



ASSOCIATION DEMOCRATIQUE DES FEMMES DU MAROC

REPORT ON THE APPLICATION OF CEDAW IN THE ARAB WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive report on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) in the Arab world was presented at the May 2009 2nd bi-annual meeting of the regional coalition “Equality without Reservation” in Amman, Jordan.

Keeping in line with the Coalition’s mission, this report aims to provide an overview of CEDAW and its influence in the Arab world. The report consists of 21 “mini-reports”, each of which outlines CEDAW’s progress and its limitations in the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Each mini-report lists the reservations made by the country to CEDAW and provides a summary of the official country reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee as well as the additional, shadow reports written by NGO’s. At the end of each mini-report, recent news and updates regarding CEDAW and the status of women’s rights in the country are discussed.

Despite the progress achieved in countries that have succeeded in lifting certain or all reservations to CEDAW, much work remains to be done in countries that have yet to ratify CEDAW, as well as in countries where CEDAW’s implementation is severely limited by strict reservations. It is clear that governments must lift all reservations to CEDAW in order to allow the treaty to be fully implemented.

ALGERIA

Ratification:

Algeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on May 22, 1996.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Algeria made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 2, 9:2, 15:4, 16, and 29 as described in detail below.

- *Article 2:* The Government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria declares that it is prepared to apply the provisions of this article on condition that they do not conflict with the provisions of the Algerian Family Code.
- *Article 9, paragraph 2:* The Government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria wishes to express its reservations concerning the provisions of article 9, paragraph 2, which are incompatible with the provisions of the Algerian Nationality code and the Algerian Family Code.
- The Algerian Nationality code allows a child to take the nationality of the mother only when:
 - the father is either unknown or stateless;
 - the child is born in Algeria to an Algerian mother and a foreign father who was born in Algeria ;
 - moreover, a child born in Algeria to an Algerian mother and a foreign father who was not born on Algerian territory may, under article 26 of the Algerian Nationality Code, acquire the nationality of the mother providing the Ministry of Justice does not object.
 - Article 41 of the Algerian Family Code states that a child is affiliated to its father through legal marriage.
 - Article 43 of that Code states that ‘the child is affiliated to its father if it is born in the 10 months following the date of separation or death’.
- *Article 15, paragraph 4:* The Government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria declares that the provisions of article 15, paragraph 4, concerning the right of women to choose their residence and domicile should not be interpreted in such a manner as to contradict the provisions of chapter 4 (art. 37) of the Algerian Family Code.
- *Article 16:* The Government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria declares that the provisions of article 16 concerning equal rights for men and women in all matters relating to marriage, both during marriage and at its dissolution, should not contradict the provisions of the Algerian Family Code.
- *Article 29:* The Government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria does not consider itself bound by article 29, paragraph 1, which states that any dispute

between two or more Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration or to the International Court of Justice.

- The Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria holds that no such dispute can be submitted to arbitration or to the Court of International Justice except with the consent of all the parties to the dispute.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Algeria has submitted two official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee ("Committee"). The first report came out two years following ratification in January 1999, and the second report was released four years later in 2003.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments regarding Algeria's progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee noted its disappointment with Algeria for not taking adequate steps to implement the recommendations made to them by the Committee following their first report. The Committee also expressed its particular concern regarding the situation of rural women and their access to education, health services, land and housing as well as the prevalence of sexual violence. In addition, the Committee recommended that Algeria make it a priority to strengthen women's national machinery, remedy all gender discriminatory laws and provide more statistics in future reports.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Algeria's second periodic report in 2003 as follows:

- Progress accomplished in the field of women's health, most notably the decline in maternal and infant mortality as well as the increase in women's life expectancy.
- An increase in the rate of inscription among girls in superior education institutions, rising from 39.5% in 1990 to 55.4% in 2003.
- An increase in women's participation in the judiciary, where women now represent a third of magistrates and management posts, such as the president of the State Council or in the tribune for example.
- The participation of women in public life has improved, notably the presence of four women in ministerial posts at the seat of the current government.
- The alteration of its penal code that criminalized sexual harassment.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Algeria's second periodic report in 2003 as follows:

- Work systematically to put the Convention's stipulations into place, specifically by sharing the Committee's present recommendations with all ministries and the Parliament to ensure their application.
- Immediately take into consideration the Committee's prior recommendation and put together studies on the repercussions of terrorism on women and girls.
- Define discrimination against women, in accordance with Article 2 of the CEDAW, and apply this definition in its Constitution and all other appropriate legislation.
- Immediately and without delay reform its Family Code in order to be able to lift its reservations to the CEDAW.
- Enact legislative reforms and accelerate the process of revising its Nationality Code and Family Code in accordance with the CEDAW articles 9 and 16.
- Remove any obstacles that may prevent women from accessing justice.

- Elaborate on a complete methodology to compile data and make available statistics relating to sex in order to evaluate the tendencies and impact of programs on the female population.
- Make it a priority to adopt legislation on violence against women, especially familial violence, which constitutes a form of discrimination against women as well as a violation of their fundamental rights.
- Take measures to avoid all forms of violence against women by training and informing judicial system members, health care providers, social workers and the general public.
- Enact measures that permit victims of violence to receive medical, psychological and judicial assistance.
- Take concrete steps, including special temporary measures, as indicated by paragraph 1 of article 4 of the CEDAW, in all sectors, so that women occupy de facto a role equal to that of men.
- Double its efforts to implement programs that favor a better understanding of equality among the sexes in all echelons of society, with the aim to modify stereotypical attitudes and traditional norms relating to the roles of men and women in the family and in society.
- Take concrete steps, including special temporary measures, as indicated by paragraph 1 of article 4 of the CEDAW, to increase the representation of women in the public sphere, and develop training programs to increase women's participation in decision-making roles.
- Undertake studies to evaluate the situation of women who work in the informal sector and produce detailed information in its next report on this topic.
- Intensify its efforts to eliminate obstacles facing women in the workplace and enact measures favorable to the conciliation of familial and professional obligations of men and women.
- Enact special temporary measures in accordance with paragraph 1 of article 4 of the CEDAW to accelerate the application of article 11 of the CEDAW.
- Watch over the needs of rural women and take them into consideration in political decisions and programs, and provide in its next report detailed information regarding the situation of rural women.
- Cooperate with non-governmental organizations in applying the articles of CEDAW and coordinate with them on its next periodic report.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol and accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to paragraph 1 of article 20 of the CEDAW regarding the length of the Committee meeting.
- Respond to the expressed concerns in its upcoming periodic reports, which the committee recommends be in June 2005 and June 2009.
- Taking into account the elements relative to equality between the sexes that figure into the statements, programs and action plans adopted outside of the conferences, UN summit meetings and extraordinary sessions, the Committee requests that it present information relating to these elements in its next periodic report.
- Ratify any and all of the seven principal international instruments relative to human rights, which the government has not done already.
- Distribute the observations of the committee so that the people of Algeria, most notably the members of the Administration and politicians, the parliamentarians and women's and human rights NGO's, are all aware of measures taken by Algeria to ensure equality of the law and between sexes.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Algeria. This report was presented by the *Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité* in 2005. Though the report commended Algeria in terms of Article 29 of the Algerian Constitution, which proclaims equality for men and women under the law, and article 132 considers the preeminence of international law over national law, the report expressed concern over the fact that Algeria has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol, effectively making article 132 of its Constitution void.

The shadow report expressed concern on the following four topics concerning women's rights and the application of CEDAW in Algeria: the question of women in internal and international politics; the proposed constitutional amendments and how they will modify the existing situation; the participation of women in the economic sphere; and the violence and marginalization of women.

Recent Updates:

In April 2008, the Human Rights Council in Geneva released the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This report, though generalist in nature, made significant observations regarding Algeria's progress in implementing CEDAW.

The report noted that the modifications of Algeria's Family Code, amended in 2005, corrected a number of injustices related to women, including the age of marriage and housing entitlements in case of divorce. A significant improvement is the new Nationality Code, which rendered null and void the reservation expressed by Algeria on article 9 (2) of CEDAW, thus making it possible for Algerian women to transmit their nationality to their children.

The report made several recommendations to the government of Algeria regarding its implementation of CEDAW. In addition to its work on the general improvement of women's rights, including addressing cultural, social and legal barriers, the report recommended that Algeria review its Family Code in order to remedy provisions that still discriminate against women regarding the issues of domestic violence, divorce, testimony and inheritance. It was also suggested that Algeria continue to promote the rights of women, particularly in relation to their right to education as well as their right to employment in the private sector.

On February 2, 2009, the Algerian newspaper al-Dustour reported that the secretary General of the opposition Labor Party in Algeria, Louisa Hannoun, had nominated herself in the Presidential elections to be held on April 9, 2009.

In honor of the International Day for Women, the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights ("LADDH") distributed a [press release](#) on May 8, 2009 regarding the current state of women's rights in Algeria. The LADDH noted that despite the government's commitment to women's human rights through its ratification of CEDAW with reservations and its latest amendments to the Family Code as well as the Constitution, women continue to be victims of violence and discrimination. Although Algeria ratified CEDAW, the fact that national legislation and discriminatory national laws continue to be an obstacle to women in their fight for equality. The LADDH therefore strongly urges Algeria to put CEDAW into force by lifting its reservations to the treaty as well as ratifying its Optional Protocol.

BAHRAIN

Ratification:

Bahrain ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on June 18, 2002.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Bahrain made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 2, 9:2, 15:4, 16, and 29:1 as described in detail below.

- *Article 2*, in order to ensure its implementation within the bounds of the provisions of the Islamic Shariah;
- *Article 9, paragraph 2*;
- *Article 15, paragraph 4*;
- *Article 16*, in so far as it is incompatible with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah; and
- *Article 29, paragraph 1*.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

Since its ratification of CEDAW in 2002, Bahrain has submitted official reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”) on two occasions. The combined first and second report was released in November 2007 and the combined fifth, sixth and seventh report came out in June 2008.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in November 2008 regarding Bahrain’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee commended Bahrain for its submission of additional information containing new data and statistics, as well as the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group, but noted that it lacked references to the Committee’s general recommendations. Bahrain’s high-level and large delegation was appreciated by the Committee, as well as the frank dialogue held between the delegation and the Committee.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Bahrain’s report in 2008 as follows:

- The adoption of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women to promote women’s enjoyment of their rights in all areas, which includes several plans and programs;
- The establishment of the Supreme Council for Women in 2001 as the national mechanism for the advancement of women;
- The enactment of Law No. 1 of 2008 on human trafficking, which includes key provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the additional protocols;
- The establishment within the Supreme Council for Women of a centre with offices in all governorates to receive and act on women’s complaints; and,

- The institution of several prizes, including the King's Prize aimed at encouraging Bahraini working women.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Bahrain's report in 2008 as follows:

- Implement all the provisions of the Convention and views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding comments as requiring the State party's priority attention between now and the submission of the next periodic report.
- Focus on those areas in its implementation activities and report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report, and submit the present concluding comments to all relevant ministries and Parliament so as to ensure their full implementation.
- Encourage its national Parliament in line with its procedures, where appropriate, to take the necessary steps with regard to the implementation of these concluding observations and the Government's next reporting process under the Convention.
- Take steps to incorporate the definition of discrimination against women as contained in article 1 of the Convention, into domestic legislation.
- Continue to conduct its awareness-raising campaigns on the Convention and the work of the Committee and provide training for judges and the legal profession.
- Intensify its efforts and take all necessary steps for the withdrawal of all its reservations to the Convention so as to ensure that women in Bahrain benefit from all the provisions enshrined in the Convention.
- Continue to support the Supreme Council for Women and ensure that it can effectively implement its mandate, and strengthen its cooperation with all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.
- Adopt and implement, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, temporary special measures, in particular in the field of participation of women in public life and in the area of employment of women, and raise public awareness about the importance of temporary special measures in accelerating the process of the achievement of gender equality.
- Effectively implement and monitor its national strategic plan, in particular to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of women and men by promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men
- Address awareness-raising campaigns to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project a positive image of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres.
- Implement the recommendations identified in the study on violence against women and monitor their impact, and enact legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence. Specifically, revise relevant provisions of the Penal Code so as to ensure that all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape, are criminalized and that marriage to the victim does not exempt perpetrators of rape from prosecution.
- Offer training and awareness-raising programs to judicial personnel, law enforcement officials, members of the legal and health professions, community leaders and the general public, taking into account its general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women.
- Strengthen its collaboration with civil society and non-governmental organizations with respect to violence against women to ensure the understanding that all forms of violence, including domestic violence, are unacceptable.
- Effectively implement the recently adopted law on human trafficking and introduce and implement a strategy that includes measures of prevention, prosecution and punishment

of offenders, as well as measures to protect and rehabilitate victims and reintegrate them into society.

- Increase its efforts in regard to international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking through information exchange, and carefully monitor the impact of measures taken and provide information on the results achieved as well as statistical data in its next periodic report.
- Take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention to establish concrete goals to accelerate the increase of women in the Council of Representatives and Municipal Councils, and encourage political parties to use quotas.
- Continue to undertake awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in decision-making at all levels.
- Take all necessary steps to expedite the adoption of the draft Nationality Law in order to comply with article 9 of the Convention, and to withdraw its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2.
- Enhance its compliance with article 10 and continue raising awareness of the importance of education for the empowerment of women as well as take steps to overcome traditional attitudes which constitute obstacles to the education of girls and women, and
- Actively encourage girls and women to choose non-traditional education and professions.
- Take all appropriate measures to expedite the adoption of the draft labor code, and to ensure that it covers all migrant domestic workers, as well as strengthen its efforts to ensure that migrant domestic workers have adequate legal protection, are aware of their rights and have access to legal aid.
- Take appropriate measures to ensure that women can consent to Caesarean-section procedures and the medical treatment without the consent and/or authorization of any other person, including that of their husbands.
- Take note of general recommendations No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations and No. 24 on women and health (article 12 of the Convention), and undertake systematic awareness-raising among women on the importance of regular medical examination to facilitate early detection of breast and cervical cancer.
- Take, as a matter of priority, all necessary measures, including through awareness-raising campaigns among all sectors of the society, particularly traditional leaders, religious clerics, the media and civil society, on the importance of adopting a unified family law which provides women with equal rights.
- Raise the minimum age of marriage of girls from 15 to 18, and take all appropriate measures to end the practice of polygamy, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations.
- Conduct a study on the economic consequences of divorce on both spouses and to adopt legislative measures to remedy possible adverse effects of existing rules of property distribution.
- Widely disseminate in Bahrain the present concluding observations in order to make the people, including Government officials at the national and local levels, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the measures that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in this regard.
- Ratify the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

- Provide to the Committee, within two years, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 30 and 38, and consider seeking technical cooperation and assistance, including advisory services, if necessary and when appropriate for implementation of the above recommendations.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Bahrain. This report was presented by member associations of the Bahrain Women's Union and other national parties in 2008.

The shadow report highlighted the fact that although Bahrain's ratification of CEDAW is considered an achievement, the reality of women continues to be tarnished with some shortcomings since many of the Convention's articles remain distant from actual implementation. The shadow report focused on the following areas of concern regarding women's rights and implementation of CEDAW in Bahrain: the absence of the Personal Status Law, the Citizenship Law, the Law for Initiating Political Rights, and the Penalties Law.

The shadow report noted the number of problematic social, cultural and political issues that continue to influence the enactment of a fair personal status law. The case is similar for the Citizenship Law, and the right of women to give their citizenship to their children. As for women's right to participation in public life, including political, economic and decision-making, involvement rates remain low, and in some cases non-existent. It is therefore necessary for Bahrain to take concrete actual steps towards officially establishing and fulfilling the principle of equality and non-discrimination for women.

Recent Updates:

In November 2008, Egalité sans Réserve, Bahrain Women's Union, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Bahrain Human Rights Society and International Federation for Human Rights distributed a [press release](#) urging Bahrain to undertake measures to combat discrimination against women, as recommended by their recent shadow report and the CEDAW Committee. Due to the absence of a unified Family Law, Bahraini women are exposed to discrimination in family matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and custody of children.

The press release recommended that the Bahrain government do the following in accordance with the Committee's comments: raise public awareness for the need to unify the Family Code; adopt legislation to criminalize all forms of violence, including marital rape; take measures to end polygamy; raise the minimum age of marriage of girls; protect women migrant domestic workers; make increased efforts to combat trafficking; enact concrete measures to increase representation of women in public and political life: develop a law to allow women to transfer their nationality to their children; and, withdraw all reservations to CEDAW.

On March 2, 2009, the Khaleej Times published an [article](#) that discussed the campaign to demand equal nationality rights for Bahraini women, as the CEDAW Committee suggested in their 2008 comments to Bahrain's periodic report. The announcement of the campaign was made by the Bahrain's Women Union in an effort to address the approximately 2,000 stateless children of Bahraini women married to foreigners. Maraim Al Ruwai, President of the Union, urged all sufferers to sign the petition because the outdated law goes against CEDAW.

