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**Statement by  
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**CHAIR**

**COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

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**Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,**

Today is the first time that I have the honour to address and engage in an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee of the General Assembly in my capacity as newly elected Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). From among the many issues the Committee has worked on in the past 12 months, I would like today to focus on three: CEDAW's engagement in furthering the impact of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs); CEDAW's recent adoption of General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women; and CEDAW and the human rights treaty body strengthening process.

### **CEDAW engagement in furthering the impact of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Over the past year, the CEDAW Committee has continued to actively promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has taken concrete steps to use its mandate in furtherance of the Agenda's objectives. The Committee's interventions have focused on three priority areas.

Firstly, the Committee encourages States parties to report on efforts to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to gender equality. It does so by requesting States parties to provide such information in their written replies to the lists of issues and questions that the Committee's pre-sessional working group adopts in preparation of the

review of State party reports. In addition, the Committee raises relevant SDGs during its constructive dialogues held with the State party delegations during its three annual sessions in Geneva. The concluding observations that our Committee adopts at the end of its review of periodic reports submitted by States parties to the Convention systematically call for the realization of substantive gender equality throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Committee has also developed the practice of recalling relevant SDG targets in its concluding observations and requiring States parties to provide information on the implementation of the relevant recommendations in their next periodic report to the Committee. Most of the 27 concluding observations that CEDAW adopted since October 2016 link specific SDGs and targets to relevant articles of the Convention. Moreover, the Committee is currently revising its reporting guidelines, with support from its substantive secretariat at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN-Women, to encourage systematic reporting by States parties on the achievement of relevant SDG targets.

Secondly, the Committee has contributed to shaping the methodologies for selected SDG indicators to assess the achievement of gender equality. In that regard, it has collaborated closely with UN Women, FAO, the World Bank and the OECD to develop the methodologies on indicators 5.1.1 ("Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex") and 5.a.2 ("percentage of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control"), respectively. The Committee has strengthened its institutional collaboration with the aforementioned

entities, with a view to promoting the achievement of the SDG targets by States.

Thirdly, the Committee has made substantive submissions to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, since its inception, to influence global and national policy-making by reinforcing the links between international human rights standards and the 2030 Agenda. In its submissions to the High-Level Political Forum, CEDAW has identified concrete steps that States must take in order to realize women's rights and achieve the Agenda's objectives of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" (2017 HLPF theme) and "Ensuring no one is left behind" (2016 HLPF theme).

With 189 States parties, the CEDAW Convention enjoys almost universal ratification, and is the only human rights instrument that provides comprehensive protection of human rights of women. It is of pivotal importance that the Sustainable Development Goals are solidly grounded in human rights, including women's rights as enshrined in the Convention.

### **Gender-based violence against women**

The elimination of gender-based violence against women is a principal area of CEDAW's broad agenda. In addition to its dialogues with States parties, this issue is also under discussion in the various other procedures of the Committee. On 18 July 2017, the Committee adopted general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating its general recommendation No. 19. In the general recommendation, the Committee complements and updates the guidance

provided by general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women. The new general recommendation extends the scope of “violence against women” to all forms of “gender-based violence against women”, which strengthens the understanding of this type of violence as a social rather than merely an individual phenomenon. It highlights that women’s exposure to violence is linked to various forms of inequalities and that it is frequently a consequence of intersecting forms of discrimination. General recommendation No. 35 calls on States parties to the Convention to address all forms of gender-based violence against women in both the public and private spheres, including violence committed in public institutions and in the cyber-space as well as in the context of violent extremism. It further elaborates in detail on the due diligence obligation of States parties to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence.

The general recommendation will be a particularly useful resource tool for policymaking, as it draws on the recent practice and jurisprudence of CEDAW as well as of other international and regional human rights mechanisms and also reflects the latest research on how to comprehensively address all forms of gender-based violence. It can furthermore be widely used for advocacy by civil society. During the public consultation on the draft general recommendation, more than 100 stakeholders submitted comments, many of which are reflected in the final text. As a novelty in international law, the general recommendation observes that the prohibition of gender-based violence against women has evolved into a principle of customary international law. This has great potential for strengthening the position of victims.

