

**WELCOMING STATEMENT BY MS. SILVIA PIMENTEL, CHAIR, ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**New York, 9 July 2012**

Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished members of the Committee,  
Honoured guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Event which marks 30 years of working for women's rights by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, one of the ten Human Rights Committees of the United Nations.

As Chair of this Committee, I am so very proud to have the opportunity to work with such a dedicated and passionate group currently made-up of 22 women and one man. The Committee has contributed to consolidating an understanding of human rights, placing women's human rights as one of the most prominent items on the international agenda, and empowering individual women, as well as groups of women, to claim them.

Allow me to highlight some of the achievements of the Committee during these past 30 years. The primary mandate of the Committee is to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the CEDAW Convention, which is the recognized United Nations internationally legally binding instrument on women's rights.

In addition to binding themselves to implement the Convention at the national level, States parties also undertake the obligation to submit reports on

the measures they have adopted to give effect to the Convention, and the difficulties they may have encountered in implementing its provisions. The reporting obligation assists States parties in the full implementation of the Convention at the national level and allows the Committee to assess the extent to which Convention obligations have been met. The Committee considers these reports and, following the constructive dialogue, makes suggestions and recommendations. The reporting procedure, which culminates in the adoption of concluding observations of the Committee, is more than a procedural matter. It serves as a dynamic force for change within a State party.

By the close of this session, this Committee will have held constructive dialogues and adopted concluding recommendations with respect to over 450 States parties. Furthermore, since its 41<sup>st</sup> session in 2008, the Committee has systematically followed-up with States parties on priority recommendations to assist States parties in meeting their international treaty obligations under the CEDAW Convention.

In addition to its core reporting function, the Committee elaborates general recommendations. To date, 28 general recommendations have been adopted by this Committee to provide clarification and promote understanding of the Convention's substantive content and the specific nature of discrimination against women. The Committee's general recommendations are a rich source of legal and policy guidance and have addressed a number of core issues, including the conceptualization of violence against women as a form of discrimination against women, the development under the Convention of the States parties' obligation of due diligence, the elaboration of the notion of non-discrimination and substantive equality that underpins the Convention, and the concept of intersecting forms of discrimination. The Committee is currently working on six other general recommendations relating to dissolution of marriage and its economic consequences, harmful practices, the human rights of

women in situations of conflict and post-conflict, access to justice, rural women, and gender equality in the context of asylum, statelessness and natural disasters.

The Committee's jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol is an emerging area of importance. The views of the Committee have been influential in the creation of an international women's human rights jurisprudence. Indeed, its jurisprudence has been guiding regional and national courts and tribunals.

The Committee's outstanding achievements in facilitating international standard setting for women's human rights, including through concluding observations, the elaboration of numerous general recommendations and jurisprudence stemming from individual and group communications and inquiries under the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention, is highly valued and critical to the realization of the fundamental human rights of women in all corners of the globe.

The Committee has many accomplishments to its credit but continually strives to do more to champion the cause of promoting and protecting the women's rights in all areas including education, employment, political participation, and sexual and reproductive rights, among others. The challenges are of course numerous, yet this Committee actively engages with States parties and undertakes other activities to ensure that all measures are taken, including by legislative, executive and judiciary. These measures include those aimed at implementing policies and programmes and eliminating discrimination in law and in practice to effective change on all levels – within the government, society and families. Committee members are also active in their own right in the promotion of the Convention and the work of the Committee.

I would like to applaud the members of the Committee, both past and present for their tremendous efforts and courage. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize former Chairs of the Committee some of whom are with us today – Ms. Luvsandanzangyn Ider, Ms. Desirée Bernard, Ms. Elizabeth Evatt, Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Ms. Ivanka Corti, Ms. Salma Khan, Ms. Aída González Martínez, Ms. Charlotte Abaka, Ms. Feride Ayse Acar, Ms. Rosario G. Manalo, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, and Ms. Naela Gabr.

