

Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Fifty-fourth session

11 February-1 March 2013

**Statement of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women on the  
Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Strengthening of the United Nations  
Human Rights Treaty Bodies**

1. The Committee has high expectations that the intergovernmental process of the General Assembly on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system will bring a significant improvement in strengthening the human rights treaty body system as an essential and efficient mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's rights, based on the proposals made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2. The Committee welcomes and takes note with interest of the proposals made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in her report on the strengthening of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies of June 2012. It welcomes the efforts of the High Commissioner to address the difficulties that the treaty bodies system is facing, and the many proposals made to overcome them.

3. The Committee recalls its statement "Towards a harmonised and integrated human rights treaty bodies system" (2006) and emphasises the importance of developing effective cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies.

4. The Committee is concerned that the treaty body system has reached its limits with the present resources available, and that it may not be able to function on a sustainable basis. The backlog of State reports received, combined with the high number of overdue reports, is an alarming sign of this dysfunctional situation. The treaty body strengthening process can be successful only if it ensures that sufficient and sustained resources will enable the treaty bodies to fully discharge their various mandates, including for CEDAW, that is, not only the consideration of States parties' reports and follow-up procedures but also the examination of individual communications and the conduct of inquiries. The Committee regrets that the proposals of the High Commissioner did not address the issue of inquiries and the related financial implications.

5. The Committee has already implemented a number of the measures suggested in the report, including:

- Issuance of summary records only in English;
- Measures concerning the consideration of States parties' reports (e.g., limitation of the number of questions in lists of issues and of the number of recommendations in and the length of concluding observations, focussing questions during the dialogue on the most important human rights issues and on States parties' follow up on the previous concluding observations, clustering of questions, allocation of speaking time to the State party delegation and to Committee members and use of a speech timer, work in task forces, etc.);
- Simplification of follow-up procedures by reducing the number of questions and adopting clear guidelines ;
- Adoption of standard operating procedures for conducting inquiries ; and

- Full incorporation of the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of treaty body members into the Committee's rules of procedure.

6. The Committee has embarked on a re-assessment of its rules of procedure and working methods, and is in the process of implementing some of the other proposals, such as:

- Further improving the "country-specificity" of concluding observations;
- Systematically requesting information on the national mechanisms and regulatory framework for the implementation of concluding observations;
- Institutionalizing the Committee's engagement with a larger number of UN agencies and national stakeholders, in particular national human rights institutions; and
- Public webcasting of the Committee's dialogues with States parties (which will initially be done on a trial basis).

7. The Committee has decided to await the outcome of the intergovernmental process of the General Assembly on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system before taking a final decision on some of the other proposals contained in the report, in particular the comprehensive reporting calendar in the light of its financial implications.

1 March 2013

**Decision on the**

**Statement of the CEDAW Committee on the  
Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Strengthening the United Nations Human  
Rights Treaty Body System**

The Committee approves the statement, as per text annexed.