

**Twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption, by the General Assembly of
the United Nations, of
the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

CEDAW at 25: Are we moving forward?

Round Table Discussion

13 October 2004

**Statement by
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly at the closing of this very prestigious panel. As the distinguished panelists have all emphasized here this afternoon - and was raised yesterday in the opening of the third committee items 98 and 99 on the advancement of women and implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly – the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the convention gives us good reason to celebrate – the many positive developments include the near universal ratification of the Convention and steadily increasing ratification of its optional protocol; the seriousness accorded to reporting obligations by many States parties; the improved and innovative working methods of the Committee, with emphasis on constructive dialogue; and the increasing attention to using the concluding comments of the Committee at national level, including by Governments, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations.

In his opening statement to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General focused on the rule of law as the all-important framework for decision-making at national and international level. He emphasized that “laws must be put into practice and permeate the fabric of our lives”. The discussions this afternoon have highlighted the importance of CEDAW as the international human rights treaty of paramount significance to the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men. Adherence to the Convention, and its implementation in practice, will contribute significantly to enhance the rule of law and foster a climate, both nationally and internationally, where violations of the rights of women will not be tolerated. The implementation of CEDAW at national level is the key challenge facing us. Discussions have illustrated how the Convention can be, and has been, used as the legal basis and a powerful instrument for furthering the human rights of women at national level.

Our celebratory mode has not, however, hindered us from considering the many persistent challenges to full implementation of the Convention at national level as well as hinders to effective monitoring by the Committee. I would urge Member States to give careful consideration to the request of the Committee for extension of its meeting time to

this session of the General Assembly so as to enable it to discharge all its responsibilities under the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Finally, I want to thank and congratulate the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – its Members past and present – represented today by the current Chair, Ms Feride Acar, as well as a number of past chairs on this panel Ms. Ivanka Corti, Ms. Salma Khan, Ms. Charlotte Abaka and Ms. Aida Gonzalez, as well as committee members among the participants. The important achievements that have been possible have been due to the leadership, expertise, commitment and hard work of the Committee members.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the important contribution of the Women's Rights Section in the Division for the Advancement of Women. This section, currently very ably led by Ms. Christine Brautigam, and acting as the Secretariat of the Committee, provides dedicated and expert support to the work of the Committee.

I would like to confirm the commitment of the Division for the Advancement of Women to fully support the work of the Committee and the efforts of Member States in both reporting and implementation. We will continue to provide technical assistance, at national, sub-regional and regional levels, including through reporting workings and judicial colloquia, in collaboration with critical partners in the United Nations – in particular the United Nations regional commissions. Our important new focus on implementation of CEDAW in post-conflict contexts will be further developed.

I would like to express the thanks of the Division to all the participants for their inspiring presentations. I would like to particularly thank the Governor-General of New Zealand, Dame Sylvia Rose Cartwright, for her presence. We appreciate that you must have an extremely busy schedule. Your presence illustrates your deep personal commitment to human rights, the implementation of the Convention, and the work of the Committee. I also want to express our gratitude for the presence of the former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Ms. Angela King.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the suggestion by several distinguished organizations and speakers today, that Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations use the opportunity of the 25th anniversary on 18 December this year to revitalize the discussion on human rights of women and the importance of the Convention at national level, in the context of preparations for the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action to be held during the Commission on the Status of Women next year.

Thank you.