The petition will request that the government amend article 4 of the nationality law, and call for an immediate solution to the resident permit issue of children and husbands of Bahraini women married to foreigners. It was noted that the Supreme Council for Women has looked into the issue of nationality through high-profile cases seeking an exception from the Ministry of Interior, but the rest of the women remain victims.

On March 3, 2009, the AFP reported that the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Suzan Mubarak's International Women's Movement for Peace had organized, in cooperation with the United Nations, an international conference regarding trafficking in people. The conference took place on March 2-3, 2009 during which the participants discussed national strategies, including judicial, executive and legislative measures, to combat trafficking in Bahrain.

COMOROS

Ratification:

Comoros ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on October 31, 1994.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Comoros made no reservations to CEDAW.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

Since its ratification of CEDAW in 1994, Comoros has yet to submit an official periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). In 2007, the Committee criticized Comoros for not having submitted its initial report in over 20 years since its ascension. The Committee requested that Comoros submit its report in June 2009.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Comoros.

Recent Updates:

Women in Comoros face difficulties in a number of facets of life, most prominently in terms of participation in the public sphere. In the government, there is currently only one woman out of 33 total parliament members and one female cabinet minister. While women in urban areas are able to find jobs easily, women in rural areas suffer discrimination related to education opportunities and wage discrepancies.

In 2002, the U.N. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* commended Comoros, noting that domestic violence against women was a rare occurrence and that, in general, inheritance and property rights are not discriminatory towards women. Although women can seek protection in cases of domestic violence from the courts, these issues are generally dealt with at the local or family level.

The occurrence of early marriages is a concern in Comoros, particularly when young women are forced to marry older men. Comoran law states that 18 is the age of marriage for girls, and 22 for boys. Though cases of forced marriage are not well-documented, it is known that many young Comoran girls are forced to give up their education in lieu of marriage and a life of subservience to their male relatives.

Nevertheless, there are individuals working on the ground to promote women’s rights. Comoros has a ministry specific to women’s issues and their advancement as well as the WEMA Association, a women’s organization, which was founded in 1997.

DJIBOUTI

Ratification:

Djibouti ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on October 31, 1994 and the Optional Protocol on February 2, 2005.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Djibouti made no reservations to CEDAW.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

Since its ratification of CEDAW in 1994, Djibouti has yet to submit an official periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). In 2007, the Committee sent a reminder letter to Djibouti requesting that they submit an official report.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Djibouti.

Recent Updates:

In its June 2004 National Report on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Djibouti expressed its commitment to developing a national committee to oversee the application of CEDAW.

The United Nations Development Programme Gender and Citizenship Initiative has reported on the current status of women in Djibouti. Although women are granted equality under Djibouti’s law, extensive discrimination persists in society and few women take part in public life. Women’s personal status is ruled by customary law, which is based on traditional Islamic law, and disadvantages women in areas of travel, divorce and inheritance. When problems do arise, women do not generally feel comfortable taking their legal issues to court.

In the government and business sectors, women are rarely present. Although the President announced in 1999 the creation of a Ministry of Women's, Family, and Social Affairs, women only make up an estimated 32.3 percent of the work force. Women face many substantial social and economic challenge – famine, poverty, and regional conflict have created difficulties for both women’s groups and the government in improving the status of women in society. Women suffer greatly in terms of education, with high drop-out rates for girls in secondary school and only 30% of girls enrolled in primary school. A weak health care system also affects women adversely, particularly in terms of maternity care services.

EGYPT

Ratification:

Egypt ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW") on September 18, 1981.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Egypt made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 2, 9:2, 16, and 29 as described in detail below.

- *In respect of article 9:* Reservation to the text of article 9, paragraph 2, concerning the granting to women of equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children, without prejudice to the acquisition by a child born of a marriage of the nationality of his father. This is in order to prevent a child's acquisition of two nationalities where his parents are of different nationalities, since this may be prejudicial to his future. It is clear that the child's acquisition of his father's nationality is the procedure most suitable for the child and that this does not infringe upon the principle of equality between men and women, since it is customary for a woman to agree, upon marrying an alien, that her children shall be of the father's nationality.
- *In respect of article 16:* Reservation to the text of article 16 concerning the equality of men and women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations during the marriage and upon its dissolution, without prejudice to the Islamic *Sharia's* provisions whereby women are accorded rights equivalent to those of their spouses so as to ensure a just balance between them. This is out of respect for the sacrosanct nature of the firm religious beliefs which govern marital relations in Egypt and which may not be called in question and in view of the fact that one of the most important bases of these relations is an equivalency of rights and duties so as to ensure complementarity which guarantees true equality between the spouses. The provisions of the *Sharia* lay down that the husband shall pay bridal money to the wife and maintain her fully and shall also make a payment to her upon divorce, whereas the wife retains full rights over her property and is not obliged to spend anything on her keep. The *Sharia* therefore restricts the wife's rights to divorce by making it contingent on a judge's ruling, whereas no such restriction is laid down in the case of the husband.
- *In respect of article 29:* The Egyptian delegation also maintains the reservation contained in article 29, paragraph 2, concerning the right of a State signatory to the Convention to declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of that article concerning the submission to an arbitral body of any dispute which may arise between States concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention. This is in order to avoid being bound by the system of arbitration in this field.
- *General reservation on article 2:* The Arab Republic of Egypt is willing to comply with the content of this article, provided that such compliance does not run counter to the Islamic *Sharia*.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

Since its ratification of CEDAW in 1981, Egypt has submitted official reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”) on five occasions. The first periodic report was submitted in February 1983 and the most recent report was submitted in March 2000.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in January 2001 regarding Egypt’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed gratitude towards Egypt for its comprehensive responses to the questions of the Committee’s pre-session working group, as well as its high-level and large delegation. The open dialogue between the delegation and the Committee was also appreciated.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Egypt’s report in 2000 as follows:

- The establishment of the National Council for Women is mandated to monitor laws and policies affecting women’s lives, raise awareness and monitor the implementation of the Convention. The Committee commends the fact that non-governmental organizations are represented in the Council and that they participated in the preparation of the reports.
- Introduction of legal reforms aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women, particularly Law No. 1 of 2000, which gives women a right to terminate a marriage unilaterally.
- Reduction of female illiteracy rates obtained by implementing special programs and specific budgetary allocations.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Egypt’s report in 2000 as follows:

- Expedite the steps necessary for the withdrawal of its reservations and in that regard draws its attention to the Committee’s statement on reservations in its report.
- Consider a revision of Law No. 1 of 2000, in order to eliminate financial discrimination against women.
- Revise the legislation governing nationality in order to make it consistent with the provisions of the Convention.
- Increase awareness-raising programs, including those specifically directed towards men, and to take measures to change stereotypical attitudes and perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of women and men.
- Support the important role of the media in changing stereotypical attitudes towards women and in promoting equality between men and women as prescribed by the Constitution and international standards.
- Create opportunities for the portrayal of positive, non-traditional images of women and that the number of women in decision-making positions in the media, and establish a monitoring body on the representation of women in the media.
- Address the multidimensional and cross-cutting nature of HIV/AIDS, including its human rights, economic, social, development and security dimensions.
- Strengthen its efforts to eradicate female illiteracy, in particular in the rural areas, and continue its programs to prevent drop-outs by girls in primary education, and to reduce the drop-out rate of girls and young women at secondary school and university, including through the use of incentives for parents, so as to provide young women with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate on the basis of equality with men in the labor market.
- Increase the number of women at all levels of decision-making, including in government and Parliament.

- Implement temporary special measures, such as numerical goals and quotas connected to time frames, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, in order to increase the representation of women at decision-making levels in all areas.
- Provide more information on the participation and conditions of women in the labor market in its next periodic report.
- Conduct a national survey of the extent of violence against women, including rural women.
- Assess the impact of existing measures to address the various forms of violence against women, and investigate the root causes of violence against women, especially domestic violence, so as to improve the effectiveness of legislation, policies and programs aimed at combating such violence.
- Implement training and sensitization programs for the judiciary, law-enforcement officials and members of the legal and health professions, as well as awareness-raising measures to create zero tolerance in society with regard to violence against women.
- Eliminate any discriminatory penal provisions, in accordance with the Constitution and the Convention.
- Provide full details on the implementation of the Minister of Health's 1996 Decree on female genital mutilation in its next report, including on public awareness-raising campaigns run by all actors (ministries, the National Council for Women and non-governmental organizations) and on measures that have been taken to educate those whose livelihood depends on performing such procedures.
- Provide in its next periodic report a comprehensive picture of the situation of rural women, in particular with regard to education, health and employment.
- Monitor existing programs and develop additional policies and programs aimed at the economic empowerment of rural women, ensuring their access to productive resources and capital as well as to health-care services and to social and cultural opportunities.
- Amend the law on the legal age of marriage to prevent early marriage, in line with its obligations as a State party to the Convention.
- Take measures to prevent the practice of polygamy in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 21.9
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to deposit, as soon as possible, its instrument of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report submitted under article 18 of the Convention.
- Disseminate widely the Committee's concluding comments in order to make the people of Egypt, in particular governmental administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and of the future steps that are required in this regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Egypt. This report was presented by the Egyptian NGO's Coalition in 2000. The

report focused mainly on tracking all kinds of discrimination against women whether in legislation, politics, or social practices.

The Coalition also prepared a preliminary report of critical issues to be presented to the Committee in November 2008. This report outlined the three main issues, which have a negative impact on the social, cultural, economic and political status of Egyptian women: a low representation of women in decision-making positions, especially in national Parliament and assemblies; discrimination against women in the Family Law Code; gender-based violence in both the private and public spheres.

Recent Updates:

Many women's NGO's in Egypt work constantly to improve women's rights and access to justice. Among them are the Integrated Care Society; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights ("ECWR"); Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance; Society of Women Promotion and Development; and Forum of Organizations of Women Development. Women in Egypt suffer from discrimination in many sectors, most notably in the public sector (where women make up only 24% of the workforce) and under customary law, where women have no legal protection in the courts.

In May 2008, the ECWR reported that Egyptian and foreign women constantly suffer sexual harassment. In honor of International Women's Day, a campaign was launched by detectives in Cairo and security officials in Giza to reveal cases of sexual harassment. A similar campaign was launched to monitor the area around Al-Monofya University and colleges in New Shibyn, where many men were caught harassing women.

In October 2008, the ECWR hosted a roundtable discussion regarding sexual harassment, during which three drafts of a new sexual harassment law were produced. Each of the laws defined sexual harassment as a legally-punishable crime and the roundtable discussion worked to develop one unified law to submit to parliament.

On February 22, 2009, Al-Sharq reported that a female member of the Egyptian parliament had submitted a draft law to amend the provision of the law on marriage documentation, in an effort to confine the spread of customary marriages. This amendment would provide punishment of imprisonment and/or a monetary fine of the married couple and their witnesses for those married under customary law.

Customary law marriage is currently considered legal under Islamic law, and simply requires a man and a woman to make an agreement on paper without registering the marriage in the courts or making it public. Many young Egyptians effectuate customary law marriages in secret to have legitimate intercourse, and older widows' do the same in order to receive their dead husbands' retirement salaries, which would be terminated if they officially re-married.

Unfortunately, this type of "secret" marriage often proves to be a disadvantage for the female, as she has no legal ability to make claims against her husband. The proposed draft law would protect women by making it obligatory for couples to obtain a medical certificate from a Ministry of Health agency confirming that they do not have any diseases.

IRAQ

Ratification:

Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on August 13, 1986.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Iraq made the following reservations:

- Approval of and accession to this Convention shall not mean that the Republic of Iraq is bound by the provisions of article 2, paragraphs (f) and (g), of article 9, paragraphs 1 and 2, nor of article 16 of the Convention. The reservation to this last-mentioned article shall be without prejudice to the provisions of the Islamic *Shariah* according women rights equivalent to the rights of their spouses so as to ensure a just balance between them. Iraq also enters a reservation to article 29, paragraph 1, of this Convention with regard to the principle of international arbitration in connection with the interpretation or application of this Convention.
- This approval in no way implies recognition of or entry into any relations with Israel.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

Since its ratification of CEDAW in 1986, Iraq has submitted official reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”) on two occasions. The first periodic report was submitted in May 1990 and the combined second and third reports were submitted on in October 1998.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in January 2000 regarding Iraq’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed appreciation for Iraq’s submission of written replies to the Committee’s questions and its willingness to continue constructive dialogue with the Committee despite the difficult situation faced by the country.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Iraq’s report in 1998 as follows:

- Implemented legislative reforms, in particular with regard to the Personal Status Code, which brought about a greater degree of women's equality with men, and the Penal Code, which now provides greater protection to women.
- Adoption, in June 1997, a National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
- The establishment, in June 1997, of the high-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women, the agency concerned with the advancement of women and consisting of representatives of ministries involved in activities of relevance to women, and of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, all of which are aimed at implementing the Convention.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Iraq’s report in 1998 as follows:

- Review discriminatory legislative provisions and to take measures, including temporary special measures, aimed at creating a non-discriminatory legislative and de facto environment for women.

- Encourage a constitutional amendment which reflects fully article 1 of the Convention, and undertake a comprehensive legislative review with a view to bringing all legislation into full conformity with the Convention.
- Put in place a mechanism to provide for the regular evaluation and qualitative and quantitative assessment of progress in the implementation of the national strategy for the advancement of women, as well as provide further information on the mandate, annual work plans and major areas of activity of the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in its next report.
- Review its reservations to article 2, subparagraphs (f) and (g), and articles 9 and 16, in the light of the Committee's statement on reservations, assess the justifications for those reservations and modify or withdraw them as soon as possible to ensure full implementation of the Convention.
- Provide, in its next report a comprehensive picture with regard to violence against women in the State party, including information on legislation, statistical data on the types and incidence of violence against women and the responses to such violence by law enforcement officials, the judiciary, social workers and health-care providers.
- Encourage and support the establishment of facilities for women victims of domestic violence, such as telephone hotlines and shelters for battered women, and to launch a zero-tolerance campaign on violence against women so as to raise awareness about the problem and the need to combat it effectively.
- Implement awareness-raising campaigns to change stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes concerning the roles of women and girls, in addition to providing a non-discriminatory legislative basis.
- Work towards the elimination of the practice of polygamy, in light of the Committee's general recommendation 21 on marriage and family relations, and ensure that gender-sensitive public education campaigns at all levels create a non-discriminatory environment.
- Condemn and eradicate honor killings and ensure that these crimes are prosecuted and punished in the same way as other homicides.
- Introduce measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and especially to increase the number of women in the political sphere.
- Strengthen efforts to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure primary and secondary education for girls by preventing school dropouts, and furthermore, broaden the educational and training opportunities for girls and young women at the secondary and tertiary levels and in technical fields.
- Give particular attention to ensuring that girls and women have equal access to new specializations, including the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge to participate on a basis of equality with men in the labor market and in the future reconstruction of the country.
- Ensure that women do not bear a disproportionate portion of the economic difficulties facing the country, and make sure that non-discriminatory labor legislation is in place and effectively enforced and that women's reproductive function does not lead to discrimination against them in employment, job security and social benefits.
- Assess the differential impact of sanctions on women and children, especially on particularly vulnerable groups of women, and to put in place measures aimed at countering such a negative impact.
- Use resources available from programs such as the oil-for-food program in a manner that directly benefits women, including through diverting resources currently allocated for other purposes.

- Put in place mechanisms to provide the greatest possible protection of women's health rights, and ensure that women and children are effectively targeted so as to benefit from available resources and that such resources are not diverted to other purposes.
- Take a holistic view of women's health, in line with the Committee's general recommendation 24 relating to article 12 of the Convention, and to put in place measures to ensure women's mental and psychological well-being.
- Provide in its next report a comprehensive picture of the situation of rural women, in particular their educational, health and employment situation, and the impact of traditions and stereotypes on their status.
- Address the situation of disadvantaged groups of women, especially women belonging to ethnic minorities, including Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians.
- Respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in the present concluding comments, and provide information about the mandate, functions and activities of the Human Rights Commission established within the National Assembly with regard to women's enjoyment of their human rights. It also requests that the Government engage in a broad consultative process with women's non-governmental organizations, including those that represent minority women, when preparing its next report.
- Disseminate widely in Iraq the present concluding comments, in order to make the people of Iraq, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and the future steps that are required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, and in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Iraq.

Recent Updates:

On January 28, 2009, Reuters reported that, according to the Higher Independent Commission of Iraqi Elections, a total of 3,912 women had been nominated for seats in the Councils of Governorates, of which 25% are allocated to women by law.

