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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 last 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 Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). I thank you for the opportunity to engage in an interactive dialogue with you during my term as Chair of CEDAW. Before I brief you on the many issues that CEDAW has worked on in the past 12 months, I would like to pay tribute to Theodora Oby Nwankwo, who passed away on 9 December 2017, during her tenure as a member of CEDAW. Ms. Nwankwo was an exemplar of untiring commitment and dedication to the attainment of the objectives set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Convention). She made enormous contributions under all of CEDAW's procedures, in particular the inquiry procedure.

Chair,

During the past 12 months, CEDAW has worked on numerous issues. Today, I would like to focus on four: CEDAW's engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Reprisals and intimidation of women human rights defenders; CEDAW's recent and ongoing work on general recommendations; and CEDAW and the human rights treaty body strengthening process.

CEDAW engagement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Since my last address, CEDAW's engagement in promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has essentially been three-fold.

First, CEDAW has continued to pursue efforts to encourage States parties to report on measures taken to achieve the targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under the State party reporting procedure, CEDAW has continued to elicit information from States parties on progress through States parties' written replies to lists of issues that CEDAW's pre-sessional group adopts in preparation for the review of State party reports. Additionally, CEDAW raised questions relevant to SDGs during constructive dialogues with States parties at its three annual sessions held in Geneva. Some of the concerns that CEDAW raised during these constructive dialogues were systematically included in the concluding observations together with concrete recommendations on measures to be taken to ensure the substantive realization of gender equality throughout the process of the implementation of the SDGs. It is, therefore, unsurprising that most of the 28 concluding observations that CEDAW adopted since October 2017 are linked to specific SDGs and targets relevant to the articles of the Convention. Furthermore, CEDAW continues to revise its reporting guidelines in order to integrate SDGs with a view to ensuring systematic reporting by States parties on progress made on the implementation of SDG targets.

Second, CEDAW has continued to collaborate with UN Women, UNESCO, FAO, the World Bank and the OECD in order to shape the methodologies for selected SDG indicators to assess the achievement of

gender equality. CEDAW has strengthened its institutional collaboration with the aforementioned entities, with a view to promoting the achievement of the SDG targets by States parties. CEDAW also continues to explore further opportunities to enhance collaboration with other entities which have a bearing on its mandate in furthering substantive equality for women and girls, and ensuring States parties' accountability in areas relevant to the SDGs. For this reason, on 20 July 2018, CEDAW signed a framework of cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Under this framework of cooperation, CEDAW and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict seek to advance the rights of women and girls by combating conflict-related sexual violence and supporting the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. It is the firm belief of CEDAW members that this framework of cooperation will yield positive results in our efforts to ensure that "no one is left behind" in our concerted efforts to achieve substantive gender equality globally.

Third, CEDAW has made substantive submissions to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, since its inception, to continue 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 in April 2018, CEDAW has identified concrete steps that States must take in order to realize women's rights and achieve the Agenda's objectives of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" (2018 HLPF theme).

Chair,

Reprisals and intimidation of women human rights defenders

One of the most disheartening things that CEDAW has had to address in the past 12 months relates to reprisals and intimidation. It is disconcerting that women human rights defenders are subjected to reprisals and intimidation for engaging or cooperating with CEDAW in their pursuit to advance women's human rights. CEDAW remains committed to ensure that States parties protect women human rights defenders who engage or cooperate with it. In order do so effectively, on 17 July 2018, CEDAW appointed Nahla Haidar as rapporteur and Gladys Acosta Vargas as alternate rapporteur on intimidation or reprisals. Furthermore, on 20 July 2018, CEDAW endorsed the guidelines against intimidation or reprisals ("San José Guidelines") adopted at the twenty-seventh meeting of chairs of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. CEDAW stands ready to work with the international community and other entities within the UN system to devise strategies and appropriate interventions in order to stem out this insidious phenomenon.

