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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Report by the Secretariat

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I. **INTRODUCTION**

- The present report addresses a number of issues relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. These include:
 - (a) proposed approaches in cases where States parties have not submitted at least two reports required under article 18 of the Convention; and
 - (b) the Committee's long term programme of work with regard to general recommendations;

The report also contains relevant developments in other parts of the United Nations human rights regime.

- A list of States parties whose reports are more than five years overdue is contained in annex I. The report also contains a list of States parties whose reports have been submitted but have not yet been considered by the Committee (annex II), as well as the date of the receipt of such reports.
- **3.** Information on efforts by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women with regard to universal ratification, timely reporting, acceptance of the amendment to article 20.1, of the Convention, and ratification and accession to its Optional Protocol, is included in the report. A list of those States parties which have accepted the amendment is contained in annex III, while those States parties which have signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention is contained in annex IV. A list of those States which have not ratified or acceded to the Convention is contained in annex V

II. PROPOSED APPROACHES WHERE STATES PARTIES HAVE NOT SUBMITTED AT LEAST TWO REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

- 4. Article 18(1) of the Convention provides that States parties undertake to submit reports on implementation of the Convention within one year after its entry into force for the State concerned, and thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests. Since the Convention entered into force in 1982, the Committee's practice has been to observe the four-yearly periodicity foreseen in article 18, irrespective of whether the State party concerned has fallen behind in its reporting obligations, or if the consideration of a State party's report by the Committee has been delayed. In this context, the Committee has interpreted submission of reports "whenever the Committee so requests" to refer to exceptional reports, with regard to which it adopted standards and guidelines at its twenty-first session in 1999.¹
- 5. Currently, 39 States parties have not submitted two reports required under article 18 of the Convention, 9 States parties have not submitted three reports, 10 States parties have not submitted four reports, while 7 States parties have not submitted five reports. Of these, 36 States parties have not submitted their initial reports.
- 6. At its twentieth session in January 1999, the Committee reiterated its decision 16/III, in which it decided, on an exceptional basis, and as a temporary measure, in order to address the backlog of reports awaiting consideration and encourage States parties to report in a timely fashion, to invite States parties to combine a maximum of two reports. This decision governs situations where reports are combined in a single document, and the Committee has considered States parties which have submitted

two reports combined in a single document, as well as another report, on three occasions²since the adoption of this decision. Moreover, on one occasion since the adoption of decision 16/III³, the Committee has considered a State party which has presented three reports combined in a single document.

7. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) contain provisions governing the periodicity of reporting in similar terms to article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

- 8. A significant number of States parties to these treaties have fallen behind in their reporting obligations, and several of the treaty bodies have developed strategies in this regard. At its thirty-eighth session in 1990, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) decided that the periodicity outlined in the Convention would be satisfied if States parties would submit a comprehensive report every four years, and a brief updating report in the two-year interim. The determination of whether a report is comprehensive, so as to warrant the interim brief up-dating report, is at the discretion of the Committee, and this decision is reflected in its concluding observations on the State party's report which request the State party to cover all the points raised in the concluding observations.⁴ This Committee has also adopted the practice of allowing States parties to fulfil their past reporting obligations by combining all outstanding reports in one document. ⁵The Committee against Torture does not allow for the consolidation of reports, but does allow departure from the Convention's periodicity on an ad hoc basis. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has a large backlog of initial reports awaiting review, as well as growing number of unsubmitted reports, has invited one State party to submit a consolidated second and third periodic report.⁶
- 9. Article 17(1) of the ICESCR makes provision for States parties to submit their reports in stages, in accordance with a programme to be established by the Economic and Social Council within one year of the entry into force of the Covenant and after consultation with the States parties and the specialized agencies concerned. ECOSOC resolution 1988/4, which is reflected in the rule 58(2) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), provides that States should submit

an initial report within two years of the Covenant's entry into force for the State party concerned, and thereafter every five years. The CESCR does not allow for consolidation of overdue reports, but agrees to rescheduling of the reporting dates when this is requested by States parties. Both to encourage regular reporting and expedite its work, this Committee is also making efforts to encourage the submission of focused reports concentrating on matters raised in the concluding observations on the preceding report of the State party.

