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**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-first session
26 February to 9 March 2007**

**Statement by
Ms. Dubravka Šimonović
Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

28 February 2007

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to present to the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women the main outcomes of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Committee's report on its 34th, 35th and 36th sessions is available in document A/61/38, and the main outcomes of the 37th session, which completed its work on 2 February, is summarized and before the Commission for its information in document E/CN.6/2007/CRP.1.

On behalf of past and present members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, let me at the outset pay tribute to the late Angela E.V. King. With her, the Committee lost a staunch supporter, friend and advocate and we will honour her memory through our work for gender equality. When she addressed a high-level gathering to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention in 2005, she placed a large responsibility on our Committee: "We look to you – the Committee – to continue to expand the scope of the Convention through recommendations such as those on violence against women, health, including HIV/AIDS, and female genital mutilation, and affirmative action, to name only a few. We also look to you to find the convincing incentives and incisive monitoring to ensure that States live up to their obligations so that women throughout the world will finally gain the full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms equally with men."

There are now 185 States parties to the Convention. Five of those – namely Brunei Darussalam, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Montenegro and Oman – acceded to the Convention in 2006. 85 States parties have also ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which is an increase of nine since March 2006. There are 48 acceptances of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time. I would like to encourage those States who are not yet a party to these key instruments for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women to do so without delay so that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention

can be achieved as soon as possible and the Optional Protocol can become an effective means for redress for women in all States.

Madam Chairperson,

I will briefly touch upon the following issues: The Committee's working methods, and in particular its meetings in parallel chambers, the Committee's meeting time, its efforts to enhance reporting by States parties, its work under the Optional Protocol, and the servicing arrangements for the Committee.

The Committee is grateful to the General Assembly for granting, in resolution 60/230, an extension of meeting time to three annual sessions, and parallel chambers. The Committee has now met twice in parallel chambers, and will again do so at its 39th session in July of this year. In calendar year 2006, the Committee considered the reports of 31 States parties – essentially double the number of States the Committee was able to consider in previous years – and in 2007, it will consider the reports of 38 States parties.

I am very happy to inform the Commission that this working method has allowed the Committee to significantly reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration and to reduce the time between submission of a report and its consideration. It has also allowed the Committee to hold very in-depth and probing constructive dialogues with reporting States. While this working method has increased the efficiency of the Committee, we will continue to identify areas for further improvements. These efforts will in particular aim to further enhance coordination among all experts in the preparation of the constructive dialogue so as to ensure that all critical issues are satisfactorily raised with the reporting State, and reflected in pertinent country-specific concluding comments.

The Committee is of the view that effective and timely implementation of all its responsibilities will require that it be provided with extended meeting time also in 2008 and beyond. The Committee has concluded that its workload under article 18 of the Convention, together with its other responsibilities under the Convention and those under the Optional Protocol make it necessary that the Committee be provided with the opportunity to hold three annual sessions, at least one of which with parallel chambers. This extended meeting time will ensure that the Committee can eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration; ensure that incoming reports are considered in a timely manner; enhance its efforts at ensuring that monitoring of the implementation of the Convention in States parties with long overdue reports is undertaken; and discharge all its other responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Let me turn to the Committee's efforts to support States parties in complying with their reporting obligations. Timely reporting is an essential element in States parties' ongoing and systematic efforts to implement all the provisions of the Convention, for the benefit of all women. The Committee's constructive dialogue with States parties contributes to this ongoing implementation as the Committee identifies areas of concern, and provides guidance for further action. Over the last few years, the Committee has sought ways to encourage States parties with very long overdue reports to submit these

reports as a basis for a constructive dialogue, and contribution to accelerated implementation of the Convention.

The Committee consequently decided, at its 37th session, to request four States parties that are more than 20 years overdue with their initial report under article 18 of the Convention, i.e. Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia, to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by March 2008. The Committee intends to consider these reports at its forty-third (January) session of 2009. As a measure of last resort, and failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested timeframe, the Committee will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the four States parties in the absence of a report. Given its past experience, the Committee is confident that these four States parties will indeed submit their reports in a timely manner. I would like to encourage entities of the United Nations system and other donors to offer support to these States parties in their efforts to comply with treaty obligations.

The Committee continued to work in cooperation and coordination with other human rights treaty bodies on issues of common concern and interest, especially through the annual meeting of Chairpersons of treaty bodies and the inter-Committee meeting. We have contributed our ideas and suggestions on a range of issues, including on the proposed reform of the treaty body system, where we adopted a statement “Towards a harmonized and integrated treaty bodies system”, and have actively participated in discussions pertaining to working methods, reporting guidelines, reservations, and follow-up procedures.

Chairperson,

I am also very pleased to report about several decisions taken on complaints submitted under the Optional Protocol. At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee adopted views on two communications. It found no violation of the rights of the author in communication 3/2004 (Ms. Dung Thi Thuy Nguyen v. the Netherlands). In communication 4/2004 (Ms. A.S. v. Hungary), concerning forced sterilization, the Committee found violations of several articles of the Convention. At its thirty-seventh session, the Committee declared inadmissible communication 11/2006, Constance Ragan Salgado v. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. So far, 14 communications have been registered since the Optional Protocol began operating.

Chairperson,

Let me address the last issue, namely the arrangements for supporting the Committee. On 11 October 2006, the Secretary-General informed the Committee of his decision to transfer responsibility for servicing the Committee to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. At its 37th session, the Committee held an exchange of view with the High Commissioner on issues of common interest, and in particular on the Secretary-General's decision to transfer responsibility for servicing the Committee to her Office. Subsequently the Committee wrote to the Secretary-General and to the High Commissioner, recommending that the proposed change in servicing arrangements be

implemented in 2008, after the Committee's thirty-ninth session. The Committee looks forward to a smooth and efficient transfer of these responsibilities, and notes its desire to hold one of its three annual sessions in New York. It also emphasizes the critical importance of maintaining effective linkages with those intergovernmental bodies that have main responsibility for promotion of gender equality, and in particular the Commission on the Status of Women, and the General Assembly, as well as with the relevant Secretariat Offices and entities of the United Nations system.

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished delegates

I would like to conclude by reiterating the Committee's readiness to continue its cooperation with the Commission in pursuing our common goal of the elimination of discrimination against women and the realization of gender equality. The Committee is grateful for the continuous support that this Commission has provided for the Convention, its Optional Protocol and the Committee's work.

I wish you well in your important deliberations.

Thank you.