

Chairpersons of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, states in article 19 that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) shall adopt its own rules of procedure, and that it shall elect its officers for a term of two years. The Committee's rules of procedure establish that the officers of the Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur. While the length of the terms of office is laid down in the Convention, the rules of procedure add that the officers shall be eligible for re-election "provided that the principle of rotation is upheld".

The Bureau of the Committee has regularly consisted of five members, one from each of the five regions of the United Nations, except when a region was not represented among the membership. The first Bureau served for a three-year term, whereas each subsequent Bureau remained in office for two years, with the exception of the Chairperson of the fourth and fifth sessions, who remained in office also for the sixth and seventh sessions; and the Chairperson of the twelfth and thirteenth sessions, who remained in office, also for the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions.

The rules of procedure identify the general powers of the Chairperson. Under the rules, the Chairperson controls the proceedings of the Committee, including the direction of the discussion and decision-making process. Procedurally, the Chairperson works closely with the United Nations Secretariat in the preparation of the session, in ensuring the timely conduct of business, including the preparation of documents, the presence of States parties for the consideration of reports, and the general provision of backup to the Committee.

The Chairperson has been increasingly called upon to represent the Committee at various international activities and events, including international conferences and other intergovernmental meetings of the United Nations, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly. The Chairperson participates on behalf of the Committee in the annual meeting of the persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, which makes recommendations to the General Assembly.

As of the fifty-second session of the Committee, twelve experts have served as its Chairperson. Ms. Silvia Pimentel, the Committee's thirteenth Chairperson, has been chairing the Committee since its forty-eighth session in February 2011. The following is a list of the Committee's Chairpersons:

Ms. Luvsandanzangyn Ider (1982 – 1987)

A national of Mongolia, Ms. Ider served on the Committee from 1982 to 1988. Her career in the foreign service of her country began in 1963, and she has the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. She has attended many UN meetings and conferences and those of other international organizations since 1962. In 1979, she was Vice-Chairperson of the UN Commission for Social Development, and in 1985 she was nominated its Chairperson.

Ms. Desirée Bernard (1985 – 1988)

A national of Guyana, Ms. Bernard served on the Committee from 1982 to 1992 and from 1995 to 1998. She was appointed the first woman judge of the High Court of Guyana in October 1980, and was later appointed the first woman judge of the Court of Appeals of Guyana in May 1992. She later served as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Guyana. In her career, she has attended many national, regional and international fora, and has written and lectured extensively on the legal rights of women and children.

Ms. Elizabeth Evatt (1989 – 1990)

A national of Australia, Ms. Evatt served on the Committee from 1985 to 1992. From 1976 to 1988, she was Chief Judge of the Family Court of Australia, and from 1988 to 1993, she was President of the Law Reform Commission of Australia. She has also served as a part-time Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. She served as member of the UN Human Rights Committee from 1993 to 2000.

Ms. Mervat Tallawy (1991 – 1992)

A national of Egypt, Ms. Tallawy served on the Committee from 1987 to 1998. She was appointed Minister for Social Affairs in 1997. She was Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative of her country to the United Nations Office at Vienna. She was Deputy Director of the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for several years. Ms. Tallawy has represented her country at many UN meetings and conferences and those of other international and regional organizations since 1962. She was Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women from 1992 to 1993. From 2000 to 2007, Ms. Tallawy was the Executive Secretary of UN ESCWA. She is a board member of the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development and is currently the President of the Egyptian National Council of Women.

Ms. Ivanka Corti (1993 – 1996)

A national of Italy, Ms. Corti served on the Committee from 1987 to 2002. She was its Chairperson for two consecutive terms during the period leading up to, during and after the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), and was instrumental in ensuring the participation of the Committee at the Conference. She was elected Chairperson of the seventh meeting of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies in September 1996. Ms. Corti has contributed greatly to the increased visibility of the Committee. She was a member of the Italian Prime Minister's Commission for Human Rights.

Ms. Salma Khan (1997 – 1998)

A national of Bangladesh, Ms. Khan served on the Committee from 1993 to 2000 and from 2003 to 2006. She was the Director-General of the Bangladesh Management Development Centre. She was Divisional Chief Economist of the Ministry of Planning from 1993 to 1994. Ms. Khan's professional work and publications have focused on economics as well as women, children, labour, credit, and non-governmental organizations. In 2006, she became her country's Ambassador to Indonesia.

Ms. Aída González Martínez (1999 – 2000)

A national of Mexico, Ms. González served on the Committee from 1982 to 1992 and from 1997 to 2004. She has been Coordinator for Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1993, and Adviser to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs since 1990. She has been an Ambassador since 1978, and has represented her country since 1968 at the United Nations and other international organizations. In addition to international relations, Ms. González has focused on women's issues, human rights and labour and social welfare.