10. Article 40(1) of the ICCPR provides that reports are due within one year of the entry into force of the Covenant for the State party concerned, and thereafter whenever the Committee so requests. States parties that submitted initial reports before July 1981, are required to submit reports five years after the consideration of their initial reports and every five years thereafter, while other States parties are required to submit periodic reports to the Committee every five years from the date when the initial report was due.⁷

nominated; where States parties reports are long overdue, the Committee will usually require the submission of a report within three years after the consideration of the current report.

- 11. In light of the practice of these bodies, and taking into account the views of the ninth meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies which encouraged treaty bodies to develop a flexible approach, although avoiding those that might provide an incentive to States parties to delay the submission of their reports, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women may wish to reconsider decision 16/III and encourage States parties with outstanding reports to submit a single document consolidating all outstanding reporting obligations. In cases where the State party's outstanding reporting obligations include the initial report, the Committee may wish to decide that where the consolidated document fully and comprehensively meets the requirements of the Committee's reporting guidelines and, in addition, provides an assessment of the implementation of the Convention from the date at which the State party's initial report fell due, that the consolidated report satisifies the State party's reporting obligations to that date. In such cases, however, the Committee may wish to ensure that the dialogue between it and the State party is sustained by requiring a report in less than four years as it is entitled to do within article 18(1). Thereafter the Committee may decide that the State party should revert to its regular four-year reporting cycle indicated in the Convention.
- 12. In addition, in order to ensure that States parties which have submitted reports do not fall behind with their reporting obligations, the Committee may wish to consider adopting the practice of the CERD and require States parties to submit a

comprehensive report at eight-yearly intervals, and a brief up-dating report in the four-year interim. As in the practice of CERD, the elements to be addressed in the updating report could be identified in the concluding comments of the Committee on the earlier report of the State party. In this context, also, the Committee may wish to consider whether a full and comprehensive response to the list of issues and questions posed by the pre-session working group of the Committee to States parties presenting periodic reports could fulfil subsequent reporting obligations in cases where the subsequent report of a State party considered by the pre-session working group is due or due shortly after the meeting of the pre-session working group.

- 13. The Committee may also wish to consider the practice advocated by the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and adopted by the CERD and the CESCR of considering implementation of their respective treaties in States parties, which consistently fail to fulfil their reporting obligations, in the absence of a report.
- 14. Where initial reports are overdue by 5 years or more, the CERD notifies States parties that (a) it shall review implementation of the Convention in the State party concerned at a future session and invites one or more representatives of the State party to participate in its consideration; and (b) in view of the absence of an initial report the Committee shall consider as an initial report all information submitted by the State party to other organs of the United Nations or, in the absence of such material, reports and other information prepared by organs of the United Nations.⁹ Where overdue periodic reports are concerned, in addition to encouraging consolidation of outstanding reporting obligations, after informing the States parties concerned in advance, the CERD reviews implementation of the Convention in States parties



volunteered to prepare general comments and recommendations on articles 2-8, 11 and 12.¹³

- 17. In accordance with its long-term programme of work, the Committee concluded general recommendation 19, concerning violence against women, at its eleventh session in 1992.¹⁴ General recommendation 21, concerning equality in marriage and family relations, was concluded at the Committee's thirteenth session (1994)¹⁵; general recommendation 23, on women and public life, was adopted at the sixteenth session, and included in Committee's report on its seventeenth session¹⁶; and general recommendation 24, on article 12 of the Convention women and health, was adopted by the Committee at its twentieth session. (1999).¹⁷
- 18. Also at its twentieth session, the Committee decided that articles 2 and 4 would be taken up in its long-term programme of work on general recommendations.¹⁸ At earlier sessions, the Committee had agreed that separate general recommendations on articles 2 and 4 would be formulated,¹⁹ and at its twentieth session it decided that work on a general recommendation on article 4 would begin at its twenty-second session in January 2000.²⁰
- 19. Several entities within the United Nations system have invited the Committee, when considering its long-term programme of work for general recommendations to take certain issues into account. In its resolution 1998/19 adopted on the report of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights invited the Committee to elaborate general recommendations with regard to trafficking in persons and related practices of sexual exploitation , while in its resolutions 1998/15 and 1999/15 on women and