On February 7, 2009, Al-Sharq reported that Nawal Al-Samera'i, the Iraqi Minister of State for Women's Affairs, had announced her resignation. Mrs. Al-Samera'i, frustrated with the Ministry's inability to actively assist women, removed herself in protest to the Iraqi government stating that they do not need an "honorary" ministry, but rather one that serves women in all areas of life. She specifically noted the inappropriate condition in which Iraqi women are detained and imprisoned.

On February 20, 2009, the Iraqi National News Agency reported that women had won 110 out of a total of 440 seats on the Councils of 14 governorates. Women won at least one-quarter of the seats in Baghdad, Ninawa, Wasit, Diyala and Najaf.

On March 19, 2009, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq announced the conference "*Still Paying the Price, Iraqi Women after Years of Wars, Sanctions and Internal Conflict*" on strategies to promote women's rights in Iraq. The conference will produce a series of recommendations to

Iraq's Government and Parliament on issues restraining women's equality in Iraq. It aims to set a strategy to improve women's political participation and constitutional guarantees, and to address violence against women and the general impact of the conflict in Iraq on their well-being.

JORDAN

Ratification:

Jordan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on July 1, 1992.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Jordan made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 9:2, 15:4 and 16 as described in detail below.

- *Article 9*, paragraph 2;
- *Article 15*, paragraph 4 (a wife's residence is with her husband);
- *Article 16*, paragraph (1) (c), relating to the rights arising upon the dissolution of marriage with regard to maintenance and compensation;
- *Article 16*, paragraph (1) (d) and (g).

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Jordan has submitted official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”) on three occasions. The first report came out five years following ratification in October 1997, the second report in November 1999, and the combined third and fourth report was released in December 2005.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in August 2007 regarding Jordan’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed appreciation to Jordan for its combined third and fourth periodic report, which was well-structured, though it lacked references to the Committee’s general recommendations. The Committee commended Jordan for its high-level delegation as well as its written replies to the issues raised by the pre-session working group. The Committee welcomed Jordan’s initiative to develop proposals to amend laws and institute measures to end discriminatory practices against women.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Jordan’s report in 2005 as follows:

- Publishing the Convention in the Official Gazette, which gives it the force of law in Jordan.
- Establishment of a 20 percent quota for women in the municipal councils, which has led to the election of 240 women to municipal councils, and on the appointment of the first female head of a court.
- Achievement of parity between girls and boys in primary and secondary education.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Jordan’s report in 2005 as follows:

- Take adequate steps to implement the recommendations in respect of some concerns raised in the Committee’s previous concluding comments, in particular In particular, its recommendations in paragraphs 169 (to encourage a constitutional amendment to

incorporate equality on the basis of sex in article 6 of the Constitution), 171 (to undertake a review of all existing legislation to bring it fully into compliance with the Convention), 175 (to reconsider the law and policy on polygamy with a view to eliminating that practice), 181 (to initiate legislative action to permit safe abortion for victims of rape and incest) and 185 (to review legislation and policy in the employment sector to facilitate full implementation of article 11 of the Convention).

- Speedily withdraw its reservation to article 15, paragraph 4, which it acknowledges has become redundant in the light of legal reform. It also urges the State party to recognize the negative impact of its nationality law on Jordanian women married to foreigners and on the children of those women and, accordingly, to revise its nationality law and remove its reservation to article 9, paragraph.
- Revise its Personal Status Act, in the light of comparative jurisprudence where more progressive interpretations of Islamic law have been codified in legislative reforms, to give women equal rights in marriage, divorce and custody of children and to withdraw its reservations to article 16, paragraph 1 (c), (d) and (g).
- Enact a comprehensive gender equality law that extends to both the public and private sectors and to political, economic, social, cultural, civil and any other fields, and includes a definition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 of the Convention; provisions on the equal rights of women with men in line with article 2 (a) of the Convention; and sanctions and remedies for acts of discrimination based on sex.
- Ensure that the Convention becomes an integral part of legal education and, in this regard, develop awareness-raising programs and training on the provisions of the Convention for judges, lawyers and prosecutors, in particular with regard to the meaning and scope of direct and indirect discrimination and about formal and substantive equality, in order to establish firmly in the country a legal culture supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination.
- Enhance women's awareness of their rights through on-going legal literacy programs and legal assistance, and disseminate the Convention and its general recommendations widely among all stakeholders, including government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.
- Complete expeditiously the process of strengthening and restructuring its national machinery so that it can fully execute all its functions, and to provide in its next report, a clear and detailed picture of the national machinery, including its authority, functions, powers and resources.
- Give high priority to its law reform process and to modify or repeal, without delay and within a clear time frame, discriminatory legislation, including discriminatory provisions in its Personal Status Act, Penal Code and Nationality Act and, to this end, increase its efforts to sensitize the Parliament and public opinion regarding the importance of accelerating legal reform which, according to article 2 of the Convention, has to be undertaken without delay.
- Take all steps necessary to increase support for law reform, including through proactive outreach to Parliament, and partnerships and collaboration with religious and community leaders, lawyers, judges, civil society organizations and women's non-governmental organizations.
- View culture as a dynamic aspect of the country's social fabric and life and therefore subject to change, and implement comprehensive measures to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women in order to create an enabling and supportive environment conducive to changing discriminatory laws, customs and practices and strengthening women's ability to enjoy all their human rights. This should

include awareness-raising and programs in the formal and non-formal educational sector, addressing women and men, girls and boys, community and religious leaders and, in particular, members of Parliament, with a view to eliminating stereotypes associated with traditional gender roles in the family and in society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. It should closely monitor the impact of, and results achieved from, its efforts to promote change concerning the stereotypical expectations of women's roles in the family and society.

- Give high priority to putting in place comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women and girls, recognizing that violence against women is a form of discrimination against women and thus constitutes a violation of their human rights under the Convention.
- Enact as soon as possible, legislation on violence against women, including the draft law on protection against domestic violence, in order to ensure that violence against women constitutes a criminal offence, that women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress and protection and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.
- Implement educational and awareness-raising measures aimed at law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health-care providers, social workers, community leaders and the general public, in order to ensure that they understand that all forms of violence against women are unacceptable, and make full use of the information contained in the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women.
- Amend, without delay, applicable provisions of the Penal Code to ensure that perpetrators of "honor" crimes do not benefit from a reduction of penalty under article 340; that perpetrators of premeditated "honor" crimes do not benefit from a reduction of penalty under article 98; and that article 99 is not applicable to "honor" crimes or other cases where the victim is related to the perpetrator, and ensure that "honor" crimes are treated as seriously as other violent crimes in regard to investigation and prosecution, and that effective prevention efforts are put in place.
- Ensure that a rapist does not escape punishment by marrying his victim, and eliminate the use of virginity tests or ensure that such tests are carried out only with the full and free consent of the woman and the results are not used to her detriment.
- Establish a sufficient number of accessible shelters and crisis centers for female victims of violence in both urban and rural areas, and ensure that if a victimized woman agrees to reconcile with the perpetrator, counseling services are provided to the perpetrator and the situation monitored to prevent further abuse.
- Replace the practice of protective custody with other measures that ensure the protection of women without jeopardizing their liberty, and to accordingly transfer all women currently held in protective custody to the Family Reconciliation Centre or other safe shelters.
- Take sustained measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations 23 and 25, and to establish concrete goals and time frames in order to accelerate the increase in the representation of women in elected and appointed bodies in all areas and at all levels of public life.
- Consider amending the Elections Act before the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2007 in order to institute a significantly higher quota for women, as recommended by the Jordanian National Commission for Women.
- Encourage political parties to use quotas or numerical goals in order to accelerate women's equal representation, and conduct training programs on leadership and negotiation skills for current and future women leaders, and undertake awareness-raising,

including for all members of Parliament, about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole.

- Strengthen its efforts to increase the number of women university professors in all fields, including through the use of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation
- Enhance its human rights education in curricula at all educational levels and to ensure that such education places priority on the promotion of gender equality and women's human rights.
- Amend its Labor Code to prohibit discrimination against women as well as sexual harassment in both public and private sector employment and include mechanisms for redress of complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment, and ensure that there is no discrimination in terms of employment-related benefits and that female employees receive all the same benefits on the same terms as male employees.
- Monitor adherence to the amended Labor Code by employers in both sectors to ensure compliance with such provisions, and take all measures necessary to eliminate discrimination against women in the private sector, in accordance with article 2 (e) of the Convention, and establish adequate and sufficient day-care centers in order to facilitate women's entry into the labor force.
- Speed up the law reform effort to ensure that the employment of domestic workers, including migrants, is covered by the Labor Code, and monitor effectively and enforce regulations relating to the employment of domestic workers, including migrants, for their benefit.
- Eliminate the provision in article 5 of the Personal Status Act that allows marriage of a person under 18 years and to enforce the 18-years minimum age of marriage for both women and men, in line with article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention, the Committee's general recommendation 21 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Ensure that civil society organizations and women's non-governmental organizations are not restricted with respect to their establishment and operations and that they are able to function independently of the Government, and provide an enabling environment for the establishment and active involvement of women's and human rights organizations in promoting the implementation of the Convention.
- Include in its next report statistical data and analysis on the situation of women, disaggregated by sex, age and by rural and urban areas, indicating the impact of measures taken and the results achieved in the practical realization of women's substantive equality.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Ensure the wide participation of all ministries and public bodies in, and to consult with non-governmental organizations during, the preparation of its next report, and involve Parliament in a discussion of the report before its submission to the Committee.
- Utilize fully in its implementation of the obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Integrate a gender perspective and the explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Disseminate widely in Jordan the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Jordan, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians, the judiciary and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard.

- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, which is due in July 2009.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, two shadow reports have been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Jordan. The first ever shadow report was submitted in July 2007 by a delegation of NGOs organized by the Karama Group of Jordan, including the Arab Women Organization of Jordan, the Arab Human Rights Organization, and the Arab Women Media centre. This shadow report detailed the government's areas of non-compliance and recommends policies to improve Jordan's protection of women's legal rights and safety from violence. Violence against women remains one of the biggest challenges that the government faces today.

The shadow report noted that although the government published CEDAW in the National Gazette, it was not done until 15 years after the ratification. In order to bring national law in line with putting CEDAW into practice, Karama recommended that the government do the following:

- First, lift all remaining reservations to the CEDAW articles, and ensure women's equality under the law to be able to pass her nationality to her spouse and children, as men are currently entitled to do.
- Second, adopt a National Strategy to end violence against women, enacting new laws in the Penal Code that criminalize VAW and punish perpetrators not women. Specifically, stop the jailing of women for their "protection" when their lives have been threatened by family members, and secure these women a place at the national shelter-which should expand to multiple shelters.
- Third, enact and develop enforcement of legislation to prohibit sexual assault in the workplace and gender-based discrimination at all levels of employment and benefits. Extend the labor law's protection and benefits to include informal sectors where women are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse: as domestic workers; gardeners; cooks; or as family members in a family business who work without receiving pay.
- Fourth, amend Article 6 Paragraph 1 of the Constitution, which indicates that all Jordanians are equal before the law and there is no discrimination between them, to specify equality according to "sex" alongside "language," "religion," and "race."
- Fifth, Government should amend the Jordanian Personal Status Law to remove articles that do not ensure women's equal rights with men within marriage.
- Sixth, the Government has yet to ensure equality in political participation. A quota of just six women out of 110 was filled in the previous election of the parliament. The government needs to undertake new policies and measures to ensure better participation of women in political and public life. A quota of at least 30% should be adopted at all decision making levels.

The Government's response to the shadow report was positive, assuring to the CEDAW committee that it is in the process of developing new laws, including a law that criminalizes domestic violence and a law that ensure non-discrimination against women at all levels. At the time, it was predicted that it will take two years to finalize these laws.

A parallel shadow report prepared by the Human Forum for Women's Rights and the MIZAN-Law Group for Human Rights was submitted in July 2007.

Recent Updates:

Under the personal status laws in Jordan, women suffer from discrimination in many areas, particularly in regards to testimony, divorce, freedom of movement, inheritance. Although women have the right to vote and consistently have a high turnout at elections, women remain largely excluded from the government itself. There is currently one female minister, three female senators and six female members of parliament. The current age of marriage for both men and women is 18, and Jordanian women married to non-Jordanian men do have the right to pass on Jordanian citizenship to their children.

Between 2001 and 2003, while the Parliament was not in session, the government amended two bills relating to women's rights: the first allowed women the right to file for divorce and the second afforded the courts more leeway to impose harsh punishments on those convicted of honor crimes.

The government recently created the National Committee for Women to oversee programs related to women's development. This Committee has been successful in lowering the female illiteracy rate and encouraging women to pursue university-level education. Although population growth has declined, the total fertility rate is higher than the regional average. There has been public support among religious leaders and communities to reduce family size, and contraceptive use has increased substantially over the past decade.

In addition, there are many advocates of women's rights in the government, most notably Queen Rania and Princess Basma. Each has supported women's development through projects and social reform. Since King Abdullah took power in 1999, the government has shown a significant interest in improving the overall status of women in Jordan.

On February 10, 2009, Jordan lifted its reservation on Article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention, which relates to women's mobility.

On February 15, 2009, the United Press reported on the progress of eliminating family violence after the government passed the Protection Against Family Violence law in 2008. Although the National Family Council prepared a four-year strategic plan, there are still approximately 5,000 cases registered each year. The National Council for Women's Affairs in Jordan announced that it is preparing to hold a conference that aims to develop an "Arab Network for Family Protection", which would adopt a mechanism for cooperation among stakeholders, setting policies and preparing international reports.

A recent project, which will be coordinated by the Italian Consortium of Solidarity along with the European Institute of Democracy and Human Rights and MIZAN-Law Group for Human Rights, will work to promote the effective application of CEDAW. This program will provide training courses for judges and lawyers, promote direct information campaigns to target women, and offer mobile units that will travel to encourage victims of domestic violence to report their situation. Honor crimes prove the greatest challenge, because the perpetrator often walks away with a modest sentence, and judges grant extenuating circumstances to men who are believed to have been motivated by honor, despite the fact they are guilty of homicide. For this reason, the new program will provide necessary training for judges and prosecutors in the legal principals

upheld by the Convention. But the main focus of the project will be the lawyers, who have the most contact with society and are best able to spread a new culture of rights.

On March 10, 2009, Al-Sharq reported that the Jordanian Minister of Justice expected that female judges will constitute 40% of judges in Jordan in the next decade. Women currently make up 50% of the participants in the programs “Judges of the Future” and “Diploma in Judicial Studies”. It was noted that the Ministry of Justice is currently writing a new law, which would enhance the independence of the public prosecutor’s office and engage female judges in public prosecution. These efforts are a part of the capacity building programs for females in the legal profession, which the Ministry of Justice supports.

In May 2009, Jordan will host the second regional conference of the Coalition “Equality without Reservation”.

KUWAIT

Ratification:

Kuwait ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on September 2, 1994.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Kuwait made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 9:2, 16 and 29:1 as described in detail below.

- *Article 9, paragraph 2:* The Government of Kuwait reserves its right not to implement the provision contained in article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, inasmuch as it runs counter to the Kuwaiti Nationality Act, which stipulates that a child's nationality shall be determined by that of his father.
- *Article 16 (f):* The Government of the State of Kuwait declares that it does not consider itself bound by the provision contained in article 16 (f) inasmuch as it conflicts with the provisions of the *Islamic Shariah*, Islam being the official religion of the State.
- *Article 29:* The Government of Kuwait declares that it is not bound by the provision contained in article 29, paragraph 1.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Kuwait has submitted one official periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). The combined first and second periodic report was released in August 2002. In response to Kuwait’s preliminary report, the Committee released comments in 2004 regarding Kuwait’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Kuwait’s report in 2002 as follows:

- Publishing the Convention in the Official Gazette, thus giving it the force of national law.
- Efforts made in 1999, through an Amiri Decree, to grant women their full political rights.
- Establishing institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, particularly the National Assembly’s standing committee on human rights, which is tasked with, inter alia, studying and proposing amendments to national legislation to guarantee and safeguard human rights.
- Progress made in reducing the rate of female illiteracy in Kuwait, and in increasing the level of education attained by girls and women in Kuwait and the enrollment rates of girls and women at all levels of education.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Kuwait’s report in 2002 as follows:

- Take all necessary steps, as a matter of the utmost urgency, to introduce and actively support the adoption of legislation to amend the discriminatory provisions of the Electoral Law in line with the constitutional guarantee of equality and in order to ensure compliance with the Convention.