Ms. Charlotte Abaka (2001 – 2002)

A national of Ghana, Ms. Abaka served on the Committee from 1991 to 2002. She has represented her country in a number of UN meetings and conferences, as well as other international and regional conferences since 1989. She served as the Chairperson of the National Subcommittee on the CEDAW (an

independent body to monitor implementation of the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action) since 1996. She has written many publications and lectures on women's issues, youth awareness, labour and gender equality.

Ms. Feride Ayse Acar (2003 – 2004)

A national of Turkey, Ms. Acar served on the Committee from 1997 to 2004 and is also currently a member since 2011. She is a Professor of Political Sociology and Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey where she has also served as the Founding Chair of the Graduate Programme in Gender and Women's Studies (1993- 2003) and as the Chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (2001- 2007). Ms Acar has been actively involved in the initiation, negotiations and drafting of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) both as an independent expert and member of the Council of Europe Task Force on Violence against Women (2006-2008), and as the Turkish delegate to the Ad Hoc Committee (CAHVIO) that negotiated and drafted the Istanbul Convention. She has published and lectured extensively on women's human rights, and has been an advocate for gender equality and implementation of the CEDAW Convention in her own country and around the world.

Ms. Rosario G. Manalo (2005 – 2006)

A national of the Philippines, Ms. Manalo served on the Committee from 1999 to 2006. She has been a career diplomat serving, since 1979, as her country's Ambassador to several countries in Europe as well as to international and regional organizations. She represented her Government at the Third World Conference on Women, in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. As a Foreign Affairs Senior Adviser of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, she chaired the High-Level Task Force that drafted the ASEAN Charter. She is currently the Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). As a professorial lecturer she gave courses on gender issues and human rights, economic diplomacy, and international relations. She is the current Dean at the Philippine Women's Helena Z. Benitez School of International Relations and Diplomacy, and lectures at various universities in Manila including the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, University of Asia and Pacific and Miriam College. She has received various medals from the French and Belgian, and Philippine Governments as well as honorary doctorates from various universities. She was recently elected as member to the International Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

Ms. Dubravka Šimonović (2007 – 2008)

A national of Croatia, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović has been a member of the Committee since January 2002, and served as its Chairperson (2007-2008), Follow-up Rapporteur (2009-2011) and Chairperson of the Working Group of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW from 2011 to the present. She headed the Human Rights Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and has the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. She was Chairperson of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2001-2002). At the regional level she was member of the Council of Europe's Task Force (its Chair and Vice Chair) to combat violence against women, including domestic violence (2006-2007) and Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee (CAHVIO) that elaborated the new Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2008-2010). Ms. Šimonović has attended numerous conferences around the world, published books and articles and lectured on women's rights and violence against women.

Ms. Naela Gabr (2009 – 2011)

A national of Egypt, Ms. Naela Gabr has been a member of the committee since January 1998, and served as its Vice Chairperson from 2007 to 2009 and as its Chairperson from 2009 to 2011. A career foreign service officer, Ms. Gabr currently heads the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons and heads the National Committee of the Francophonie. She was Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2012, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs from 2005 to 2010, Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and to the World Trade Organization from 2002 to 2005 and she was Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Republic of South Africa. She was the First Director of the Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1992 to 1997 and Deputy Assistant Minister for Human Rights, International Social and Humanitarian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 1999. She was a board member of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) from 2002 to 2008. Ms. Gabr has attended conferences and published articles on human rights, women rights and human trafficking.

Ms. Silvia Pimentel (2011 to present)

A national of Brazil, she has been a member of the CEDAW Committee since 2005 and is currently its Chair. She is Professor of Legal Philosophy at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo (PUC/SP) as well as a well-known women's rights activist, in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and in particular, in Brazil. She was one of founders of the International Women's Rights Action Watch – IWRAW, and the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights – CLADEM. Ms. Pimentel has attended and participated in numerous conferences, including the UN International Women Conferences of Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) as well as the UN International Human Rights Conference in Vienna (1993). She has also been active in the elaboration of numerous general recommendations of the Committee, including the general recommendations on migrant workers, and the core obligations of article 2 of the Convention. She is currently the Chair of the Working Group on the General Recommendation on Access to Justice.

[The above information has been updated for Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Ms. Ivanka Corti, Ms. Charlotte Abaka, Ms. Rosario G. Manalo, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, Ms. Naela Gabr and Ms. Silvia Pimentel for the 30th Anniversary Event of the Committee which will be held on 9 July 2012 at United Nations Headquarters. As new information is received, the above information will be modified accordingly.]
