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**Statement by
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CHAIRPERSON

**COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

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**Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

As Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee, which oversees the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it is my honour today to address and engage in an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee of the General Assembly, pursuant to its resolution 68/138.

Allow me first of all to insist that the time has come to reinforce the Committee's visibility and to underscore the progress achieved by our Committee during the past year in its work on key issues such as treaty body strengthening, harmonization of working methods, women's rights in the post-2015 development agenda, women in conflict and Beijing +20.

Secondly, I take the opportunity in this distinguished forum to pay tribute to the previous High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay. On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank Ms. Pillay for her relentless advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. At the same time, the Committee wishes success to the new High Commissioner. We are convinced that Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein will make every possible effort to honour the great hopes and expectations that millions of women across the globe vest in him.

Thirdly, while we all know how fragile women's rights are in the current context of international conflicts and crises, I would like to thank all those who tirelessly struggle for the full realization of women's equal rights and opportunities. For us Committee members, it is reassuring to

see from our experience in considering States parties' periodic reports that the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is of common concern to all our partners, States parties, United Nations entities and specialized agencies, women's rights activists and human rights defenders alike.

Treaty body strengthening

The adoption by this Assembly on 9 April 2014 of resolution 68/268 was a milestone for strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the human rights treaty body system. The resolution, *inter alia*, allocated additional meeting time and financial and human resources to the treaty bodies; encouraged them to implement the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (the Addis Ababa guidelines); provided for capacity building to support States parties to implement their reporting obligations; and invited the treaty bodies to continue to align their working methods and to enhance the role of treaty body chairs with a view to accelerating the harmonization of the treaty body system.

My Committee would like to thank Member States for their meaningful engagement with the treaty bodies throughout the inter-governmental process on treaty body strengthening. As you know, the CEDAW Committee actively supported and engaged with the co-facilitators of this process. We are determined to remain in the pole position when it comes to enhancing the cost efficiency and quality of the work of the treaty bodies. This is why we decided, at our 57th session in February, to revise the Committee's rules of procedure in order to incorporate the outcome of the inter-governmental process on treaty body

strengthening as well as the recent decisions taken by the Committee to rationalize its working methods (e.g. limiting the number of questions in lists of issues; shorter and more focused concluding observations). At its 58th session in July, the Committee further decided to offer, on a pilot basis, the simplified reporting procedure to those States parties that wish to submit their periodic reports under this procedure, provided that they have submitted an updated common core document. One issue that was omitted in the treaty body strengthening process is the lack of resources for work on inquiries, a core mandated activity of CEDAW under the Optional Protocol. We will discuss this challenge, including the need for more resources to undertake country visits, at our upcoming 59th session and will also raise it at our informal meeting with the States parties to the Convention to be held on 6 November 2014 in Geneva.

In an effort to harmonize its jurisprudence with that of other treaty bodies, the Committee has worked with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to draft a joint general recommendation on harmful practices, the first document of this type jointly elaborated by two treaty bodies. We hope that this joint general recommendation will be adopted very soon. CEDAW also met twice informally with the Human Rights Committee during the past year to discuss issues of common concern such as abortion or minimum age of marriage. During the same period, the Committee met with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, and with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo.

Women's rights in the post-2015 development agenda

Chairperson,

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

With 188 States parties, the CEDAW Convention is the only nearly-universally ratified human rights instrument which provides for comprehensive protection of women's rights. At the same time, the Convention is an instrument for women's empowerment and equal participation as well as an international pillar for sustainable development.

In February 2014, during my intervention at the eighth session of the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, I made a call that the targets in the post-2015 development agenda should be more ambitious than those of the MDGs. I also supported the call for the inclusion of a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality. This call was reiterated by the Committee in its statement on the post-2015 development agenda and the elimination of discrimination against women, also issued in February. In July 2014, in an open letter to the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group, the Committee expressed its appreciation for the many positive elements of the final proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals which underline the centrality of women's rights to the development agenda.

And yet, the post-2015 agenda must go beyond mere affirmations and acknowledge that the substantive aspects of gender equality and non-discrimination as spelled out under the Convention are essential components of sustainable development. Women could be main drivers of development. However, they continue to be under-represented in political and public life and are excluded from decision-making processes in all areas, at all levels. It is clear that sustainable development cannot be

achieved if over 50 percent of the population is in some way neglected. The Committee therefore welcomes the opportunity offered by the post-2015 agenda to make women's substantive equality with men a reality. I reiterate our call for explicit references to the CEDAW Convention and systematic mainstreaming of women's rights and a gender perspective into the Sustainable Development Goals, including their respective targets and indicators. The Committee also invites all States parties to strengthen their efforts to implement the recommendations contained in CEDAW's concluding observations, if needed with technical assistance from the United Nations, with a view to accelerating the achievement of their development objectives.