- Expedite the necessary steps for the withdrawal of its reservation to article 7 (a) of the Convention, which it believes to be contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention.
- Expedite the necessary steps for the withdrawal of its reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 16 (f) of the Convention.
- Provide, in its next report, comprehensive information on the effect of its reservations on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the situation of women in Kuwait, and in this regard, draws attention to its statement on reservations.
- Ensure the primacy, direct applicability and enforceability of the Convention within the national legal framework of Kuwait, and launch a comprehensive program of dissemination, education and training on the Convention, in particular for government officials and legislators, as well as judicial officers, including law enforcement officials and the judiciary, and for civil society and the public at large with a view to ensuring that the provisions of the Convention are known and implemented in Kuwait.
- Take urgent steps to incorporate the definition of discrimination against women as contained in article 1 of the Convention in its national legislation.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of all existing laws, including the Nationality Act, and to amend or repeal discriminatory provisions so as to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention.
- Raise the minimum age of marriage for women and men to 18 years, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Clarify, in its next report, the mandate and responsibilities of the various components of the national machinery, coordination among them, and the resources allocated to them, and ensure that the national machinery involves more women at the decision-making level and is provided with adequate visibility, power and resources to effectively promote the advancement of women.
- Develop, adopt and implement, at the national level, a comprehensive and coordinated plan of action to promote gender equality and to ensure gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas.
- Design, implement and strengthen comprehensive awareness-raising measures to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men, at all levels of society, with a view to eradicating traditional stereotypes regarding the role and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, and encourage the media to promote cultural changes with regard to the roles and responsibilities attributed to women and men, as required by article 5 of the Convention.
- Increase its efforts towards accelerating the achievement of de facto equal opportunities for women and men in the area of employment through, inter alia, the use of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and general recommendation 25.
- Take measures to promote change concerning the stereotypical expectations of women's roles and to promote the equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men.
- Provide detailed information and statistical data on women's representation, particularly in decision-making positions, in various areas of public life, including in law enforcement, the judiciary and the diplomatic corps in its next report.
- Take measures to increase the representation of women in all areas of public life, including at the decision-making level, and in law enforcement, the judiciary and the diplomatic corps, through the use of temporary special measures, in accordance with

article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and general recommendation 25, as well as general recommendation 23, and undertake and support awareness-raising programs on the importance of women's representation, in particular at decision-making levels, in all areas of public life.

- Provide, in its next report, detailed information and statistical data on the situation of non-Kuwaiti women, in particular with regard to education, health and employment as well as information about the availability of services and programs for protecting women domestic migrant workers from violence and abuse and the availability of legal and administrative remedies, and on steps taken to inform women migrant workers about the availability of such services and remedies.
- Recognize that violence against women constitutes a violation of the human rights of women under the Convention.
- Undertake the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data on all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, as well as research into the extent and root causes of such violence, including against women migrant workers and non-Kuwaiti women, and to provide such information in its next report.
- In the light of general recommendation 19, ensure that all forms of violence against women and girls are prosecuted and punished promptly and that victims have immediate means of redress and protection, and take measures to fully sensitize public officials, especially law enforcement officials, the judiciary and health-care providers, and to train them to handle such situations adequately, and undertake awareness-raising measures aimed at the public at large to make such violence socially and morally unacceptable.
- Enhance collaboration and coordination with civil society organizations, in particular women's associations, to strengthen implementation of the provisions of the Convention, and to engage in consultations with such organizations when preparing its next report.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, and submit its third periodic report, which was due in 2003, and its fourth periodic report, due in 2007, in a combined report in 2007.
- Include in its next periodic report, information on the implementation of aspects of those documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention.
- Disseminate widely in Kuwait of the present concluding comments in order to make the people, in particular government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in this regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Kuwait.

Recent Updates:

Over the past several decades, Kuwait has made significant progress towards improving the status of women and ensuring gender equality. Women have opportunities to pursue higher education, and currently comprise two-thirds of university-level students. In addition, women's presence in the work force has increased steadily and should continue in the future, despite laws limiting women's work. One law prohibits most women from working between the hours of 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. and another prohibits women from working jobs that may be dangerous, difficult or harmful to health. The law prevents women from engaging in "immoral" occupations that exploit their bodies, and prohibits women from working for institutions that provide services only to men.

On May 16, 2005, the Parliament approved an amendment that gives women full political rights, including electoral rights. Following this decision, two women ran for municipal council elections, where they were defeated by their male candidates and a weak 28.7% of eligible female voters actually participated in the election. There are many opponents to women's suffrage, primarily by Islamic and traditional leaders who argue that women's exposure to public life by voting will lead to their moral decline.

Currently, women hold many positions in government, and have made recent advances at the top levels of leadership. In 2005, the first female was appointed as Minister of Planning and Administrative Development; she was later appointed as Minister of Health in the Cabinet in 2007. Another female was appointed as Minister of Education and Higher Studies in the same cabinet, and in 2005, two women were appointed to the 16-member municipal council.

The Federation of Kuwaiti Women's Associations and the Women's Cultural and Social Society are the two most prominent women's groups in Kuwait. The Federation is tightly regulated by the Kuwaiti government, and is the only group allowed to represent Kuwait on the international level. The Society was initially a charity organization, but has become an active advocate for women's rights. Many other organizations such as the Women Affairs Committee and the Kuwait's Union of Women Societies have organized campaigns and conferences to protest the exclusion of women in the political arena.

Despite Kuwait's ratification of CEDAW, women face certain legal inequalities, largely related to the personal status law. Under this law, women face discrimination in terms of testimony, nationality, divorce and inheritance. Despite its initial reservation to article 7, which relates to the authority of the international dispute resolution mechanisms created by the CEDAW, the Government of Kuwait informed the Secretary-General, by a notification received on 9 December 2005, of its decision to withdraw the following reservation in respect of article 7 (a), made upon accession to the Convention, which read as follows: The Government of Kuwait enters a reservation regarding article 7 (a), inasmuch as the provision contained in that paragraph conflicts with the Kuwaiti Electoral Act, under which the right to be eligible for election and to vote is restricted to males.

LEBANON

Ratification:

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on April 21, 1997.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Lebanon made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 9:2, 16, and 29 as described in detail below.

- The Government of the Lebanese Republic enters reservations regarding article 9 (2), and article 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g) (regarding the right to choose a family name).
- In accordance with paragraph 2 of article 29, the Lebanese Republic declares that it does not consider itself bound by the provisions of paragraph 1 of that article.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Lebanon has submitted three official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). The first report was released in November 2003, the second in February 2005 and third in July 2006.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in 2008 regarding Lebanon’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed appreciation to Lebanon for their written replies to the issues expressed by the pre-session working group as well as the frank and constructive dialogue held between the Delegation and the Committee. The Committee also commended the delegation as well as the timely reporting of the third periodic report.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Lebanon’s report in 2006 as follows:

- Establishment, through the decree of the Prime Minister in April 2007, a Steering Committee led by the Ministry of Labor to reform the 1946 Labor Law.
- Post-conflict efforts to mainstream the role of women in peace building, decision-making, development and rehabilitation process in ten villages which were heavily affected by the conflict in Lebanon in July and August 2006.
- Implementation of a project entitled “WEPASS” aimed at empowering women in the conflict-affected regions with a view to capacity building in the main areas of concern covered by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).
- Signature by the State party of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol on 14 June 2007.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Lebanon’s report in 2006 as follows:

- Implementation of the Committee’s comments, in particular, its recommendations in paragraphs 95 (to include provisions guaranteeing equality on the basis of sex, in line with article 2 (a) of the Convention, in the Constitution or in other appropriate legislation), 98 (to undertake a systematic review and revision of all existing legislation to bring it fully into compliance with the Convention), 106 (to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programs to foster a better understanding of and

support for equality between women and men at all levels of society), 108 (to take sustained measures to accelerate the increase in the representation of women in elected and appointed bodies in all areas of public life) and 110 (to eliminate occupational segregation, ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labor market and establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure enforcement of legislation requiring employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value).

- Ensure that the promotion and protection of women's human rights and gender equality is a central goal of all aspects of the transition process and to raise the legislature's awareness of that important goal.
- Devote serious attention to the specific needs of women in the post-conflict period and ensure women's equal participation in decision-making, in conformity with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and put in place an action plan for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), taking into account paragraph 1 of article 4, and articles 7 and 8 of the Convention.
- Develop and implement awareness-raising programs and training on the provisions of the Convention, in particular with regard to the meaning and scope of direct and indirect discrimination and about formal and substantive equality, for parliamentarians, government officials, judges, lawyers and prosecutors, so as to establish firmly a domestic legal culture supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination.
- Enhance women's awareness of their rights through sustained legal literacy programs and legal assistance.
- Widely disseminate the Convention and its general recommendations among all stakeholders, including government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, political parties, the civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.
- Proceed with the elaboration, adoption and implementation of the National Plan of Action for Human Rights without delay and within a clear time frame.
- Urgently adopt a unified personal status code which is in line with the Convention and would be applicable to all women in Lebanon, irrespective of their religion; and include, in its next periodic report, detailed information on the various personal status codes affecting women, and the impact of these codes on implementation of the Convention.
- Give urgent priority to the strengthening of the national machinery for the advancement of women, and provide it with the authority, decision-making power and human and financial resources that are necessary to work effectively for the promotion of equality of women and the enjoyment of their human rights.
- Institute or revitalize a system of focal points with sufficient expertise in gender equality issues in all sectoral ministries to strengthen the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy to ensure the realization of equality of women with men in all policies and programs, and institute a system of collaboration and networking between the national machinery and the focal points.
- Use temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, as part of a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality between women and men, and consider using a range of possible measures, such as quotas, benchmarks, targets and incentives, in particular with regard to accelerated implementation of articles 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 14 of the Convention.
- Enhance the training of teaching staff on gender equality issues and revise educational textbooks and curricula to eliminate gender-role stereotypes.
- Disseminate information on the Convention through all levels of the educational system, including through human rights education and gender-sensitivity training, so as to change

existing stereotypical views and attitudes about women's and men's roles, and encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls.

- Encourage a public dialogue on the educational choices girls and women make and their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labor market, and make sure that awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project positive images of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres.
- In accordance with its general recommendation No. 19 recognizing that violence against women is a form of discrimination against women and thus constitutes a violation of their human rights under the Convention, place high priority on establishing and implementing comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Enact, without delay, legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence, so as to ensure that violence against women constitutes a criminal offense, and that women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress and protection and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.
- Amend, without delay, applicable provisions in the Penal Code to ensure that perpetrators of honor crimes are not exonerated, that marital rape is criminalized and that marriage to the victim does not exempt a sexual offender from punishment, and also introduce and implement educational and awareness-raising measures aimed at law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health service providers, social workers, community leaders and the general public, in order to ensure that they understand that all forms of violence against women are unacceptable.
- Provide detailed information in its next report on the laws and policies in place to deal with violence against women and the impact of such measures.
- Intensify its efforts to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls, including by enacting specific and comprehensive legislation and by putting in place programs for the repatriation and reintegration of victims of trafficking.
- Increase its international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin and transit so as to address more effectively the causes of trafficking, and improve prevention of trafficking through information exchange.
- Collect and analyze data from the national, regional and international police and other sources, prosecute and punish traffickers, and ensure the protection of the human rights of trafficked women and girls, including protective measures and legal assistance. Ensure that trafficked women and girls are not subject to prosecution of immigration laws and have adequate support to be in a position to provide testimony against their traffickers.
- Speedily enact the draft law regulating the employment of domestic workers which is currently being considered by a steering committee established in April 2007 to address the situation of women migrant workers and to supervise its compliance by employment agencies and employers, and establish procedures to monitor and safeguard the rights of women domestic workers and adequately prosecute and punish abusive employers. Provide domestic workers with viable avenues of redress against abuse by employers, and undertake efforts to ensure that domestic workers are aware of their rights and legal protections and have access to legal aid.
- Include information on the steps and measures taken and on their impact, and data on the prevalence of violence against women domestic workers in its next periodic report.
- Take adequate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the area of taxation.
- Put in place mechanisms to make health care services accessible to all groups of women and to ensure that all health policies and programs integrate a gender perspective in

accordance with article 12 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 24 on women and health.

- Pay special attention to the needs of rural women, ensuring that they participate in decision-making processes that affect them and have full access to justice, education, health services and credit facilities.
- Take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women with respect to ownership and inheritance of land, and ensure that a gender perspective is included in all poverty reduction plans and strategies.
- Collect data on the situation of rural women and include such data and analysis in its next periodic report.
- Provide, in its next report, a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of disabled women as well as women who care for the disabled family members and to take appropriate measure to protect their rights.
- Adopt laws and regulations relating to the status of asylum-seekers and refugees in Lebanon, in line with international standards, in order to ensure protection for asylum-seeking and refugee women and their children.
- Consider accession to international instruments to address the situation of refugees and stateless persons, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.
- Fully integrate a gender-sensitive approach throughout the process of granting asylum/refugee status, and implement targeted measures for refugee women and girls and internally displaced women and girls, within specific timetables, to improve access to education, employment, health and housing and to protect them from all forms of violence and to monitor their implementation, and report on the results achieved in improving the situation of these groups of women and girls in its next periodic report.
- Recognize the negative impact of its nationality law on Lebanese women married to foreigners and on the children of those women and, accordingly, revise its nationality law and remove its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2.
- Remove its reservation to article 16, paragraph 1 (c), (d), (f) and (g) of the Convention, and ensure equality for women in marriage and its dissolution by giving women equal rights to property accumulated during marriage, in light of article 16 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Utilize fully, in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Integrate a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Widely disseminate in Lebanon the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and

human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard.

- Convene a public forum involving all State actors as well as the civil society to discuss the presentation of the report and the content of the concluding comments.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its combined fourth and fifth periodic report before 16 May 2014.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, a number of shadow reports have been submitted regarding the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in Lebanon. The third official shadow report was released in 2007 by the Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues, supported by the UNICEF-Beirut office, in coordination with other 15 local women's associations.

The report noted the following critical failures of the Lebanese government:

- More than 10 years have passed since Lebanon ratified CEDAW with many reservations (paragraph 2 of Article 9 on nationality, paragraphs (c, d, e, g) of Article 16 on the Civil Status Law, paragraph 1 of Article 29 on conflict resolution); however, no amendment of these reservations were made.
- More than 10 years have passed since the establishment of the National Commission for Lebanese Women, which is a mechanism that is directly related to the office of the prime minister. The commission did not submit any proposals to lift the reservations of the articles that Lebanon had remarks on.
- A parliamentary commission for women was established. However, until now, the forms of its actions and scope of work have not been determined. It did not forward any suggestions to lift off the reservations made by the government on the document.
- Even though the government allocated in its ministerial statement a paragraph relevant to women and the government's intention to implement the relevant conventions and the declarations, and even though the Human Rights parliamentary commission started to draft a plan to enhance human rights, which the women advancement plan is part of, the government did not submit any strategy to eradicate violence against women. This is manifested in the absence of any programs by the committee for updating the laws, which has been working since Lebanon entered the phase of peace. It does not have any programs to set laws to curb violence against women or look after victims of violence.
- The government or the relevant governmental bodies do not have any programs to eliminate discrimination in the various economic and media fields.
- The government did not submit any programs to involve the civil society in the relevant decisions.
- The Lebanese government has to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their families.
- There are no laws that protect a female refugee and female migrant domestic workers from human trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- There government has no national strategy to enhance women.
- The national plan to promote women is the first step towards women's progress in Lebanon.

This shadow report made the following recommendations to improve the status of women in Lebanon:

- Integrate the concept of gender, i.e. taking into account the issues of both genders in all policies and sectors and in all sectors, including measures of training, capacity building, establishment of special units inside ministries and administrations to detect and monitor the implementation of this concept.
- Give ultimate priority to endorse a comprehensive methodology to confront violence against women and girls and integrate this methodology in all the economic, social and cultural policies.
- Draft new laws to protect women are subject to violence and punish those exercising violence against women.
- Create laws that protect female refugees and migrant workers from trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Implement internal measures, including positive distinguishing (quota) in order to improve and enhance women's participation in decision-making, particularly in electing committees.
- Adopt legislative measures to promote awareness towards the necessity to amend stereotypical laws and traditional standards on the roles and the responsibilities of each of men and women in the family and at work. The profound study on "violence against women", issued by the secretary-general, stressed that lack of equality is a reason behind violence. Stereotypical roles in society constitute a dangerous obstacle that prevent women from enjoying human rights and hinder the complete implementation of the convention.
- Build equilibriums on the basis of gender in interest men and women.
- Lift the reservations off paragraph 2 of Article 9, relevant to nationality and paragraphs (c, d, f, g) of Article 16 which is relevant to personal status, because these reservations contradict the essence of the convention.
- Promulgate a unified law for personal status that could be applicable on all women, regardless of their religions. It is high time that the government adopts the necessary measures in order to unify religious courts and render them affiliated with the Justice Ministry.
- Implement the preferential treatment or the quota to expedite women's integration in different sectors and facilitate her accession to the voting bodies.
- Change the paragraph on women in the ministerial statement and the advancement plan endorsed by the Human Rights parliamentary committee into procedures and legislations.
- Form lobbying groups and establish alliances in order to promote women's issues .
- Raise the awareness of women and guide them to their rights.
- Build a public opinion in order to lift the reservations off CEDAW

In 2008, a shadow report was submitted by a group under the umbrella association Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon. This report focused on the discrimination faced by refugee women in Lebanon and the failure of the law to protect refugees' rights.

