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Statement by
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CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

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Third Committee
Item 27: Advancement of women

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Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Today is the second and 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 (the CEDAW Committee).

Over the past year, the Committee held dialogues with 25 States parties in Geneva and adopted concluding observations on their reports, preventing a further increase of its current backlog of 37 received State party reports that are pending review. Regrettably, it was able to adopt only 6 lists of issues in relation to reports from States parties and 9 lists of issues prior to reporting under the simplified reporting procedure because one of its three annual pre-sessional working groups was cancelled due to the UN regular budget liquidity crisis. Of the 189 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention), only 13 have opted out from simplified reporting procedure since the Committee's decision in 2022 to make it the default procedure for the submission of periodic reports.

Under article 2 of the Optional Protocol, ratified by 115 States parties, CEDAW acted on 8 individual complaints. It found violations of the authors' rights in 6 cases concerning sexual harassment of women in detention and non-identification of victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation resulting in failure their full access to justice and remedies.

Under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the Committee adopted its report of an inquiry concerning restrictive access to abortion, which was made public in August, 6 months after its transmittal to the State party concerned, for observations. In December 2023, it conducted a confidential inquiry visit to another State party concerning abductions of women and girls by armed groups.

The Committee regrets that the meeting time of both its Working Groups on Communications and on Inquiries was reduced by two days due to the liquidity crisis, after that of the Working Group on Communications had already been reduced from 10 to 7 days this year.

Draft general recommendation on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems

At the end of our 89th session currently taking place in Geneva, CEDAW will adopt and launch its draft general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, whose central demand is parity – everywhere decisions are made. The general recommendation will offer an innovative roadmap providing guidance to States parties and the international community for reaching 50:50 parity in decision-making systems in political, public and economic life, as well as in peace and security and other national and international fora. Among the key recommendations are enshrining parity in national constitutions, adopting national parity action plans, and taking urgent measures to ensure parity in the digital world and other innovative sectors that will shape our future.

The general recommendation echoes the call of the Pact for the Future, adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Summit of the Future last month, for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political and economic life, as well as in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation and in peace operations, as an essential condition for achieving sustainable peace.

Another draft general recommendation, on gender stereotypes, is on the horizon. In February this year, CEDAW adopted a concept note and at its 90th session in February 2025, it plans to hold a half-day of general discussion on the topic.

Women, peace and security

The Committee remains deeply concerned that women and girls continue to be primarily targeted by the use of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, and relocate communities. Alarmed by reports of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation in IDP camps in a State party to the CEDAW Convention, the Committee requested and already received an exceptional report from that State party, which will be reviewed in February 2025.

In response to the escalating conflict in the Middle East and the high toll of women and children killed, wounded and displaced by the war, CEDAW adopted statements urgently calling for inclusive peace talks with equal representation of

women as well as for a ceasefire and a peaceful and lasting resolution of the war. The Committee also adopted a statement denouncing that the institutionalized violations of women's human rights in Afghanistan may amount to gender persecution and decided to explore the possibility of considering Afghanistan under CEDAW's State reporting procedure, following the precedent of the fourth cycle Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan held at the Human Rights Council on 29 April 2024.

On 12 March, I had the honour to participate in a briefing of the Security Council under the *Arria* formula on the links between CEDAW and the women, peace and security agenda, convened by Switzerland, where I spoke and engaged in an interactive dialogue on the theme "Leveraging the CEDAW Convention and the women, peace and security framework".

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the Committee encourages Member States to use the CEDAW Convention as a comprehensive normative framework and the Committee as a treaty monitoring tool to firmly anchor the women, peace and security agenda in binding human rights norms and monitor its implementation.

Harmonization of working methods

Over the past year, my Committee also continued to streamline and harmonize its working methods with those of other treaty bodies. It adopted and in one case already applied a new methodology for the review of State party reports in the absence of a delegation, drawing on the practices of several other treaty bodies, amending its rules of procedure to provide for the possibility of adopting provisional concluding observations following the review, which are made final after the expiry of the time limit for the State party to submit observations.

Treaty body strengthening process

The treaty body system has been negatively impacted by chronic resource constraints, in addition to the ongoing liquidity crisis of the United Nations. These constraints pose limitations on human rights protection and prevent my and other Committees from fully implementing their mandated activities efficiently and effectively. Resources of the treaty bodies need to be bolstered to reflect increases in ratifications, State party reports, individual communications and inquiry visits.

Despite these constraints, the treaty body strengthening process has led to significant results further to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268. We, the Chairs, have presented unified conclusions on how to make the treaty body system fit-for-purpose, coherent and sustainable, and OHCHR has presented a technically detailed Working Paper. All recommendations are based on the State-led 2020 review process.

At our thirty-sixth meeting annual meeting of Chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies in New York (24-28 June 2024), that was preceded by an informal meeting of the Chairpersons held in Madrid, Spain, from 21 to 23 February this year, we made progress in aligning the working methods of our Committees, including with respect to the simplified reporting procedure and the proposed advisory mechanism for harmonization. During our meeting with States, we urged States to endorse the introduction of a predictable eight-year review schedule, with follow-up reviews in-between, as well as other pending proposals for the strengthening of the treaty body system and called for resources to implement these proposals.

Importantly, in the Pact for the Future, Member States requested the Secretary-General to assess the need for adequate, predictable, increased and sustainable financing of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for efficient and effective mandate delivery to enable them to respond to the range of human rights challenges facing the international community with impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

In the recent statement of the treaty body Chairs on the Pact for the Future, we called on Member States to ensure that the positive language in the Pact is swiftly followed up by decisive support for treaty body strengthening, including through increased regular budget resources to implement the improvements needed.

The upcoming GA resolution on the human rights treaty body system is one important opportunity for Member States to reiterate their commitment to strengthening the treaty bodies by addressing the remaining challenges, including those related to resources.

Coordination with other mechanisms on discrimination and violence against women

In 2024, the CEDAW Committee has the honour to co-chair the Platform of independent expert mechanisms on discrimination and violence against women

(EDVAW Platform) together with MESECVI, the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention. Under this leadership, the Platform has held two meetings; has elaborated its terms of reference; and is finalizing a position paper on "Beijing +30: The urgent need to address violence and discrimination against women and girls in the context of rising gender equality regression".

Chair, distinguished delegates,

Before I close, I wish to thank our partners, in particular UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union for their support to our draft general recommendation No. 40. I especially thank UN Women for taking the lead in the organization of 5 hybrid regional consultations and for coordinating the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting, comprising also OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, IOM, and FAO, which continued to provide invaluable information through United Nations Country Teams. I also wish to thank UNHCR; IOM; IPU; the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) Asia-Pacific that continued coordinating the NGO briefings during our sessions; and the various national human rights institutions and representatives of local women's organizations, who provided country-specific information to the Committee. I would also like to thank the CERMI Women's Foundation for its generous support last year in providing captioning and international sign language interpretation during the Committee's informal public meetings with non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions. In that regard, the Committee regrets that the United Nations no longer service public hybrid meetings with interpretation of the treaty bodies, which limits the accessibility of their work for NGO and NHRI representatives or other stakeholders, including those with disabilities.

Finally, let me thank OHCHR for its support as CEDAW's Secretariat despite inadequate staffing levels.

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