development adopted at its fiftieth and fifty-first sessions, the Subcommission invited the Committee to explore the possibility of adopting a general recommendation on the theme of women's economic rights as it related *inter alia* to the provisions of article 14 of the Convention. The Commission on the Status of Women has invited the Committee to develop a general recommendation on women and migration,²¹ while both the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly have encouraged the Committee to consider developing a general recommendation on the situation of women migrant workers.²²

20. The Committee may wish to confirm its long-term programme for the preparation of general recommendations. Bearing in mind its three-stage process for the preparation of general recommendations adopted at its seventeenth session, ²³the Committee may also wish to schedule a general discussion and exchange of views on the subject of its next general recommendation with the participation of specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations at its twenty-fourth session in January 2001.

IV. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME

21.

22. At its fifty-sixth session in March 2000, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted a general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of race discrimination.²⁵ The HRC's general comments and the CERD's general recommendation have been made available to members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

V. REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED AT FUTURE SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- 23. At its twenty-second session, the Committee drew up the list of States parties whose reports would be considered at future sessions. The Committee decided that at its twenty-fourth session in January 2001, the initial reports of Singapore and Uzbekistan; the second periodic report of the Netherlands; the combined second and third periodic report of Jamaica; the third periodic report of Egypt; the combined third and fourth periodic report of Mongolia and the fourth periodic report of Sweden would be considered. The Netherlands, Singapore and Sweden indicated that they would be unable to report at the twenty-fourth session, while Finland agreed to present its third and fourth periodic reports. In finalizing the list of States parties to be considered at the twenty-fourth session, the Committee may wish to take account of the fact that the initial reports of Fiji and Maldives have been submitted.
- 24. The Committee decided that at its twenty-fifth session, the initial report of Kazakhstan, the second periodic reports of Guyana, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Viet Nam; the third and fourth periodic reports of Finland and the fourth periodic report of Nicaragua would be considered. In finalizing the list for the twenty-fifth session, and drawing up the lists for future sessions the Committee may wish to take

account of annex II which contains a list of those States parties that have submitted reports which have not yet been considered, and provides information on those available in the languages of the United Nations.

VI. EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION, RATIFICATION OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 20 (1)

- 25. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division have continued efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, ratification of the optional protocol and acceptance of the amendment to article 20(1) of the Convention relating to the Committee's meeting time.
- 26. During the Sixth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers for Women's Affairs, held April 2000 in New Delhi, India, these issues were addressed by the Special Adviser during her speech to the Meeting, as well as in briefings. The Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women also addressed ratification during the 103rd Interparliamentary Union meeting of Women Parliamentarians held in Amman, Jordan in April 2000.
- 27. During the 44th session the Commission on the Status of Women and the third preparatory committee on the special session of the General Assembly, Beijing+5 in March 2000, the Special Adviser and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women met with several delegations to discuss ratification, and compliance with reporting obligations. Offers of technical support have also been made to countries contemplating ratification and with regard to reporting obligations.