Women in conflict situations

Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

One of the main purposes of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. Maintaining peace remains a key challenge of our times. In today's world, the role of the international human rights treaties in shaping and implementing a culture of peace cannot be dissociated from measures taken to counter acts of aggression, terrorism and extremism. Women's rights are an essential component of peace. The Committee therefore calls on the international community to reaffirm the place of women's rights in a peaceful and equitable international order. For this reason, we also welcome and support recent initiatives to propose the nomination of CEDAW for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Women are the first victims and targets in armed conflicts; they are frequently targets of terrorism. On 18 October 2013, the very same day that the Security Council held its open debate on women, peace and security, our Committee adopted its General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. The Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Executive Director of UN-Women all welcomed the adoption of the General Recommendation in their statements during the open debate. The General Recommendation emphasizes that States parties to the CEDAW Convention are required to uphold women's rights before, during and after conflict, whether they are directly involved in fighting, are providing peacekeeping troops or donor assistance for conflict prevention, humanitarian aid or post-conflict reconstruction. States parties should exercise due diligence in ensuring that non-State actors, such as armed groups and private security contractors, are held accountable for crimes against women. The General Recommendation also stresses the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building, and highlights the need for a concerted and integrated approach that places the Security Council agenda on women, peace and security into the broader framework of implementation of the CEDAW Convention. I encourage Member States to integrate General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations into their national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Since last October, the Committee was able to examine the disastrous impact of armed conflict on women's and girls' lives in States experiencing conflict, including Iraq, Sierra Leone, Central African

Republic and Syria. Recurrent issues during the Committee's dialogues with the Government delegations from these States parties included the need for humanitarian assistance and protection of civilians, in particular women; rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls by armed groups enjoying impunity; the breakdown of basic services such as education and health care; violent attacks on schools; and an increase in child marriages. The Committee recommended concrete measures to the Governments concerned for improving women's enjoyment of their human rights and their access to basic services in the prevailing conflict situations. In July 2014, the Committee adopted a statement on the situation of women in Gaza, calling on the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under the Convention and protect the rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in line with its General Recommendation No. 30. It also emphasized the urgent need to revive the peace process with women's effective participation and called on the international community to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance.

We are asking all Governments that are represented here today to take the Committee's recommendations into account and to meaningfully involve women at all stages of peace negotiations and processes.

Women and climate change and natural disasters

On 23 September, the UN Secretary-General invited world leaders to the UN climate summit at UN Headquarters in New York to galvanize and catalyze climate action. The Committee recognizes that due to unequal gender relations, women are especially vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change and natural disasters. As the international

community is getting ready to adopt a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, the Committee is embarking on the elaboration of a general recommendation on gender equality in the context of climate change and natural disasters.

Beijing +20 process and CEDAW's engagement with partners

The Beijing +20 review process provides a unique reminder to all of us of the commitments made towards women in the Beijing Platform for Action. Together with States parties' legally binding obligations under the CEDAW Convention, these commitments constitute a global basis for advocating women's rights and gender equality. The Committee therefore supports UN-Women's campaign "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity – Picture It!", and Committee members have resolved to participate in awareness-raising activities planned for this and next year.

Second only to our natural link with OHCHR which supports our work in Geneva and in many countries, we strongly value our partnership with UN-Women. Over the past year, UN-Women continued to coordinate the country-specific input by UN Country Teams to CEDAW, through the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank UN-Women and the other members of the Inter-Agency Group (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO and UN-Women) for their important contribution to the Committee's consideration of periodic reports submitted by States parties to the CEDAW Convention. I would also like to thank OHCHR, FAO, WFP, IFAD and UN-Women for their support to the elaboration of a draft general recommendation on rural women, as well as OHCHR for its contribution to preparing a general recommendation on women's access

to justice, and OHCHR, UNICEF and UNESCO for their support to the organization of a half-day of general discussion on girls' and women's right to education in July 2014. I further wish to thank all our partners that regularly contribute to the Committee's work by providing country-specific or thematic information, in particular UNHCR, OHCHR, ILO, UNESCO, ILO, as well as the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia-Pacific which brings local NGOs to our sessions through their Global to Local Programme.

Role of national Parliaments

Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

This brings me to the last point that I wish to raise with you: The role of national Parliaments in the implementation of the Convention. The Committee welcomes the increased involvement of Parliaments in the elaboration of States parties' periodic reports as well as their active role in designing legislative measures to follow-up on the Committee's concluding observations. Parliaments have a vital role in repealing discriminatory laws, adopting temporary special measures to accelerate substantive equality between women and men, and in ensuring that national laws, policies and budgets give effect to the rights and principles enshrined in the Convention. They also play a strategic role with respect to the ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and the withdrawal of the reservations. We welcome the trend among States parties to include Parliamentarians on their official delegations that come to Geneva to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Committee.

As a long-standing member of my country's National Assembly, I am personally delighted that the Committee's increased cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union adds a new perspective to the work of CEDAW and broadens the possibilities for disseminating the Convention and its Optional Protocol among national decision-makers.

In closing, I wish to stress the key role of all of you in delivering on the promise of ensuring freedom from fear and want for all women without discrimination. We need you to fulfil this promise and the ethical imperatives of the CEDAW Convention.

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