I would also like to recognize the many stakeholders that have greatly contributed to the Committee’s work. Progress has been achieved in many countries thanks to the work of the Committee as well as other actors, including the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, other organizations and not least the States parties themselves. I would especially like to highlight the vital role that civil society plays in bringing women’s voices and demands to the attention of the CEDAW Committee with a view towards strengthening substantive gender equality.

I would like to warmly thank the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations for his presence this morning, H.E., Mr. Jan Eliasson, who just recently assumed his functions. We wish you the very best of luck. Although the Secretary-General could not be with us this morning, the Committee had the great honour to meet with the Secretary-General at its 49<sup>th</sup> session last July, and we were all so impressed by his work within the Organization towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director for UN Women, for the tremendous support provided to the Committee by UN Women, as well as for generously sponsoring this event along with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I

participated in the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in the panel entitled “The Future Women Want: Leaders’ Forum on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment for Sustainable Development”, where I had the opportunity to listen to Ms. Bachelet and can attest to her outstanding commitment to women’s rights. At the conference, Ms. Bachelet emphasized that for the sake of current and future generations, it is imperative to nurture and develop all of humankind’s collective intelligence, wisdom and capacity and that the full and equal participation of leadership is no longer an option. It is an urgent necessity if the world is to achieve the transformational need at all levels and spheres of society for sustainable development.

I am very proud to also acknowledge and thank the Minister of Policies for Women of Brazil, H.E., Ms. Eleonora Menicucci de Oliveira, who will be delivering a statement from the President of Brazil, H.E., Ms. Dilma Rousseff. These are women who embody the notion of women’s political participation and leadership – the theme for today’s panel discussion. I also would like to congratulate President Dilma Rouseff who presided over the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, which was a very challenging summit. The summit did not result in any binding agreements, and the draft of the outcome document “The Future We Want” did not go further than the Rio 92 Conference, especially regarding women’s rights. However, it reflected what was possible after more than a year of discussions among the 193 government delegations that attended the summit. I must highlight that the President Dilma has made considerable efforts to ensure that women’s rights, including reproductive rights, were integrated into the final documents.

We also have with us an old and dear friend of this Committee, as well as a former member, Ms. Shanthi Dairiam, Founder and Member of the Board of Directors of the International Women’s Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific. The

Committee owes a debt of gratitude to IWRAW-Asia Pacific and all of the non-governmental societies that play such active and vital roles in the reporting process and implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

Representing the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we have the pleasure of having with us Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General of the New York Office of OHCHR. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the work of OHCHR in providing excellent substantive and technical support to the Committee. I would also like to commend the recent report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the strengthening of the human rights treaty body system, which was unanimously applauded by the human rights treaty-bodies chairpersons, during the 24th Annual Meeting of Chairpersons of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies, in Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia, a few days ago,

I would also like to welcome our distinguished panellists for today's discussion on women's political participation and leadership. To achieve the equality in terms of women's political participation and leadership it is fundamental that discriminatory cultural patterns, gender stereotyping, prejudices and unequal power relations that still exist in our societies are overcome. In this sense, it is crucial to guarantee the implementation of the CEDAW Convention as a whole, as well as its the General Recommendations and Concluding Observations.

The CEDAW Convention is the most important legally binding norm that inspires us and requires from all stakeholders to take action directed to overcoming obstacles and achieving equality and security regarding women's rights.

Before I close, I would like to warmly thank our Secretary, Mr. Bradford Smith and Ms. Lee Waldorf from UN Women for organizing today's event. I additionally would like to thank Mr. Smith and the CEDAW secretariat staff and the staff from the New York Office of OHCHR for the commemorative publication marking this occasion. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

In closing, I would like to quote the CLADEM (Latin American Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights) slogan of its campaign in 1998 for the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration: "Without women's rights there are no human rights".

On behalf of the Committee, a very warm welcome to you all. Thank you!

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