At this point, I would like to highlight the Committee's continued collaboration throughout the process of updating the general recommendation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, and thank her for her contribution. I would also like to thank the London School of Economics Centre for Women, Peace and Security for having contributed to the process by organizing two expert meetings in 2016 and 2017, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to discuss specific substantive issues in relation to gender-based violence against women.

On 14 November 2017, during its sixty-eighth session in Geneva, the Committee will hold a public event with an expert panel to launch general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women. On that occasion, it will also meet with the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) monitoring the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The meeting will also provide an opportunity to enhance the collaboration between international and regional mechanisms on women's rights.

The Committee also continues to work on its draft general recommendation on the right of women and girls to education. This is done to clarify the obligations of States parties under article 10 of the Convention to ensure that education is accessible and affordable for all women and girls, of high quality and free from violence, and to ensure patriarchal stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes that exacerbate

sexual abuse and harassment of women and girls, including in educational settings, are eradicated.

In parallel, CEDAW is elaborating a draft general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate, in order to provide guidance to States parties on measures to achieve gender equality as a factor that will reinforce the resilience of women and communities in the context of climate-induced disasters. The draft general recommendation also recognizes the need to improve coherence, accountability and the mutual reinforcement of different international agendas on disaster risk reduction, climate change, sustainable development and human rights, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), to ensure a consistent and effective approach.

### **CEDAW's work under the Optional Protocol to the Convention**

Under its Optional Protocol, ratified by 109 States, CEDAW despite a constrained financial environment took action on 11 individual complaints last year. Most of these complaints concerned cases of gender-based violence against women and refoulement. The Committee, with help from its Working Group on Inquiries, also continued its work on a number of confidential inquiry submissions alleging grave or systematic violations by a State party of rights set forth in the Convention. Since October 2016, it adopted one inquiry report and undertook one confidential inquiry visit.

## **Treaty body strengthening process**

In November 2016, CEDAW held an informal meeting with the States parties to the Convention in Geneva attended by 71 States parties. The Committee briefed the States parties on the implementation of the Convention and the Optional Protocol in the context of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, its engagement with UN-Women on the Sustainable Development Goals indicators and its recent work on draft general recommendations.

The Committee supports and has implemented many of the measures envisaged in General Assembly resolution 68/268. Accordingly, we have (1) continued to prepare lists of issues prior to reporting for seven, and examined the simplified reports of three, States parties having requested to be examined under the simplified reporting procedure, while temporarily suspending the procedure with regard to new requests; (2) continued to operate in country task forces in examining periodic State reports; (3) formulated shorter and more focused, concrete and country specific concluding observations; (4) established word limits for annexes to State party documentation; and (5) increased the use of videoconference technology for consultations with UN country teams and for remote participation of delegation members in constructive dialogues.

The human rights treaty body system is growing and evolving. We see increased ratifications, greater demands to access the communications procedures and the work on inquiries into grave or systematic violations of human rights. Unfortunately, this growth is not commensurate with the resources provided. In his report on the status of the human rights treaty

body system (A/71/118), the Secretary-General called for the provision of additional resources that respond to that called for by the General Assembly's resolution 68/268. We count on Member States to take responsibility and follow on their commitments by asserting in a positive manner those recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Should we not receive the needed resources, we might no longer be able to cope with the increased workload. Without revisiting the actual needs of the treaty body system every two years and adjusting the provision of resources accordingly, we will inevitably fail in adequately responding to victims' needs. At a time when the Secretary-General rightly calls on preventative measures to ensure that human rights violations do not occur – rather than forcing us all to respond to them at terrible human and financial costs –, a lack of potential support to human rights mechanisms therefore seems to fall short of hearing his call.

Before concluding, let me express the Committee's gratitude to all our partners, including other treaty bodies and human rights mechanisms, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, Member States, civil society, national human rights institutions and many other stakeholders. The support and information received from these partners are crucial for the Committee to gain a clear view of the status of women's rights around the globe. In addition to our colleagues at OHCHR, I would especially like to thank United Nations country teams, as well as the Interagency Group on CEDAW reporting comprising UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO and UN Women. We are also grateful to UNHCR, ILO, UNESCO, IOM, the IPU and civil society organizations, particularly IWRAW-Asia Pacific, for their support.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity and stand ready to answer any questions you may wish to pose.

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