Annex I

State parties whose reports are five years or more overdue for submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as of 4 May 2000

A. Initial reports

State party	Date due
Angola	
Bahamas	
Benin	
Bhutan	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-
Brazil	
Burundi	
Cambodia	2
Cape Verde	
Central African Republic	
Congo	
Costa Rica	0
Dominica	•
Estonia	-
Gambia	
Grenada	
Guinea	I
Guinea-Bissau	
Haiti	-
Lao People's Democratic Republic	•
Latvia	-
Liberia	-
Malta	-
Saint Kitts and Nevis	
Saint Lucia	•
Samoa	

Seychelles	
Sierra Leone	
State party	Date due

Suriname	31 March 1994
Tajikistan	25 October 1994
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	17 February 1995
Togo	26 October 1984
Trinidad and Tobago	11 February 1991

B. Second periodic reports

C. Third periodic reports

State party

Date due

D. Fourth periodic reports

Belarus
Bhutan
Bulgaria 10 March 1995
Dominica3 September 1994
Ecuador9 December 1994
El Salvador
Ethiopia10 October 1994
Guyana
Haiti
Hungary
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Panama
Poland
Rwanda3 September 1994
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Uruguay
Viet Nam
Yugoslavia

Annex II

States parties whose reports have been submitted but have not yet been considered by the Committee

	State party	Date due	Date received	Document symbol
A.	Initial reports			
	Fiji	27 September 1996	29 February 2000	CEDAW/C/FIJ/1
	Kazakhstan	25 September 1999	26 January 2000	CEDAW/C/KAZ/1
	Maldives	1 July 1994	28 January 1999	CEDAW/C/MDV/1
	Singapore	4 November 1996	30 November 1999	CEDAW/C/SGP/1
	Uzbekistan	18 August 1996	19 January 2000	CEDAW/C/UZB/1
B.	Second periodic reports			
	Armenia	13 October 1998	23 August 1999	CEDAW/C/ARM/2
	Czech Republic	24 March 1997	9 March 2000	CEDAW/C/CZE/2
	Equatorial Guinea	22 November 1989	6 January 1994	CEDAW/C/GNQ/2-3
	Guyana	3 September 1986	20 September 1999	CEDAW/C/GUY/2
	Jamaica ^a	18 November 1989	17 February 1998	CEDAW/C/JAM/2-4
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	15 June 1990	18 February 1999	CEDAW/C/LBY/2
	Morocco	29 July 1998	28 February2000	CEDAW/C/MOR/2
	Netherlands	22 August 1996	10 December 1998	CEDAW/C/NET/2 Add.1 and 2
	Slovenia	5 August 1999	26 April 1999	CEDAW/C/SVN/2
	Uruguay	8 November 1986	3 February 1998	CEDAW/C/URY/2-3
	Viet Nam	19 March 1987	2 February 1999	CEDAW/C/VNM/2

State party	Date due	Date received	Document symbol
Finland ^a	4 October 1999	25 October 1999	CEDAW/C/FIN/4
Iceland	3 July 1998	15 July 1998	CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4
Jamaica ^a	18 November 1997	17 February 1998	CEDAW/C/JAM/2-4
Japan	25 July 1998	24 July 1998	CEDAW/C/JPN/4

Mongolia and MNS 657.75 114.75 0.755 Tf -0.0916 Te -0.0959 Tw (17.75 rec (a) Tj ET q 285.5 98646.5 58.595 0 rg8 Dec668 Te (BT 386.25 663 4755 70(CEDAW/C/JPN/4) Tj ET 475575 rec (a) Tj ET q 285.52 0.5 0.75 0.75 reMNG 90.75 68

Annex III

States parties which have deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of the acceptance of the amendment to article 20, pararaph 1, of the Convention.

States parties	Acceptance date
Australia	4 June 1998
Brazil	5 March 1997
Canada	3 November 1997
Chile	8 May 1998
Denmark	12 March 1996
Finland	18 March 1996
France	8 August 1997
Guatemala	3 June 1999
Italy	31 May 1996
Liechtenstein	15 April 1997
Madagascar	19 July 1996
Malta	5 March 1997
Mexico	16 September 1996
Mongolia	19 December 1997
Netherlands	10 December 1997 ¹
New Zealand	26 September 1996
Norway	29 March 1996
Panama	5 November 1996
Republic of Korea	12 August 1996
Sweden	17 July 1996
Switzerland	2 December 1997
Turkey	9 December 1999
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	19 November 1997 ²

