welcome you to this meeting with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women during our thirty-fifth session. We are aware how busy you must be in conjunction with the ongoing special session of the General Assembly, but the Committee considers it important to have an opportunity to brief you on our planning for the Committee's upcoming sessions, and in particular on the working methods we intend to use for the parallel chambers.

I suggest that I start with some introductory comments, and other experts may wish to add, or raise additional points. The Committee will also be very pleased to hear your views and comments, and to respond to any questions you may wish to pose to us.

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the Committee, our sincere appreciation to the General Assembly for authorizing three annual sessions of three weeks each, in 2006 and 2007.

We are also very appreciative of the opportunity to meet in parallel chambers during the upcoming August session, and again at the first and third annual sessions in 2007. This extension of the Committee's meeting time will significantly increase the number of States the Committee is able to invite for consideration of their reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention.

Delegations will be aware that the Committee held its fifth informal meeting, generously hosted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, in Berlin from 2 to 4 May 2006. We focused in particular on our working methods in relation to parallel chambers, and took into consideration the working methods of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is the first treaty body that has used parallel chambers.

I would like to highlight some of the arrangements we have put in place for the chamber sessions. These are also reflected in the Committee's draft report which I understand is available in the room. Importantly, the Committee believes that the success of our work in chambers also depends on clear and transparent procedures that are known to all parties concerned so that we can continue to interact on a basis of trust. I wish to underline that no matter what our working methods, the Committee will function as one

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Committee. All action, and in particular adoption of concluding comments, will take place in plenary sessions.

The first point I wish to discuss pertains to the procedure for establishing the parallel chambers, including their composition. The Committee agreed on the need for clear, transparent and fair guidelines for determining the membership in parallel chambers. We were very interested in the experience of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of drawing lots to randomly assign experts to chambers, but we chose a different path.

We agreed on the following criteria for establishing the chambers: fair geographical balance of experts between the two chambers, length of experience of experts on the Committee, assignment of experts who are nationals of a reporting State to the chamber that is not considering the report from that State party; assignment of office holders of the Committee to each chamber; and geographical balance, to the extent possible, of reporting States to be taken up in each chamber. Membership of the chambers will be decided by the Committee based upon a proposal to be submitted by the Committee's Bureau, in advance of each session. At the same time, I wish to stress that there will always be a need for flexibility to make adjustments in the composition of the two chambers as may be necessary.

The Committee's Bureau will continue to exercise its responsibilities and will in particular ensure that all possible issues that might arise from either of the chambers will be adequately addressed and brought to the attention of the Committee as a Whole.

At each session where we will meet in parallel chambers, the Committee will consider the reports of fifteen States parties. Initial reports will continue to be considered in plenary by the Committee of the Whole and periodic reports will be considered in chambers. While each chamber has the main responsibility for considering the periodic reports assigned to that chamber, all experts will have the opportunity to bring to the attention of their colleagues issues and questions they would wish to have raised in regard to a reporting State.

The Committee will continue to exercise good time management. Since there will be a smaller number of experts per chamber, experts will be given a bit more time (5 minutes) and will place emphasis on the analysis and reasoning for the line of questions that an expert will wish to raise. There will also be opportunity for follow-up questions by experts. While we will not establish country task forces as such in the chambers, we will build on and use the very positive experience gained in working through country task forces to enhance coordination among experts, deepen the quality of the constructive dialogue and ensure that we cover all the critical issues that arise in regard to each State party considered. We will continue to invite the State party to also adhere to good time management in responding to the questions.

Our work in parallel chambers will allow us to address the backlog of reports which have been submitted under article 18 of the Convention. The timely consideration

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of States parties reports is necessary to ensure effective implementation of the Convention at the domestic level. At the same time, States parties also need to make every effort to comply with their reporting obligations in a timely manner. I therefore encourage all States parties to review the status of reporting. The Committee invites States parties with overdue reports to combine these outstanding reports into a single document.

I should also like to recall that the Committee has in place incremental measures to encourage States with very long overdue reports to submit those reports. In principle, the Committee will consider implementation of the Convention by a State party in the absence of a report, only as a measure of last resort and in the presence of a delegation. We have so far invited two States to submit reports within a specified time frame, and both have done so. The Committee keeps the situation under review and intends in due course, to invite other States parties with very long overdue reports to present these for consideration.

Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to report that, last week Brunei Darussalam acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of ratifications to 183., 78 States parties have now ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and 48 States parties have accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time. I encourage those States who have not become party to these instruments to intensify their efforts so that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved soonest and the Optional Protocol can become an effective means for redress for women in all States parties.

Distinguished delegates,

The August session will be a time for learning, both for the Committee and the reporting States. We have carefully prepared the various aspects of our work, but there will always be a need for flexibility and adjustment. We look forward to States parties'; cooperation and trust that this will be forthcoming as has been the case during the current and past session

The Committee welcomes any questions you may have.

Thank you.