Another shadow report was submitted by HELEM: Lebanese Protection for Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals and Transgenders in January 2008. This report focused on violence against women on the basis of sexual orientation, and recommends repeal of article 534 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes sexual acts deemed "contradictory to nature", as well as the introduction of non-biased sexuality education in schools.

Recent Updates:

Many women's organizations in Lebanon work to improve the rights of women. Among them are the Lebanese Association for Combating Violence Against Women, the Committee for the Political Rights of Women, the Lebanese Women's Council, the Lebanese Association of Women Lawyers, and the Council for Lebanese Women's Organizations. Over the past two decades, these women's NGOs have played a large role in enforcing CEDAW in Lebanon through awareness-raising programs and shadow reporting.

Although women in Lebanon have taken an active role in education and economy, they face significant discrimination in the political sphere. The Lebanese government created a National Authority on Women's Issues, which works to improve the status of women. The Authority's National Action Plan for Women and National Committee for Women's Affairs work to eliminate discrimination against women in the fields of work and education, by developing micro-credit and teaching women about their rights. Although women are present in the workforce, comprising approximately 29%, they have few opportunities to rise to senior levels.

Lebanon's common civil code governs many areas of women's personal status, including the right to own a business and the right to equal testimony. However, religion also plays a role in determining women's rights. Officially, Lebanon recognizes 19 groups that are each accorded their own, distinct religious law. Many women's groups and the CEDAW Committee have requested that Lebanon reforms to develop a single codified personal status law, which would bring all marriages and subsequent rights under a common law. The Parliament has resisted these efforts and refused to implement such a unified code.

On March 11, 2009, the Daily Star reported on a series of events organized by women's activists in honor of International Women's Day. In addition to specific concerns over poor labor rights for migrant workers, the two sit-ins highlighted problems such as domestic violence, sexual and psychological abuse and pay inequality. The sit-ins were followed by a march organized by the Feminist Collective.

Feminist Collective noted that complaints among men and women were different based on their geographic location. For instance, in Hamra, both men and women reported frustration towards political and legislative discrimination, specifically in the areas of nationality, divorce and domestic abuse. However, in the Shiah district, women expressed gender oppression in the forms of domestic and economic problems. Many also claimed abuse and lack of household authority in their homes. Following their activities, many women's activists said the outcomes of their efforts came as little surprise given that Lebanon is a deeply partitioned country, full with varied opinions and experiences on the part of its citizens.

LIBYA

Ratification:

Libya ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on May 16, 1989.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Libya made reservations to CEDAW articles 2 and 16 as described in detail below:

- Article 2 of the Convention shall be implemented with due regard for the peremptory norms of the Islamic *Shariah* relating to determination of the inheritance portions of the estate of a deceased person, whether female or male.
- The implementation of paragraph 16 (c) and (d) of the Convention shall be without prejudice to any of the rights guaranteed to women by the Islamic *Shariah*.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Libya has submitted three official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). The first report was released in February 1991, the second report in December 1998, and the combined third and fourth periodic reports in December 2008.

In February 2009, the Committee considered Libya’s second periodic report and the combined third and fourth periodic reports. Following this sessions, the Committee released comments regarding Libya’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. While expressing its appreciation to the State party for its second periodic report and its third to fifth periodic reports, the Committee regretted that they do not follow its guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports or provide sex-disaggregated data on all areas covered by the Convention. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to the State party for its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group, but regrets that they do not provide specific information in response to the questions posed. The Committee commended the State party for their high-level delegation.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Libya’s report in 2008 as follows:

- Accession in 2004 to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Progress made by the State party towards the achievement of equality between women and men in the areas of education, health and social security. In this respect, the Committee particularly welcomes the approval by the General People’s Congress, in March 1997, of the Charter on the Rights and Duties of Women in the Libyan Arab Society.
- The Law No. 10 of 1984 regulating marriage and divorce was amended by Law No. 9 of 1993 to prohibit polygamy without the written consent of the first wife and authorization from the court, which is a step towards the complete abolition of polygamy. The Committee further notes that article 37 of the Law revokes all rulings based on the principle of *nushuz* (recalcitrance), which shall be considered null and void.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Libya's report in 2008 as follows:

- While reaffirming that the Government has the primary responsibility and is particularly accountable for the full implementation of the State party's obligations under the Convention, note that the Convention is binding on all branches of Government, and the State party should encourage its General People's Congress, in line with its procedures, where appropriate, to take the necessary steps with regard to the implementation of these concluding observations and the Government's next reporting process under the Convention.
- Recalling the acknowledgement by the Libyan delegation of the predominance of the Convention over national law, take urgent steps to incorporate into domestic legislation a prohibition of discrimination against women that encompasses both direct and indirect discrimination, in line with article 1 of the Convention, as well as sanctions where appropriate in line with article 2, paragraph (b), of the Convention.
- Educational programs on the Convention, including its Optional Protocol and its jurisprudence, and programs on women's rights should be introduced for all legal professionals, including judges, lawyers, prosecutors and law enforcement personnel, as well as the public at large. Take special measures, including comprehensive legal literacy programs, to enhance women's awareness of their rights so that they may be able to exercise them. Report on progress made in this regard in the next periodic report, including cases where the provisions of the Convention were invoked in or applied by courts.
- Take all necessary steps, including the initiation of a public debate involving all sectors of society, for the withdrawal of all of its reservations to the Convention, so as to ensure that women in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya benefit fully from all the provisions enshrined in the Convention.
- Put in place an institutional mechanism that recognizes the specificity of discrimination against women and is exclusively responsible to promote de jure and de facto equality and to monitor the practical realization of the principle of substantive equality of women and men, with a view to promoting women's human rights and gender equality at all levels. Endow at the highest political level such a mechanism with the necessary authority and human and financial resources to promote effectively the implementation of the Convention and the enjoyment by women of their human rights across all fields by coordinating and monitoring gender mainstreaming in all areas, thus ensuring women's enjoyment of their human rights across all fields.
- Establish gender focal points in different Government bodies, provide them with adequate gender training and link them with the national machinery. Furthermore, seize the occasion of the launch, on 25 July 2009, of the strategy for women in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for the period 2009-2019, which was referred to by the delegation, to develop programs and action plans based on the present concluding observations.
- Accelerate the process of amendment of Law No. 18 of 1980 to make it consistent with article 9 of the Convention, and intensify its efforts to amend its legislation governing child custody expeditiously, in order to ensure that women have the same right as men to travel with their children abroad. Introduce legislative reforms to provide women with equal rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance, and end the practice of polygamy in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 21, on equality in marriage and family relations.
- Enact specific legislation for the adoption of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 in order to accelerate the realization of women's de facto equality with men in areas where women are underrepresented or in disadvantaged

situations, and take measures to raise public awareness about the importance of temporary special measures in accelerating the process of achievement of gender equality.

- Adopt a national strategic plan, in particular to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of women and men, thereby promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres. Awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project a positive image of women.
- Implement the recommendations identified in the study of the Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) and in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/HRC/4/34/Add.1) and monitor their impact. Furthermore, the Committee calls upon the State party to enact legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence.
- Adopt and implement a national strategy to combat violence against women, which would include the collection of sex-disaggregated data on all forms of violence and research into the extent of violence against women and girls, including that which occurs in the domestic sphere. Reconsider and amend the legal provisions which allow the confinement of women and girls in so-called rehabilitation facilities against their will.
- Furthermore, discourage the practice whereby victims of rape are forced to marry the perpetrator and to ensure that in all cases perpetrators are duly prosecuted and punished, and victims rehabilitated. Training and awareness-raising programs should be offered to judicial personnel, law enforcement officials, members of the legal and health professions and the general public, taking into account its general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. The Committee encourages the State party to make use of the multi-year campaign launched in 2008 to eliminate violence against women. The Committee also calls upon the State Party to consider repealing Law No. 70 (1973).
- Implement the provisions of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Consider ratifying the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and provide detailed information on the situation of migrant women in its next periodic report.
- Take measures to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive strategy, and increase its efforts in relation to regional, international and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin and transit so as to address more effectively the causes of trafficking and improve its prevention through information exchange. Collect and analyze data from national police and international sources, prosecute and punish traffickers, and ensure protection of the rights of trafficked women and girls.
- Take measures to ensure that trafficked women and girls receive adequate support and protection to support them in testifying against their traffickers, and analyze the causes and extent of trafficking in women and girls from its perspective as a country of transit.
- Take all appropriate measures to suppress the exploitation of prostitution of women, including discouraging male demand by ensuring the effective prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitution, and provide, in its next report, comprehensive information and data on exploitation of prostitution and trafficking in women and girls, as well as on the measures taken to prevent and combat such activities.
- Take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and in accordance with the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 23 and 25, to establish concrete goals to accelerate the increase of women's representation in the executive branch of Government, Parliament and the

diplomatic corps. It recommends that the application of such measures to increase women's political representation should include the establishment of benchmarks with timetables or increased quotas. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to undertake awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in decision-making at all levels.

- Include, in its next periodic report, data disaggregated by sex and urban and rural areas on all issues addressed by article 10 of the Convention, including women's and girls' access to vocational training, access to studies in the primary, secondary, technical and tertiary education, access to scholarships and other study grants and access to programs of continuing education, as well as statistics on student dropout rates.
- Provide data disaggregated by sex, in its next periodic report, on all issues addressed by article 11 of the Convention, including the right of women to equal remuneration for work of equal value and their right to social security and maternity leave. Also provide information on the situation of women in the informal sector, in both urban and rural areas.
- Include in its next periodic report information, including statistics disaggregated by sex, with respect to all matters covered by article 12 of the Convention, including family planning and appropriate services in connection with pregnancy and the post-natal period, in both urban and rural areas.
- Take steps to eliminate the practice of male guardianship over women both de jure and de facto, including through the design and implementation of awareness-raising campaigns. It encourages the State party to engage in a social dialogue on the concept of male guardianship and how it affects the application of the Convention in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya with a view to eliminating this practice.
- Establish, within a clear time frame, an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Principles, whose competencies should include issues related to the equality of women and men.
- Cooperate more effectively and in a systematic manner with civil society, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, in the implementation of the Convention. The Committee further recommends that the State party consult with non-governmental organizations during all phases of the preparation of its next periodic report.
- Put in place a comprehensive system of data collection, including measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and progress towards women's de facto equality over time. Seek regional and international assistance, as necessary, for the development of such data collection and analysis efforts.
- Include in its next report statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex and by rural and urban areas, indicating the impact of measures taken and the results achieved in order to illustrate more comprehensively the situation of women in all areas of the Convention, in particular in the fields of education, health and employment. Give special attention to the collection of data in respect of the most vulnerable groups of women, including rural and migrant women.
- Utilize fully, in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report. Millennium Development Goals
- The Committee emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development

Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

- Ratify the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Disseminate widely in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including Government officials, politicians, members of the General People's Congress and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the measures that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in this regard.
- Continue to strengthen the dissemination, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, on the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Provide, within two years, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 20 and 38 above, and consider seeking technical cooperation and assistance, including advisory services, if necessary and when appropriate for implementation of the above recommendations.
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports in 2014.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in Libya. This fact should come as no surprise, given that no women's rights groups independent of the state are legally entitled to exist.

Recent Updates:

Despite the fact that Libyan law guarantees men and women equality under the law, women face wide discrimination in a variety of sectors. Libya's reservations to CEDAW significantly affect women's property rights, access to divorce, rights within marriage and parental rights.

The most common form of violence against women is domestic violence, although its actual occurrence is not known because of underreporting. Incidents are kept private within the family and there are no laws beyond the general criminal code that protect the victim or penalize the perpetrator (most often the husband). The concept of marital rape is not recognized by the law. Matters are not helped by the fact that no women's rights groups independent of the state are allowed to exist.

However, it is important to take into account the differences across generational lines when considering the advancement of women. Libyan women born before the 1969 revolution have a tendency to remain at home as a result of a lack of education, while women under the age of 35 are much more likely to have received a public education and to work in the public sphere. Literacy among women hovers between 29% and 30%, and women comprise approximately 22% of the work force.

The government created the Department of Women's Affairs, which is overseen by the Assistant Secretary of the General People's Committee. The Department is charge with collecting data and working to integrate women into all sectors of public life. A second government initiative is the General Union of Women's Associations, which acts as a network of NGOs that assist women with employment needs.

In 2006, Human Rights Watch released a 60-page report accusing the government of Libya of detaining, for an indefinite period, girls and women suspected of violating moral rules. These girls were detained in "Social Rehabilitation Centers", which are centers that take care of women and girls vulnerable to moral deviance, or who are rejected by their families. The authorities usually violate the human and legal rights of those detainees. The Human Rights Watch report and others showed that many detainees did not commit any crime, or have completed their sentence but would not be released unless a male relative pledges to be a guardian of the detainee or unless she agrees to get married.

MAURITANIA

Ratification:

Mauritania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on May 10, 2001.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Mauritania made the following reservation as described below:

- Having seen and examined the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979, have approved and do approve it in each and every one of its parts which are not contrary to Islamic Sharia and are in accordance with our Constitution.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Mauritania has submitted one official periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). Their first initial report was submitted in May 2005.

In response to Mauritania’s first periodic report, the Committee released comments in June 2007 regarding Mauritania’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Mauritania for submitted its initial report, which in general followed the Committee’s guidelines for the preparation of reports, was very informative and provided a candid picture of the situation of women in Mauritania, but which was overdue. The Committee also noted its appreciation for the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group and for the oral presentation and responses to the questions posed by the Committee. The Committee commended Mauritania for the frank and constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Mauritania’s report in 2005 as follows:

- Expressed commitment and political will to eliminate discrimination against women and adopt measures to ensure the implementation of the Convention.
- A stated intention of Mauritania to withdraw its general reservation made upon ratification of the Convention.
- Introduction of a 20 percent quota for women on lists of candidates for municipal and parliamentary elections which, together with financial incentives for political parties, resulted in the election of 33 percent women at the municipal level and 17.9 and 17.0 per cent women, respectively, to the Senate and the National Assembly.
- Adoption of the Personal Status Code.
- Making basic education compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 14.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Mauritania’s report in 2005 as follows:

- Complete as soon as possible the process of withdrawal of its general reservation, which is contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention.
- Intensify its efforts to raise awareness about the Convention among the general public and, especially, among public officials, the judiciary and the legal profession.

- Ensure that the Convention becomes an integral part of the legal education and training of judicial officers, including judges, lawyers and prosecutors, so that a legal culture supportive of women's equality with men and non-discrimination on the basis of sex will be firmly established in the country.
- Incorporate in its Constitution or in other appropriate legislation a definition of discrimination against women, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination, in line with article 1 of the Convention, and furthermore ensure that the understanding of indirect discrimination encompasses sex-based discrimination as well as other, multiple forms of discrimination that women may face.
- Remove impediments women may face in gaining access to justice, and to ensure that the judiciary is familiar with the Convention and the State party's obligations.
- Provide legal aid services, implement legal literacy programs and disseminate knowledge of ways to utilize available legal remedies against discrimination, as well as to monitor the results of such efforts.
- Seek assistance from the international community in order to implement measures that in practice will strengthen women's access to justice.
- Strengthen its national machinery for the advancement of women by clearly defining the mandates and responsibilities and the means for cooperation between the different mechanisms with responsibility for gender equality, and by allocating sufficient human and budgetary resources so as to ensure that they can fully and adequately perform all their functions, including providing capacity for better and more effective coordination among the various mechanisms on gender equality and for enhanced cooperation with civil society.
- Use temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, as part of a necessary strategy towards the accelerated achievement of substantive equality for women, especially in the judiciary and the civil service, including the foreign service, and include information on the use of such temporary special measures, in relation to the various provisions of the Convention, and the impact of such measures, in its next periodic report.
- Per the commitment made by the candidates to the Presidency, in the charter for the promotion of women, establish a minimum quota of 20 percent of women in decision-making posts in the public administration.
- View culture as a dynamic dimension of the country's life and social fabric, subject to many influences over time and therefore to change.
- Be more proactive and put into place without delay a comprehensive strategy, including clear goals and timetables, to modify or eliminate negative cultural practices and stereotypes that are harmful to and discriminate against women and promote women's full enjoyment of their human rights, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention.
- Undertake such efforts in collaboration with civil society organizations, women's groups and community and religious leaders, and assess regularly progress made towards the achievement of established goals and report thereon in its next periodic report.
- Assess the status of implementation of its strategy for the advancement of women and for gender mainstreaming, and utilize fully the momentum and partnerships generated during the process of the preparation of its report under article 18 of the Convention and the Committee's present concluding comments to review the current strategy and further elaborate a comprehensive operational plan for the promotion of gender equality and advancement of women, encompassing all levels and sectors of Government. Such a strategy should cover legal, policy and program measures and contain clear goals,

benchmarks and timetables, as well as mechanisms for regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress in its implementation, including the development of indicators for assessing compliance with all the provisions of the Convention. Seek the technical support of United Nations entities in the collection of data and the training of the national team responsible for the elaboration and implementation of such a plan.