Chair,

CEDAW's recent and ongoing work on general recommendations

Disaster risk reduction in the context climate change

In March 2018, CEDAW adopted a General Recommendation on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, which provides 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 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 to the implementation of interventions.

Trafficking of women and girls in the context of global migration

CEDAW began the process of elaborating a draft General Recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, in order to provide guidance to States parties on measures to address trafficking of women and girls as they move across borders either in search for better economic conditions or as they seek refuge from persecution. The draft General Recommendation will particularly address the gendered dimensions of trafficking including risk factors that expose women and girls on the move to sexual exploitation and abuse. The General Recommendation will also tackle State parties' responsibility in addressing organized crime including combating illicit financial flows that fuel the trafficking of women and girls.

CEDAW plans to hold a half-day of general discussion on the subject of this General Recommendation during its 73rd session in July 2019. Thereafter, CEDAW will invite States parties and other stakeholders to comment on a draft General Recommendation, and will also conduct consultations at the regional level.

Chair,

Treaty body strengthening and cooperation with partners

CEDAW continues to implement most of the measures provided in General Assembly resolution 68/268. Following its decision to suspend the use of the simplified procedure in October 2016, CEDAW decided to reinstate the procedure in July 2018 after reviewing its workload and working methods. The simplified reporting procedure is available to States parties provided that they meet the following two conditions: **First**, they must have previously submitted an initial report, which was considered under the regular procedure; and **second**, they must have submitted an updated common core document, which dates back to no more than five years on the day the request is made. Since its reinstatement, 22 States parties made requests to avail themselves of the procedure and 12 States parties meet the aforementioned conditions.

Furthermore, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 68/268, CEDAW continued to (1) operate in country task forces in examining periodic State reports; (2) formulate shorter and more focused, concrete and country specific concluding observations; (3) ensure that States parties adhere to established word limits for annexes to State party documentation; and (5) increase the use of videoconference technology for consultations with UN country teams and for remote participation of delegation members in constructive dialogues.

Nevertheless, CEDAW continues to experience significant challenges in undertaking its mandate, particularly under its individual communications and inquiry procedures. The increased demand to access

the communications and inquiry procedures coupled with the lack of adequate human and financial resources means that CEDAW cannot effectively provide redress for individuals who may have exhausted all domestic remedies, and women and girls who may have suffered grave or systematic violations. While calls by the Secretary-General to be frugal are understandable and heeded, CEDAW's mandated work in this area is severely hamstrung by inadequate resources. I, therefore, count on Member States to take responsibility and follow on their commitments to strengthen the UN treaty body system by conducting an overall review of the effectiveness of the measures taken pursuant to resolution 68/268 by the year 2020 (2020 Treaty Body Review Process). Let me underscore that if CEDAW does not receive the needed resources, it might no longer be able to cope with the increased workload of individual communications and inquiries.

Chair,

Before I close, and as my term as CEDAW Chair comes to an end, I would like to thank our partners including the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting, comprising UN Women, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA IOM, and FAO, that provides invaluable country-specific information to CEDAW; OHCHR, UNESCO and UNISDR which have generously supported CEDAW's work on General Recommendations; the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) Asia-Pacific that brings local NGOs to our sessions through its Global to Local Programme; and the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, which regularly hosts thematic events for CEDAW. We continue to forge new partnerships. In July 2018, CEDAW members had a fruitful exchange with senior officials of the World Health Organization

as well as a seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania, on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration with senior officials from WHO, ILO, the European Commission, IOM and civil society.

Finally, let me thank OHCHR for its support as the Secretariat of CEDAW. The work of CEDAW has continued to grow in 2017-2018, and while the treaty body strengthening outcome provided welcome new resources, our staffing support has not kept pace with the growth in our work, particularly for individual communications and inquiry procedures. I remain hopeful that the 2020 Treaty Body Review Process will address this resource problem so that the expectations placed on CEDAW by women across the world can continue to be met.

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