

Concept Note

REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHT MECHANISMS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Workshop convened by the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice of the UN Human Rights Council Geneva, 1st October 2013

1. Background

In 2010, Human Rights Council Resolution 15/23 established the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice to identify, promote and exchange views on best practices related to the elimination of laws that discriminate against women or are discriminatory to women in terms of implementation or impact. In 2011, five independent experts of balanced geographical representation were appointed by the Human Rights Council as members of the Working Group. The Working Group is tasked with making recommendations to States on how to improve legislation and its implementation and on realisation of the MDGs, in particular as regards promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Working Group's mandate, established 30 years after the entry into force of CEDAW, invites review of a broad frame of progress and challenges in the elimination of discrimination against women in law and in practice. In addressing this wide reaching mandate, the Working Group established a working program in which it will examine four thematic areas and then subsequently analyse the interconnectedness of these thematic areas in determining women's quality of life, gender equality and empowerment of women: discrimination in public and political life, in economic and social life, in family and cultural life and in relation to health and safety issues.

The mandate of the Working Group requires it to take into account the views of other stakeholders, including regional human rights mechanisms. This collaborative mandate gives it the potential to act as a convenor for exchanges on women's rights with regional human rights mechanisms. Initiating a discussion on women's rights among the different regional human rights mechanisms is particularly relevant now, twenty years after the Vienna Human Rights Declaration and Programme of Action, which affirmed that women's rights are human rights and that regional human rights mechanisms and cooperation between the international and regional systems should be strengthened. Since that time, the importance of regional human rights mechanisms has indeed grown and been strengthened, making a central contribution to the conceptual development and the implementation of human rights globally. Amongst the most recently established mechanisms are ASEAN's Inter-Governmental Human Rights Commission (AICHR) and Women's and Children's Commission (ACWC), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC). Older human rights mechanisms established under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the Charter of Organization of American States have continued to make significant strides forward on women's rights, including through the Convention of Belem do Para. Meanwhile, both the international and regional

human rights systems have recognized the important role that each system plays in the common goal of realizing human rights for all and the crucial importance of reinforcing synergies and partnerships between these two levels.

The Human Rights Council has, on a number of occasions, reiterated the importance of strengthened cooperation between the international and regional human rights systems including through resolutions and a series of international workshops that it mandated the OHCHR to organize. The last of these international workshops, which took place in December 2012 and where the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice was represented, discussed ways and means for stepping up the collaboration between the two systems in relation to women's rights.

The Working Group wishes to convene a workshop with representatives of regional and cross-regional mechanisms with the aim of exchanging information, sharing experiences, lessons learnt and challenges on the different levels of protection awarded by the regional instruments and mechanisms on women's rights and strategizing on how the collaboration and partnerships among all these mechanisms could be strengthened.

2. Objective

The specific objectives of this meeting will be to provide a meeting space for relevant actors to:

1. Exchange views on the different provisions on women's rights set forth by these regional human rights instruments and identify ensuing protection gaps.
2. Reflect upon relevant jurisprudence, good practices and lessons learnt on women's rights set by the regional human right monitoring mechanisms.
3. Identify potential areas of collaboration between the regional mechanisms and the Working Group to maximize efforts to eliminate discrimination against women in law and practice.

3. Modalities of the event

The workshop will bring together representatives of regional and cross-regional human rights mechanisms, namely the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Special Rapporteur on the rights of women; the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children; the European Court on Human Rights, the Gender Equality Commission and the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe; the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and there will be a number of presentations related to the different regional mechanisms followed by discussions.

The workshop will be conducted in English, French, and Spanish (simultaneous interpretation will be available in these three languages). Participation will be upon invitation only.

A detailed agenda for the workshop and logistical information will be sent in due course.