- Include adequate statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex and ethnicity, and information on women with disabilities, in its next report so as to provide a full picture of the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention, in regard to all women.
- Regularly conduct impact assessments of its legislative reforms, policies and programs to ensure that the measures taken lead to the desired goals, and that it inform the Committee about the results of these assessments in its next report.
- Raise awareness about the provision in the Code of Criminal Procedure that prohibits female genital mutilation for minors and to ensure its enforcement, including the prosecution and adequate punishment of offenders.
- Speedily adopt the draft law that will specifically address female genital mutilation, mentioned by the State party's representative during the constructive dialogue.
- Strengthen its awareness-raising and education efforts, targeted at both men and women, with the support of civil society and religious leaders, to eliminate the practice of female genital mutilation and its underlying cultural justifications, and devise programs for alternate sources of income for those who perform female genital mutilation as a means of livelihood.
- Address the health consequences of female genital mutilation and provide medical support to those affected by it, and in this context, seek technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization.
- Place the highest priority on implementing a comprehensive approach to address all forms of violence against women.
- Make full use of the Committee's general recommendation 19 in such efforts and of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women.
- Raise public awareness through media and education programs that all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence and forced feeding of girls, are unacceptable, and train the judiciary, law enforcement officials, legal professionals, social workers and health providers with respect to violence against women so as to ensure that the perpetrators of violence against women are effectively prosecuted and punished with the required seriousness and speed and that effective and gender sensitive support is provided to victims.
- Enhance victims' access to legal redress and establish support measures for victims of violence against women, including shelters and legal, medical and psychological support.
- Provide information in its next report on the laws, policies and programs in place to deal with all forms of violence against women and on the impact of such measures, as well as statistical data and trends concerning the prevalence of various forms of such violence.
- Accelerate its efforts aimed at the effective implementation and full enforcement of its legislation on the suppression of trafficking and on the prohibition of forced labor. Such efforts should, in particular, include the effective prosecution and punishment of traffickers.
- Increase the provision of assistance and support to women victims, as well as prevention efforts, by addressing the root causes of trafficking and by improving the economic situation of women so as to eliminate their vulnerability to exploitation and traffickers. Place priority on enhancing practical measures for the protection of girls employed as domestic servants from all forms of exploitation and abuse and to ensure that they can exercise their right to education.

- Take steps to completely eliminate remnants of slavery.
- Amend the Mauritanian Nationality Code so as to bring it in conformity with article 9 of the Convention.
- Raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and as a basis for the empowerment of women, and take steps to overcome traditional attitudes that perpetuate discrimination and lack of compliance with the provisions of article 10 of the Convention.
- Implement measures to ensure equal access for girls and women to all levels of education and to ensure the retention of girls in school, including through temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, and make efforts to improve the literacy level of girls and women through the adoption of comprehensive programs of formal and non-formal education, and through adult education and training.
- Implement specific measures to enable girls to complete their schooling after childbirth and to combat early and forced marriage as obstacles to their education, and strengthen collaboration with civil society and to seek enhanced support from the international community and donor organizations to accelerate compliance with article 10 of the Convention.
- Introduce without delay specific measures, including an enforcement mechanism, to ensure equal rights for women in the area of employment and work and their full and equal participation in the labor market. This should include a guarantee of equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value. The Committee also calls upon the State party to enact legislation prohibiting sexual harassment.
- Undertake all necessary measures to improve women's access to health care and to health-related services and information, including for women in rural areas.
- Improve the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning services and obstetric care, and adopt programs and policies to increase knowledge of and access to affordable contraceptive methods, so that women and men can make informed choices about the number and spacing of children.
- Implement a comprehensive maternal and infant mortality reduction program, with time bound targets, including measures to increase access to obstetric services.
- Address teenage pregnancies with a view to preventing vesicovaginal fistula and to provide medical support to those affected by it.
- Provide appropriate sex education and youth-friendly reproductive health services, inter alia, to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and address drug and substance abuse among young people, with a specific focus on young women.
- Pay special attention to the needs of rural women and of those belonging to various ethnic groups, and ensure that rural women have access to health care, education, justice, clean water, electricity, land and income-generating projects.
- Carefully monitor the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction of Mauritania so as to ensure that the gender perspectives contained in the strategy are explicitly addressed in the implementation process.
- Collect data on the situation of rural women and include such data and analysis in its next periodic report, and provide a clear picture of the situation of women belonging to various ethnic groups in that report.
- Accelerate its reform of marriage and family law and to eliminate all discriminatory provisions so that women enjoy the same legal rights and obligations, in accordance with articles 15 and 16 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 21.

- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Utilize fully in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Recognize that a full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- Widely disseminate in Mauritania the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, and submit its second periodic report, which was due in June 2006, and its third periodic report, which is due in June 2010, in a combined report in 2010.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, two shadow reports have been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in Mauritania. Both reports were prepared and submitted to the Committee in March 2007.

One report was written under the coordination of the NGO National Forum for the Promotion of Women's and Children's Rights of Mauritania, with the technical and financial assistance of WILDAF-Benin, UNIFEM and the collaboration of a group of over 20 NGOs working on a project on the evaluation of a mechanism of following and evaluating the implementation of CEDAW.

The other report was prepared by the Partners Network for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Mauritania in March 2007. This alternative report, created by the collaboration of over ten women's organizations, described at-length the discrimination that women in Mauritania face on a daily basis, and made the following recommendations to the government:

- Creation of a structure at the level of Prime Minister Office or of Presidency for the protection of minor girls against the premature marriage; any marriage before the legal age will have to get a special authorization.
- Intensification of SECF structures in qualified and specialized staff (integration of social workers for an action of nearness with authority to carry the cases before courts).
- To assure the independence of justice of any form of pressure as required in a law State.

- To contribute to strengthen the capacities of NGOs in promotion and in protection of human rights of women and girls.
- To make a study on the extent of the fatal practices and the violence against women; and adopt an action plan to eliminate them.
- To take administrative measures in health centers to handle the cases of victims of violence as a matter of urgency priority.
- To adopt a gender budget for a better handling of problems connected to this question.

Recent Updates:

Women in Mauritania face discrimination despite the fact that the government has made efforts to improve women's status. In August 2006, the government issued a legal order facilitating women's access in the public sphere, stipulating that 20% of parliamentary and municipal seats be allocated to women. In addition, the government offered financial incentives to political parties with a larger number of female candidates. Currently, women occupy 20% of the seats in the National Assembly and 1,120 women were elected to municipal councils in 2006.

Although Mauritania has ratified CEDAW, national law continues to discriminate against women in various areas, including access to property, marriage rights, divorce and parental rights. The National Human Rights Committee in Mauritania as well as women's NGOs such as *The Rally for Defending Women's Rights* and *Hope Organization* work to fight discrimination against women.

On March 3, 2008, Al-Hayat Daily reported that President Sheikh Abdullah spoke with leaders of the *Mauritanian Network for Ministers and Parliamentarian Women*. In this meeting, the President consented to appoint more women to high-level state positions. It was noted that he had appointed women ambassadors and governors for the first time in Mauritania's history.

On May 13, 2008, the UN News Service reported on the situation of rape victims in Mauritania. The government claims that it is trying to increase rape case prosecution, but outdated legal texts and poorly trained judges prove a big challenge. In particular, the penal code does not give a precise definition of sexual violence, making it all the more difficult to prove. Judge's personal opinions often affect legal decisions, and sexual abuses are often labeled as voluntary sexual relations.

The number of reported rapes in the capital Nouakchott has tripled this year, according to UNICEF, and close to none of the perpetrators received any legal punishment. NGOs are the only entities providing support to victims, with organizations like AMSME assisting victims with reporting assaults to police and helping them with the administration procedures necessary for convictions. In addition, these NGOs also provide psychological counseling for rape victims.

On February 9, 2009, Al-Sharq reported that activists from women's leaderships called for assisting Mauritania in getting rid of household slavery and exploitation of slaves. Although the government prohibited slavery first in 1984, and again with a prohibition law in 2006, the law has not been practically implemented and continues to be ignored by traditionalists. Aminato Bint Mukhtar, director of the *Women Who Support Families* declared that the authorities are doing nothing to end the suffering of many women subjected to various forms of exploitation and discrimination.

MOROCCO

Ratification:

Morocco ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW") on June 21, 1993.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Morocco made reservations to the following CEDAW articles: 2, 9:2, 15:4, 16, and 29 as described in detail below:

- *With regard to article 2:* The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco express its readiness to apply the provisions of this article provided that:
 - They are without prejudice to the constitutional requirement that regulate the rules of succession to the throne of the Kingdom of Morocco;
 - They do not conflict with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah. It should be noted that certain of the provisions contained in the Moroccan Code of Personal Status according women rights that differ from the rights conferred on men may not be infringed upon or abrogated because they derive primarily from the Islamic Shariah, which strives, among its other objectives, to strike a balance between the spouses in order to preserve the coherence of family life.
- *With regard to article 15, paragraph 4:* The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco declares that it can only be bound by the provisions of this paragraph, in particular those relating to the right of women to choose their residence and domicile, to the extent that they are not incompatible with articles 34 and 36 of the Moroccan Code of Personal Status.
- *With regard to article 9, paragraph 2:* The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco makes a reservation with regard to this article in view of the fact that the Law of Moroccan Nationality permits a child to bear the nationality of its mother only in the cases where it is born to an unknown father, regardless of place of birth, or to a stateless father, when born in Morocco, and it does so in order to guarantee to each child its right to a nationality. Further, a child born in Morocco of a Moroccan mother and a foreign father may acquire the nationality of its mother by declaring, within two years of reaching the age of majority, its desire to acquire that nationality, provided that, on making such declaration, its customary and regular residence is in Morocco.
- *With regard to article 16:* The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco makes a reservation with regard to the provisions of this article, particularly those relating to the equality of men and women, in respect of rights and responsibilities on entry into and at dissolution of marriage. Equality of this kind is considered incompatible with the Islamic Shariah, which guarantees to each of the spouses rights and responsibilities within a framework of equilibrium and complementary in order to preserve the sacred bond of matrimony.
 - The provisions of the Islamic Shariah oblige the husband to provide a nuptial gift upon marriage and to support his family, while the wife is not required by law to support the family.

- Further, at dissolution of marriage, the husband is obliged to pay maintenance. In contrast, the wife enjoys complete freedom of disposition of her property during the marriage and upon its dissolution without supervision by the husband, the husband having no jurisdiction over his wife's property.
- For these reasons, the Islamic Shariah confers the right of divorce on a woman only by decision of a Shariah judge.
- *With regard to article 29:*
 - The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco does not consider itself bound by the first paragraph of this article, which provides that 'Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration.
 - The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco is of the view that any dispute of this kind can only be referred to arbitration by agreement of all the parties to the dispute.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Morocco has submitted official reports to the CEDAW Committee ("Committee") on three occasions. The first periodic report was released in September 1994, the second report in February 2000, and the most recent combined third and fourth periodic report in August 2006.

In response to Morocco's most recent periodic report, the Committee released comments in June 2007 regarding Morocco's progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee commended Morocco's timely submission, but regretted that the report does not provide clear and precise information on the implementation of each recommendation made in the previous concluding observations of the committee. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Morocco for its high-level delegation and the constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Morocco's report in 2006 as follows:

- The work of the Royal Commission on the Personal Status Code and the important legal reforms undertaken in the field of human rights and especially to eliminate existing discrimination against women, such as the adoption of the Family Code, the Nationality Law, the Law on Civil Registration, the Labor Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure as well as the amendments to the Penal Code.
- The ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, published in Official Gazette in February 2004, as well as the publication of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in March 2004, since these international instruments also cover the human rights of women and the girl-child.
- The reorganization of the *Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme*, which is in line with the Paris Principles, the establishment of the *Divan Al Madhanlim*, as an Ombudsman to deal with complaints vis-à-vis the public administration as well as the establishment of the *Instance Equité et Réconciliation*, with a view to examining the serious human rights violations of the past, since these instruments and bodies also contribute to the protection of the human rights of women.
- The various plans, programs and other measures aiming at implementing human rights at the domestic level, especially the measures adopted in the field of women's rights, such as national strategies for gender equity and equality, to eliminate violence against women, for universal basic education, and on migration.

- Morocco's signature of a cooperation agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2007 aiming at implementing a national refugee strategy.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Morocco's report in 2006 as follows:

- Incorporate the principle of equality between women and men in its Constitution, or in other appropriate law, in line with article 2 (a) of the Convention, and reflect fully the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention in its national legislation. Enact and implement a comprehensive law on gender equality that is binding on both public and private sectors and make women aware of their rights under such legislation, and establish procedures for filing complaints on discrimination against women, provide adequate sanctions for such acts of discrimination and ensure that effective remedies are available to women whose rights have been violated.
- Establish the status of international conventions within its domestic legal framework, ensuring the precedence of international instruments, including the Convention, over national legislation, and ensure conformity of this legislation with these instruments, and disseminate the Convention and its general recommendations widely among all stakeholders, including government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.
- Notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as depositary of the Convention, the withdrawal of those reservations and declarations as soon as possible and continue to take the necessary steps for the withdrawal of all its remaining declarations and reservations to articles 2 and 16 to the Convention which, in the opinion of the Committee, go against the object and purpose of the Convention, in order for Moroccan women to benefit from all the Conventions' provisions.
- Intensify awareness-raising campaigns and training on the newly adopted legislation, as well as on the provisions of the Convention, for prosecutors, lawyers and judges, so as to firmly establish a legal culture supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination in the State party, and enhance women's awareness of their rights through sustained legal literacy programs and legal assistance.
- Continue its reforms in consultation with civil society, especially women's organizations, and provide, in its next periodic report, detailed information on legal remedies available in cases of discrimination, and on complaints on cases related to discrimination against women brought before the Ombudsman and the courts and their outcome.
- Address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including the hidden cultural patterns and norms that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives, and increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programs to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men at all levels of society with a view to changing stereotypical attitudes and negative cultural norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family and society, in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention.
- Media should be encouraged to project positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in society.
- Enact as soon as possible, in accordance with its general recommendation 19, legislation on violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, to ensure that all violence against women constitutes a criminal offence, that women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of protection, including shelters, and redress and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished adequately.
- Amend, without delay, the Penal Code to ensure that marital rape is criminalized and criminal proceedings against rapists are not terminated when they marry their victims,

and conduct studies on the causes and extent of violence against women and girls, including sexual and domestic violence.

- Collect disaggregated data on all forms of violence against women and provide information in its next report on the laws and policies in place dealing with such violence against women and the impact of the measures taken, and take steps towards the protection of domestic workers and to ensure that restrictions on child labor are enforced, in order to protect the girls-child from multiple forms of discrimination.
- Adopt effective measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, and investigate thoroughly such cases, in accordance with article 6 of the Convention and general recommendation 19, and increase international cooperation efforts to prevent trafficking, to prosecute and punish traffickers in accordance with the gravity of their crime, and ensure the protection of the human rights of women and girls who are victims of exploitation and trafficking, including by taking measures for their rehabilitation and social integration.
- Ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and provide to the Committee, in its next periodic report, statistical data related to trafficking and exploitation.
- Take effective and sustained legal measures to increase the political representation of women at all levels, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, rather than depending on *ad-hoc* moral commitments from political parties.
- In order to accelerate the representation of women, Morocco should establish legal quotas for women for the 2009 municipal elections and adopt temporary special measures to increase women's representation in decision-making positions in all spheres, and undertake awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole, including in the public and private sectors.
- Implement measures to ensure access to girls and women to all levels of education. Such measures could include canteens, boarding facilities, proper sanitation, water and electricity, which have a direct impact on the realization of their right to education, especially in rural areas.
- Adopt temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, to ensure the retention of girls in school, and continue to strengthen its efforts to improve the literacy level of girls and women through the adoption of comprehensive programs of formal and non-formal education, adult education and training and increase training and employment of teachers, the development of gender-sensitive educational materials and the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved towards time-bound targets.
- Special attention should be given to girls who are domestic workers, in order to ensure that they are not employed below the age of 15, allowing them to continue their education, at least until that age.
- Raise general awareness of the importance of education as a human right and as a basis for the empowerment of women, and to take steps to overcome traditional attitudes that perpetuate discrimination.
- Prioritize the realization of women *de facto* equality with men in the labour market, so as to achieve full compliance of article 11 of the Convention and strengthen labor inspection measures to ensure better implementation of the Labor Code, to take proactive measures to eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical and to narrow and close the wage gap between women and men.

