

Closing remarks
by
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at the
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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to congratulate the Committee on the successful completion of the work of its thirtieth session, especially in light of the unexpected loss of two meetings on Wednesday of your last week. I am confident that the concluding comments adopted by the Committee concerning the eight States parties (Belarus, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Germany, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Nigeria) that have reported at this session will make a significant contribution to the ongoing process of achieving equality for all women.

Allow me, Madam Chairperson, to comment on some of the aspects of the work at this session.

I would first like to congratulate the Committee on the adoption of general recommendation 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, on temporary special measures. This general recommendation represents a significant contribution to the Committee's work in this area, and will provide critical guidance to States parties concerning an article, the scope of meaning of which still seems to be fraught with uncertainties on the parts of many States parties and other stakeholders. I am also pleased that the Committee has taken the initial steps towards the preparation of its next general recommendation, which will be on article 2 of the Convention.

I welcome the Committee's continuing attention to enhance its working methods so as to ensure that you can fully implement all aspects of your mandate. Your responsibility to consider States parties reports is now complemented by your responsibilities under the Optional Protocol. Traditionally, you consider the reports of eight States parties per session. As your Chairperson pointed out in her opening statement, the reports of 33 States were awaiting consideration, and since the beginning of your session, two more States, China and Australia, have submitted their periodic reports, bringing the number to 35. I trust that the Committee, at its informal meeting in

May, will weigh carefully all implications of these numbers to chart the way ahead for future sessions.

I, too, like the Chairperson, am particularly pleased by your adoption of general recommendation 25 on temporary special measures and the thorough background preparations that went into this general recommendation by Ms. Schöpp-Schilling. As you know the United Nations has long used article 4 of the Convention as its *raison d'être* for special measures in achieving the gender balance target of 50/50 women and men staff.

I would like to congratulate the Committee on your meeting with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women early in her mandate. The coordination and mutual reinforcement in the mandates of human rights mechanisms is also of great significance in the area of the human rights of women. Your discussion with the Special Rapporteur highlighted the Committee's interest in such cooperation, and indicated opportunities how such cooperation can be practically enhanced.

Your Committee was the first treaty body to be briefed by Ms. Maria Francisca Ize-Charrin, of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the work currently under way in the Secretariat to implement the guidance provided by the second inter-committee meeting and the Meeting of Chairpersons last June in regard to an expanded core document and harmonized reporting guidelines. This remains very much a work in progress and your Committee, together with the other human rights treaty bodies, will guide the process forward towards the goal of enhanced implementation of all human rights instruments at the domestic level.

Over the coming months, your Chairperson will once again represent this Committee at intergovernmental meetings, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women in March, and the Commission on Human Rights shortly thereafter. These continue to be critical opportunities to focus the attention of the intergovernmental processes on the work of this treaty body and its contribution to the goal of gender equality. I am also happy that the Committee has entrusted the Secretariat with the organization of an event to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly. Let me assure you that we will do our best to use this occasion to demonstrate the difference the Convention, as well as this Committee, have made in the lives of women in all parts of the world.

May I end with some information of a personal nature which I shared at the beginning of the session with you, Chairperson. This is the last time that I will be attending your CEDAW session as Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women as I have decided to leave the United Nations after serving in many capacities for nearly 38 years and in the Permanent Mission of Jamaica for nearly two years before that.

Among the most satisfying developments over the four-decade period is the steady improvement of awareness of women's human rights, given a great boost by the Vienna and Beijing International Conferences, by the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and especially by the work of this Committee. Your concluding comments have promoted gender mainstreaming and

implementation of the Convention among States parties and indeed given hope to women's groups and NGOs throughout the world.

It has been a supreme pleasure and source of encouragement to me to have worked closely with this Committee from February 1996. I have been singularly impressed by the able and astute past Chairpersons, Aída González Martínez, Charlotte Abaka, Ivanka Corti, Salma Khan, Mervat Tallawy, and Desirée Bernard.

Let me thank you, Madam Chairperson, very warmly for the leadership you provided and the excellent manner in which you have chaired the proceedings of this Committee.

I extend the appreciation of myself and my Office, as well as that of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Ms. Hannan and her staff, for the hard work and the dedication to the mandate entrusted to the members of this Committee. I wish you, Mme. Chairperson, and all members of the Committee a safe journey home, and we look forward to welcoming you back to New York on 6 July.

Thank you very much.