¹ For the Kingdom in Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba ² For the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the British Virgin Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

LIST OF COUNTRIES

which have signed the **OPTIONAL PROTOCOL** (last update 16 May, 2000)

COUNTRIES

DATE SIGNED

1. Argentina	28 F
2. Austria	10 I
3. Belgium	10 I
4. Bolivia	10 I
5. Chile	10 I
6. Colombia	10 I
7. Costa Rica	10 I
8. Cuba	17 N
9. Czech Republic	10 I
10. Denmark	10 I
11. Dominican Republic	14 N
12. Ecuador	10 I
13. Finland	10 I
14. France	10 I
15. Germany	10 I
16. Ghana	24 F
17. Greece	10 I
18. Iceland	10 I
19. Indonesia	28 F
20. Italy	10 I
21. Liechtenstein	10 I
22. Luxembourg	10 I
23. Mexico	10 I
24. Macedonia	03 A
25. Netherlands	10 I
26. Norway	10 I
27. Paraguay	28 I
28. Philippines	21 N
29. Portugal	16 H
30. Senegal	10 I
31. Slovenia	10 I
32. Spain	14 N
33. Sweden	10 I
34. Venezuela	17 N

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Annex V States which have not ratified or acceded to CEDAW

Africa	Mauritania
	Sao Tome and Principe
	Somalia
	Sudan
	Swaziland
Asia and the Pacific	Afghanistan
	Brunei Darussalam
	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
	Kiribati
	Marshall Islands
	Micronesia (Federated States of)
	Nauru
	Palau
	Tonga
Western Asia	Bahrain
	Oman
	Qatar
	Saudi Arabia
	United Arab Emirates
Western Europe and Other	Monaco
	San Marino
	United States of America
	Holy See

NOTES

¹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/54/38), Part Two, Decision 21/I

² Eighteenth session: Dominican Republic, combined second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report; twenty-second session: Democratic Republic of the Congo: initial report and combined second and third periodic reports; Germany: combined second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report. ³ Seventeenth session: Antigua and Barbuda: combined initial, second and third periodic report;

⁴ See for example, the concluding observations on Morocco: "The Committee recommends that the State party's next report, which was due on 17 January 1998, should be an updating report and that it should cover all the points raised in these concluding observations". <u>Official Records of the General Assembly</u>, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/53/18) para. 420

⁵, <u>Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth session, Supplement No. 18</u> (A/46/18), para.28

⁶ CRC/C/91, footnote 2: "In response to a note verbale submitted by the Government of Australia on 17 August 1999 requesting guidance on the periodicity of submission of its second periodic report, the Committee, by letter sent on 22 September 1999, invited the Australian authorities to submit a consolidated second and third periodic report by 15 January 2003".

⁷ CCPR/C/19/Rev.1 (1982)

⁸ <u>Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 40</u> (A/53/40), vol I, annex VIII, para. 7.

⁹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No 18 (A/51/18), para. 608
¹⁰ Ibid, paras. 603-607

¹¹ <u>Manual on Human Rights Reporting</u>, 2nd Edition, 1997 (United Nations Sales No. E.GV.97.0.16) pp.159-160

¹² Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38), paras. 456-458.

¹³ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38), paras. 456-458.

¹⁴ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38)

¹⁵ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/49/38)

¹⁶ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement. No 38 (A/52/38.Rev.1) Part Two

¹⁷ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/54/38.Rev.1) Part One

¹⁸ <u>Ibid</u>, para. 434

¹⁹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/52/38.Rev.1) Part Two, para. 482

²⁰ <u>Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38</u> (A/54/38.Rev.1) Part One, para. 434.

²¹ Resolution 42/3

²² GA resolution 54/138; resolution 1998/17.

²³ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/52/38/Rev.1), Part Two, para. 480.

²⁴ CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10

²⁵ CERD/C/56/Misc. 21/Rev.3