- Speedily enact appropriate legislation to regulate the employment of domestic workers as well as to adopt a gender sensitive employment policy to regulate women's work in the informal sector and to enhance their access to the formal sector of employment.
- Increase women's access to primary health care services, including reproductive health care and means of family planning.
- In light of its general recommendation 24, Morocco should increase awareness campaigns on the importance of health care, including information on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as well as on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies through family planning and sex education.
- Take temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to ensure that rural women enjoy their political, social, economic and cultural rights without any discrimination, especially with regard to access to education and health care facilities, and ensure that they are fully integrated in the formulation and implementation of all sectoral policies and programs.
- Ensure the strict implementation of the provisions on the minimum age of marriage of the Family Code, and amend the Family Code in order only to authorize marriage of children under exceptional strict mandatory legal conditions.
- Amend its Family Code to prohibit polygamy, as it contravenes a woman's right to equality with men, and eliminate any other discrimination against women remaining in this Code.
- Ensure equality between women and men in marriage and upon its dissolution, by giving women equal rights in marriage and family relations, and amend without delay all remaining discriminatory provisions including provisions relating to divorce, custody and legal guardianship of children and inheritance.
- Enact legal provisions to ensure that, upon dissolution of marriage, women have equal rights to property acquired during marriage, in line with article 16 paragraph 1 (h) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 21, and bring those amendments in consultation with women's organizations.
- Amend without delay all discriminatory provisions affecting women's rights in the Nationality Code, in order to harmonize it fully with the Convention, and conduct this task in consultation with women's organizations.
- Take measures through its mainstreaming efforts, and the INDH, to address the specific vulnerability of women in poverty, including efforts to ensure women's representation in the participatory approaches taken in the management of poverty reduction programs, and utilize temporary special measures under article 4 paragraph 1, and general recommendation 25, to this effect.
- Continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR and adopt a national refugee legislation, in compliance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, and allow refugees and asylum-seekers to access public services, provide work permits for those refugees and asylum-seekers who are documented, and ensure their right to security, especially for women and children.
- Improve the collection and analysis of statistical data, and to include in its next report statistical data and analysis on the situation of women, disaggregated by age, rural and urban areas, ethnicity and region, including the Western Sahara, thus providing a clear picture of the situation of women in the State party, and indicate the impact of measures taken and the results achieved in the practical realization of women's substantive equality.
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and also invites the State party to accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

- Ensure the wide participation of all ministries and public bodies in the preparation of its next report, as well as to consult with non-governmental organizations during that phase, and involve Parliament in a discussion of the report before its submission to the Committee.
- Utilize fully in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State Party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Emphasize that a full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests that Morocco include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Disseminate widely the present concluding observations in order to make the people of Morocco, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and *de facto* equality for women and the future steps required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol; the general recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its next periodic report to be submitted under article 18 of the Convention, and submit its fifth periodic report, which is due in July 2010, and its sixth periodic report, which is due in July 2014, in a combined report in 2014.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in Morocco. This comprehensive report was prepared by the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women in coordination with 25 women's organizations in November 2007 to parallel the combined third and fourth official periodic report prepared by the government.

The significant report made recommendations to the Moroccan government on the following areas in which women face discrimination: public policy; political participation; nationality; education; employment; reproductive health; the Labor Code; the Penal Code; the Family Code; trafficking; prostitution; and, violence against women.

Recent Updates:

On December 19, 2008, while celebrating the 60th anniversary of the International Human Rights Declaration, King Mohammed VI announced that Morocco would retract its reservation towards certain articles of CEDAW. In addition, the King noted that the reforms adopted by the revised version of the Moudawana were implemented to do justice for women and to consolidate women's equality to men. However, the Secretary General of the United Nations has yet to receive any official document to that effect.

At this time, the Supreme Council of Muslim Scholars in Morocco issued a statement confirming that the removal of these CEDAW reservations was not in contradiction to Islamic Sharia. This announcement follows after several reforms made by the King to the Family Law including, but not limited to the following: women are now allowed to be their own guardians with regards to marriage, education and employment; the legal age for marriage is now 18; polygamy is generally prohibitive and is under many new restrictions; women now have equal rights to divorce their husbands; verbal repudiation is no longer considered a legally binding form of divorce; custody of children following divorce is now primarily in favor of the mother; and finally, grandchildren are now included in the inheritance of their maternal grandparents. Also, in July 2005, the King announced that Moroccan women could transmit their nationality to their children

Despite this announcement and the overall reforms that have occurred in Morocco over the past decade, Moroccan women still face wide discrimination in both the public and private spheres. Only 20% of pregnant women in rural areas receive pre-natal care and only 39% in rural areas use contraceptives. International assistance programs that provide health care for women often lack the coordination that is necessary to develop a comprehensive system.

On the education front, women are most often less educated than men. Female adult illiteracy is 64% and in rural areas, illiteracy may be as high as 90%. In the economic sector, women are actively participating despite the hurdles they may face. In 2003, it was estimated that women comprise approximately 35% of the workforce. The majority of women work in the fields of agriculture, fishing, crafts and services.

As of 2002, women play a significant role in Moroccan politics, holding 24 seats in the national legislature. The King has appointed three women to senior positions during his reign. Women's organizations play a major role in coordinating women's participation in politics, as well as in the overall improvement of the status of Moroccan women. In 1998, women's groups collaborated with the government to help write the National Action Plan for Women's Integration into Sustainable Development. Among the many women's organizations in Morocco, the two most influential include the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM) and the Union for Women's Action (UAF).

OMAN

Ratification:

Oman ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on February 7, 2006.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Oman made the following reservation as described below:

- All provisions of the Convention not in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic sharia and legislation in force in the Sultanate of Oman;
- Article 9, paragraph 2, which provides that States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children;
- Article 15, paragraph 4, which provides that States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile;
- Article 16, regarding the equality of men and women, and in particular subparagraphs (a), (c), and (f) (regarding adoption).
- The Sultanate is not bound by article 29, paragraph 1, regarding arbitration and the referral to the International Court of Justice of any dispute between two or more States which is not settled by negotiation.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Oman has yet to submit their first official report.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

No shadow report has been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in Oman.

Recent Updates:

Oman is often seen as one of the more progressive states in the Gulf region in terms of women’s rights. Women’s overall personal status is dictated by Islamic sharia. Omani women have the right to vote and run for office. During the October 2003 parliamentary elections, women had the opportunity to participate without restrictions. Although women’s participation increased significantly, none of the 13 first-time female candidates won. Despite laws providing equal pay for equal work and the fact that gender discrimination is prohibited in the workplace, women’s participation in the workforce remains low, hovering around 13% in 2000. In regards to schooling, the government has actively promoted female education, which has greatly reduced illiteracy in the past decade.

Despite this progression, women in Oman still face discrimination in a number of areas, particularly with regards to inheritance and freedom. Women are required to seek the permission of a husband, father or male family member in order to travel out of the country. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor and Vocational Trade is charged with women’s affairs on the national level. The Ministry funds the Oman Women’s Association (OWA) and other local women’s

organizations. OWA works to provide vocational training programs, lectures on health and primary school services.

QATAR

Ratification:

Qatar ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on April 26, 2009

Recent Updates:

On April 26, 2009, Qatar ratified CEDAW without any reservations to the Convention. This Convention is necessary for the promotion of the rights of women and girls throughout the world. Ratification would give the United States leverage and positive influence in the field of international women's rights. U.S. criticism of human rights abusers can be rejected because the U.S. has not ratified this fundamental human rights treaty. The time to ratify is now because the support is there! When Vice President Biden was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he was one of the leading proponents of the treaty. President Barack Obama has expressed his support for treaty ratification. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is even quoted as saying.

Sharia law provides the basis for Qatari family law, which governs women’s personal status. Since 1995, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani of Qatar has advocated for greater women’s participation in the public sphere. Despite traditional constraints, the status of women in Qatar has improved over the past two decades. In the 1999 elections, six women ran for seats on the Municipal Council, though none succeeded. In 2003, Qatar elected its first female official.

Despite the gains with women participating in government, the majority of citizens, including both males and females, feel that a woman’s place is in the private sphere. As a result, women comprise just 15% of the workforce. In addition, most workplaces (like schools) remain segregated by sex. Women also face discrimination in such areas as: testimony, freedom of movement, domestic violence, honor crimes, inheritance, child custody, and domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.

The Supreme Council for Women’s Affairs, a department of the government, is responsible for improving the status of women in Qatar. The Supreme Council established five organizations that deal with women and children issues: the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children, the Family Consulting Center, the Motherhood and Childhood Cultural Center, the Orphans Care Center, and the Qatar Society for Senior Citizens Care. There are no active independent women’s organizations in Qatar.

SAUDI ARABIA

Ratification:

Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on September 7, 2000.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Saudi Arabia made reservations as described in detail below:

- In case of contradiction between any term of the Convention and the norms of Islamic law, the Kingdom is not under obligation to observe the contradictory terms of the Convention.
- The Kingdom does not consider itself bound by paragraph 2 of article 9 of the Convention and paragraph 1 of article 29 of the Convention.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Saudi Arabia has submitted a combined initial and second periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). This official report was submitted in March 2007.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in April 2008 regarding Saudi Arabia’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed appreciation to Saudi Arabia for having ratified CEDAW and for sending a large and important delegation. Nevertheless, the Committee noted that Saudi Arabia’s report lacked references to the Committee’s general recommendations.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Saudi Arabia’s report in 2007 as follows:

- Its modern infrastructure and its high standard of basic social services, especially the provision of Government-funded health care and education services to many sectors of society.
- Establishment of institutional mechanisms for the advancement and the protection of women from violence, in particular the higher national committee specialized in women’s affairs and the 13 social protection committees established in 2004. The Committee also notes with satisfaction that Saudi Arabia is currently in the process of drafting new legislation on the implementation of women’s rights and that the State party plans to compile, in writing, the provisions of Sharia on personal status.
- Establishment by royal decree in 2004 of a human rights commission, which is tasked with the implementation of the human rights commitments of the State party, and a national society for human rights.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Saudi Arabia’s report in 2007 as follows:

- Submit the present concluding observations to all relevant ministries, to the Consultative Council (Shura), and to the Judiciary so as to ensure their full implementation.
- Consider the withdrawal of its general reservation to the Convention, particularly in light of the fact that the delegation assured that there is no contradiction in substance between the Convention and Islamic Sharia.

- Amend its legislation to confirm that international treaties have precedence over domestic laws and enact a comprehensive gender equality law and intensify its efforts to raise awareness about the Convention among the general public.
- Ensure that the Convention becomes an integral part of the legal education and training of judicial officers, including judges and magistrates, lawyers and prosecutors, particularly those working in the family courts, so that a legal culture supportive of women's equality with men and non-discrimination on the basis of sex is firmly established in the country. It also invites the State party to enhance women's awareness of their rights through, for example, legal literacy programs and legal assistance.
- Incorporate fully into the legislation the principle of equality between women and men, as well as a definition of discrimination on the basis of sex in line with article 1 of the Convention, and extending State responsibility to acts of discrimination by public and private actors, in accordance with article 2 of the Convention, and to take the appropriate steps in order to implement the principle of formal and substantive equality.
- Take immediate steps to end the practice of male guardianship over women, including by awareness-raising campaigns, and be proactive and to put into place without delay a comprehensive strategy, including clear goals and timetables, to modify or eliminate negative cultural practices and stereotypes that are harmful to and discriminate against women and to promote women's full enjoyment of their human rights, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention.
- Finalize its review of the ban of women from driving, and include in its next periodic report information on the concept of male guardianship and how it affects the application of the Convention in Saudi Arabia.
- Develop a national action plan with an effective strategy on gender equality, based on the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Beijing+5, with the involvement of all sectors of Government and in consultation with relevant non-governmental organizations, and provide information in its next report on the impact of, and results achieved in, its implementation of such a plan. Seek the technical support of United Nations entities in developing such a plan and also in the collection and analysis of data and training of the national team responsible for its elaboration and implementation.
- Ensure that the national machinery for the advancement of women has the necessary visibility and decision-making, as well as coordination, powers to enable it effectively to fulfill its mandate in promoting gender equality, and provide in its next report a clearer and more detailed picture of the national machinery, both the central coordinating body and the sectorial units to be created, including its authority, functions, powers and resources. Taking into account that the Human Rights Commission has been tasked with the implementation of the Convention and other human rights treaties, it also recommends that the Commission be comprised of an equal number of female and male staff and board members as well as providing full and easy access to women to claim their rights.
- Give high priority to comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women and girls, recognizing that violence is a form of discrimination against women and constitutes a violation of their human rights under the Convention.
- Enact, as soon as possible, legislation on violence against women, including a comprehensive law on domestic violence, to ensure that violence against women is a criminal offense, that women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.
- Implement educational and awareness-raising measures aimed at law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health-care providers, social workers, community leaders and the

general public, to ensure that they understand that all forms of violence against women, including violence in the home, are unacceptable, and make full use of the Committee's general recommendation 19 in such efforts and of the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) and his recently launched worldwide multi-year campaign to eliminate it.

- Provide information in its next report on the laws, policies and programs in place to deal with all forms of violence against women, in particular the approach of the 13 social protection committees, and on the impact of such measures, as well as statistical data and trends concerning the prevalence of various forms of violence.
- Provide full details on the situation of non-Saudi women, in particular domestic workers, in its next report and on their enjoyment of the rights established by the Convention, and grant in law and practice female domestic migrant workers, including their children, the rights provided for in the Convention and to implement measures aimed at informing them about these rights. Adopt a labor law concerning domestic workers as a priority.
- Implement fully article 6 of the Convention, including by speedily enacting specific and comprehensive national legislation on the phenomenon of trafficking that ensures that victims are adequately protected and assisted, and increase prevention efforts, by addressing the root causes of trafficking through bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation with the countries of origin so as to eliminate the vulnerability of women and girls to being trafficked into Saudi Arabia, as well as the provision of assistance and support to these trafficking victims, using the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking (E/2002/68/Add.1).
- Take sustained measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations 23 and 25, and to establish concrete goals and time frames to accelerate the increase in the participation and representation of women in the Shura and other elected and appointed bodies in all areas and at all levels of public and political life. Conduct training programs on leadership and negotiation skills for current and future women leaders, and undertake awareness-raising about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole.
- Amend the Nationality Code so as to bring it in conformity with article 9 of the Convention and to withdraw its reservation concerning article 9, paragraph 2.
- Raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and as the basis for the empowerment of women, and implement measures to ensure equal access for girls and women to all levels and fields of education and ensure the retention of girls in school.
- Make every effort to improve the literacy level of girls and women through the adoption of comprehensive programs of formal and non-formal education, and through adult education and training, and provide detailed information and statistics in its next report on the education of women and girls, including those from rural areas, and non-Saudi nationals.
- Take immediate and more targeted steps to increase women's participation in the workforce, in particular by ensuring the implementation of the laws enacted for the advancement of women.
- Prioritize the adoption of a law regarding maternity leave in the private sector and calls upon the State party to remove impediments to women's employment, including by abolishing de facto workplace segregation of women and men and by ensuring that there are adequate childcare facilities in all areas, and provide in its next report more information and more detailed data on women in employment, including incidents of sexual harassment and the positions held by women in the private and public sector.

- Take all necessary measures to improve women's access to health care and health-related services and information, within the framework of the Committee's general recommendation 24, and make sure that special attention is paid to the health needs of women from rural areas and non-Saudi nationalities. The Committee also recommends training for hospital staff on the rights of women regarding health care and the implementation of a system of supervision to ensure that staff respects these rights.
- Prescribe and enforce a minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both women and men, in accordance with article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to introduce legislative reforms to provide women with equal rights in marriage, divorce, the custody of children and inheritance, and end the practice of polygamy, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation 21, on equality in marriage and family relations.
- Include in its next report more detailed statistical data and analysis on the situation of women, disaggregated by sex, age and rural and urban areas, and include information on the impact of measures taken to implement the Convention and the results achieved in the practical realization of women's substantive equality.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Enhance collaboration and coordination with civil society organizations, in particular women's associations, to strengthen implementation of the provisions of the Convention, and to engage in consultations with such organizations when preparing its next report.
- Utilize fully in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Recognize that the full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Consider ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Disseminate widely in Saudi Arabia the present concluding observations in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, and the further steps that are required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in appropriate and suitable forms, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its third periodic report, which is due in October 2009, and its fourth periodic report, which is due October 2013, in a combined report in 2013.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted by Human Rights Watch regarding the application of CEDAW in Saudi Arabia. This report was considered in February 2008 by the Committee and was entitled *Perpetual Minors: Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia*. This report was Human Rights Watch's first fact-finding mission to Saudi Arabia, during which they conducted 109 interviews in four major cities. The report focused mainly on the fact that the imposition of male guardianship denies Saudi women their right to a legal capacity identical to that of a man, which violates various articles covered by CEDAW.

The report made the following recommendations to the government of Saudi Arabia:

- Promulgate by royal decree the dismantling of the legal guardianship system for adult women, guaranteeing that women are considered to have reached full legal capacity at 18 years of age. In the interim, ensure that all government agencies no longer request permission from a guardian to allow adult women to work, travel, study, marry, receive health care, or access any public service.
- Appoint a committee tasked with examining the ways in which strict sex segregation prevents Saudi women from fully participating in public life.
- Establish an independent body tasked with monitoring the implementation of laws, royal decrees, and ministerial decisions that advance women's rights, including decisions that limit a guardian's authority, and create female sections in all government offices.
- Appoint women as full members to the consultative council to ensure that women in the kingdom have a voice in decision making.
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Lift reservations made upon acceding to CEDAW, which violate the object and purpose of the treaty.
- Implement the recommendation made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to seek technical assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Health Organization to support efforts to address violence against women and children.
- Establish an independent mechanism with a mandate to regularly monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national and local levels.

Recent Updates:

Despite Saudi Arabia's ratification of CEDAW, Saudi women still face discrimination in a number of areas. Women's participation in the public sphere is sharply limited by the government's interpretation of Islam as well as the opinion of the Council of Senior Ulama. Saudi women do not have rights equal to that of their male counterparts, specifically with regards to citizenship, testimony, divorce, consent and freedom of movement. In addition, women are required by law to remain segregated from any male who is not a member of the family or household.

Women have made advances in education and employment, though their progress remains limited due to strict laws. Primary school enrollment rates for girls hovers around 65% and approximately 58% of university students are women. Nevertheless, women are barred from studying certain subjects, such as architecture, engineering and journalism. Approximately 33% of women are illiterate. Women comprise approximately 16% of the work force, and are most

prevalent in the fields of education, healthcare and civil service. The work place remains segregated by sex, and most often male relatives control a woman's income.

Women do not have a large role in the public sphere, given that all public meeting must be segregated by sex and women are legally banned from conducting public meetings on their own. Nevertheless, two women are members of the Majlis al-Shura, the 120 member national council appointed by royal decree. On April 27, 2007, the King appointed the first Saudi woman as president of the Riyadh University for Women.

On January 4, 2006, Arab News reported that Saudi women now have the right to apply for their own personal identification cards without the consent of a male guardian. This identification card affords a variety of new opportunities, including the right to open an independent bank account, apply for a passport and request bank loans.

On February 2, 2008, Al-Sharq reported that the Saudi lawyers and Islamic law staff rejected the portrait of Saudi women as portrayed by the CEDAW Committee published earlier in 2008. While the Committee commented that "Saudi women suffer as a result of male domination and discriminatory cultural traditions", the deputy chairman of the Saudi National Society for Human Rights countered the claim, stating the Saudi women have the same rights as men in terms of trade, property, education, and participation in civil society. The chairman also noted that women in Saudi Arabia have the right to vote and enjoy equal rights in civil service jobs.

SOMALIA

Ratification:

Somalia is not a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”).

Recent Updates:

The United Nations Development Programme Gender and Citizenship Initiative has reported on the condition of women in Somalia. Women’s legal status is covered by the pre-war civil and criminal code, whose laws have not been enforced in recent years. The current transitional government is working towards developing a civil code consistent with Islamic Sharia. Although the Somali constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, Somali women often face discrimination both in the public and private spheres. Specifically, the personal status code prohibits women from inheriting more than half of their brother’s share.

Overall, the conditions of women in Somalia have been greatly affected by the country’s civil war and a prolonged absence of a central government. Women and children were often targeted in violent attacks by the clan. In addition, the lack of national infrastructure has affected women and children, leaving them to deal with problems of hunger, poverty and disease. An overall lack of public health care, education, and drinkable water has had a devastating effect on child health as well as the child mortality rate. Somalia has among the lowest literacy rates in the world, with only 26% of its female population reportedly literate in 2001. Primary school enrollment hovers around 28%, and about 48% of students are females. Despite high unemployment, women do comprise approximately 43% of the workforce.

It should be noted that women have played a primary role in the efforts to rebuild Somalia. Women occupying just 30 seats in the 550-member Transitional National Assembly represent the four major clans. These women in government have worked together successfully to represent universal female interests. In addition, two female ministers have consistently participated in the Transitional National Government, despite its having been reformed twice since 2000.

The Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation, and Political Rights is a Somali-based NGO working to elevate the status of Somali women. Additionally, many women’s groups in Hargeisa have been working to assist women and children, though their work has been made difficult by a poor communications infrastructure. 90% of Somalia’s women’s groups form the following four networks: the Coalition of Grassroots Women’s Organization; IIDA Women’s Development Organization; We Are Women Activists (WAWA) and NAGAAD. In March 2004, these networks collaborated to launch a national campaign against female genital mutilation, a prevalent problem in Somalia.

SUDAN

Ratification:

Sudan is not a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”).

Recent Updates:

Women in Sudan face a number of obstacles on a daily basis, primarily as a result of the 21-year civil war. Many women have been killed or displaced from their homes, and the war has resulted in severe poverty for millions of citizens. The women placed in refugee camps often have little economic opportunity and have no choice but to resort to prostitution or the illegal brewing of alcohol to financially support their families. In turn, many of these women end up in prison for their transgressions. Although the civil war has afforded women the opportunity to serve as the breadwinners of their families and seek employment, the obstacles they face can prove devastating. The civil war has also had a negative effect on education with only 42% of girls enrolled in primary education. Adult female literacy hovers around 51%.

In terms of the public sphere, women have made some advances in recent years with Sudanese women achieving senior positions in a number of fields. On April 17, 2009, the *Sudan Tribune* reported that the interim constitution provides legal participation of women at a 25 percent level, but they will also be permitted to contest for seats beyond that quota when elections are held in 2010. The government has appointed female ambassadors as well as an advisor on women’s affairs to a cabinet position.

Women’s groups in both northern and southern Sudan have worked to improve Sudanese women’s status as well as push for an end to the civil war. The Sudanese Women’s General Union employs social programs and the Democratic Women’s Alliance is one of the primary women’s opposition groups in the North.

SYRIA

Ratification:

Syria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on March 28, 2003.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Syria made reservations as described in detail below:

- Subject to reservations to article 2; article 9, paragraph 2, concerning the grant of a woman's nationality to her children; article 15, paragraph 4, concerning freedom of movement and of residence and domicile; article 16, paragraph 1 (c), (d), (f) and (g), concerning equal rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution with regard to guardianship, the right to choose a family name, maintenance and adoption; article 16, paragraph 2, concerning the legal effect of the betrothal and the marriage of a child, inasmuch as this provision is incompatible with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah; and article 29, paragraph 1, concerning arbitration between States in the event of a dispute.
- The accession of the Syrian Arab Republic to this Convention shall in no way signify recognition of Israel or entail entry into any dealings with Israel in the context of the provisions of the Convention.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Syria has submitted one official periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). This initial report was submitted in August 2005. The Committee expressed appreciation for Syria’s well-structured report, but noted that it lacked references to the Committee’s general recommendations. The Committee commended Syria for its high-level delegation and the quality of its introductory statement as well as the report, which was prepared in cooperation with government bodies and non-governmental organizations.

In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in June 2007 regarding Syria’s progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Syria’s report in 2005 as follows:

- The Committee commends the State party for its decision to withdraw reservations to articles 2, 15 (4), 16 (1) (g) and 16 (2).
- It congratulates the State party on the establishment of (i) the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs as the national machinery for the advancement of women and (ii) the Directorate of Rural Women Development within the Ministry of Agriculture.
- It commends the State party on including sections on women’s empowerment in its Ninth and Tenth Five-Year Plans and on its adoption of the Rural Women Development Strategy.
- The Committee congratulates the State party on the achievement of parity between girls and boys in secondary education.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Syria's report in 2005 as follows:

- Speedily complete the process of removal of reservations to articles 2, 15 (4), 16 (1) (g) and 16 (2) by depositing the necessary instrument of removal with the Secretary-General, as depository of the Convention, and withdraw all remaining reservations, and especially reservations to articles 9 and 16, which are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.
- Develop awareness-raising programs and training on the provisions of the Convention, in particular with regard to the meaning and scope of direct and indirect discrimination and about formal and substantive equality, for judges, lawyers and prosecutors, so as to establish firmly in the country a legal culture supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination.
- Enhance women's awareness of their rights through ongoing legal literacy programs and legal assistance.
- Widely disseminate the Convention and its general recommendations among all stakeholders, including government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.
- Include in the Constitution, or other relevant legislation, a definition of discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention, as well as provisions on the equal rights of women in line with article 2 (a) of the Convention.
- Enact and implement a comprehensive law on gender equality that is binding on both public and private sectors and to make women aware of their rights under such legislation, and establish procedures for filing of complaints of discrimination, provide adequate sanctions for acts of discrimination against women and ensure that effective remedies are available to women whose rights have been violated.
- Give high priority to its law reform process and to modify or repeal, without delay and within a clear time frame, discriminatory legislation, including discriminatory provisions in its Personal Status Act, Penal Code and Nationality Act. To this end, the Committee calls upon the Syrian Arab Republic to increase its efforts to sensitize the Parliament as well as public opinion regarding the importance of accelerating legal reform.
- Continue to increase support for law reform through partnerships and collaboration with religious and community leaders, lawyers and judges, unions, civil society organizations and women's non-governmental organizations.
- In accordance with its general recommendation 19, give high priority to putting in place comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women and girls, recognizing that violence against women is a form of discrimination against women and thus constitutes a violation of their human rights under the Convention.
- Enact, as soon as possible, legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence, so as to ensure that violence against women constitutes a criminal offence, that women and girls
- who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress and protection and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.
- Amend, without delay, applicable provisions in the Penal Code to ensure that marital rape is criminalized, that marriage to the victim does not exempt a rapist from punishment, and that perpetrators of honor crimes are not exonerated and do not benefit from any reduction in penalty.
- Implement educational and awareness-raising measures aimed at law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health service providers, social workers, community leaders and the general public, in order to ensure that they understand that all forms of violence against women are unacceptable, and provide information in its next report on the laws

and policies in place to deal with violence against women and the impact of such measures.

- Establish sufficient numbers of shelters and services for victims of violence against women throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, review its existing laws and policies to ensure that women who go to shelters do not forgo other legal rights, such as rights to maintenance and dower. Ensure that if the victimized woman agrees to reconcile with the perpetrator, counseling services are provided to the perpetrator and the situation monitored to prevent further abuse, and provide details of services provided to victims of violence, including details about access to and scope and effectiveness of the services, in its next report.
- Fully implement article 6 of the Convention, including by speedily enacting specific and comprehensive national legislation on the phenomenon of trafficking (internal and cross-border) that ensures that offenders are punished and victims adequately protected and assisted. Increase its efforts at international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking through information exchange.
- Collect and analyze data from the police and international sources, prosecute and punish traffickers, and ensure the protection of the human rights of trafficked women and girls, including by ensuring that such women and girls are not sent to prison or to reform centers for juvenile delinquents.
- Take measures for the rehabilitation and social integration of women and girls who are victims of exploitation and trafficking, and decriminalize victims of such exploitation and take all appropriate measures to suppress exploitation of prostitution of women, including discouraging the male demand for prostitution.
- Take sustained measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, and to establish concrete goals and timetables so as to accelerate the increase in the representation of women, in elected and appointed bodies in all areas of public life, including in municipal, town and village councils. Encourage political parties to use quotas.
- Conduct training programs on leadership and negotiation skills for current and future women leaders, and undertake awareness-raising about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole.
- Address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including the hidden cultural patterns and norms that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives.
- Implement and monitor comprehensive measures to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women, including by promoting equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men. Such measures should include awareness-raising and educational campaigns addressing women and men, girls and boys, of all religious affiliations with a view to eliminating stereotypes associated with traditional gender roles in the family and in society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention.
- Take targeted measures to improve and increase women's access to health care and health-related services and information, in accordance with general recommendation 24 on women and health and based on an assessment of the needs of women in different parts of the country and belonging to different social classes. And, in the context of the ongoing decentralization of the government, ensure that there is parity in the quality of health and health-related services in different areas.

- Adopt effective measures in the formal labor market to eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, and to narrow and close the wage gap between women and men.
- Regulate the informal sector to ensure that women in this sector are not exploited and are provided social security and other benefits, and remove impediments to women's employment, including by ensuring that there are adequate child care facilities in all areas.
- Revise its Employment Act to add provisions on sexual harassment and ensure that such provisions are enforced.
- Undertake comprehensive reform of its Personal Status Act, ensuring that women and men have equal rights to marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance and that polygamy and child marriages are prohibited. The Committee further recommends that the Syrian Arab Republic ensure enforcement of such revised laws, including by requiring registration of all births, deaths, marriages and divorces.
- Ensure, including through speedy revision of the Associations Law, that civil society organizations and women's non-governmental organizations are not restricted with respect to their establishment and operations and that they are able to function independently of the government. In particular, the Syrian Arab Republic should provide an enabling environment for the establishment and active involvement of women's and human rights organizations in promoting the implementation of the Convention.
- Include in its next report statistical data and analysis on the situation of women, disaggregated by sex, age and by rural and urban areas, indicating the impact of measures taken and the results achieved in the practical realization of women's substantive equality.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Ensure the wide participation of all ministries and public bodies in, and to consult with non-governmental organizations during, the preparation of its next report, and involve Parliament in a discussion of the report before its submission to the Committee.
- Utilize fully in its implementation of the obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- The Committee also emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and the explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Disseminate widely in the Syrian Arab Republic the present concluding comments in order to make the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party

to submit its second periodic report, which is due in April 2008, and its third periodic report, due in April 2012, in a combined report in April 2012.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, one shadow report has been submitted regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Syria. This report was prepared in 2007 by The National Association for Women Role Development (AWRD), the Syrian Women League (SWL), Good Shepherd Sisters, the Islamic Intellectual Forum, and the Social Initiative Association.

The shadow report highlighted the areas of life in which Syrian women face discrimination, and made the following comments:

- The reservations made by the Syrian Government on Article /2/, Item /2/ of Article /9/, Item /4/ of Article /15/ and Paragraphs /c, d, g & f/ of Item /1/ of Article /16/ and Item 2 thereof, have weakened the positive effect of joining the Convention by Syria. The participating NGOs find no contradiction between the Islamic Sharia principles and the Convention provisions, especially with proper innovative interpretation of the Sharia. We look at the Draft Decree prepared by the SCFA and submitted to the Development Committee of the Office of the Prime Minister on the cancellation of the reservations on Article /2/ and Paragraph /4/ of Article /15/ on the freedom of movement and domicile unless it is against Islamic Sharia provisions and on Paragraph /g/ of Item /1/ of Article /16/ and Item /2/ of Article /16/ on having no legal effect of a child marriage, but we look for the cancellation of all the reservations on Articles /2, 9, 15 & 16/ and work in accordance with Article /2/ of the Convention to make the national laws in harmony with the Convention.
- The participating organizations assure that the optimum implementation of the CEDAW provisions requires full respect of human rights, especially the right of expression and civil activity, which requires the cancellation of all exceptional laws, procedures and courts and granting all citizens the full citizenship rights stipulated in the Syrian Constitution and international charters ratified by Syria, particularly that the SAR has been a state party in the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- In this regard, we expect the Syrian Government to fulfill its promises related to removing the marshal laws, amending the current Associations Law and issuing a Parties Law; in addition to finding a solution to the problem of 1962 exceptional consensus, which deprived lots of Syrian Kurds of Syrian citizenship, the thing that generates extreme difficulties to them whether men and women.

Recent Updates:

In May 2007, Syria announced State its decision to withdraw reservations to articles 2, 15 (4), 16 (1) (g) and 16 (2), but it has yet to complete the process of removal of reservations by depositing the necessary instrument of removal with the Secretary-General.

Islamic sharia forms the basis of the Syrian Code, which governs women's personal status in Syria. Over the past few decades, many civil laws have been reformed in order to improve gender equity. In 1995, the government created the National Committee for Post-Beijing Follow-up of Women's Affairs. The Committee is responsible for issuing reports to the UN on Syria's progress towards gender equity.

Syrian women face discrimination in a number of areas in the private sphere, specifically with regards to maintenance, freedom of movement, guardianship and violence against women. Instances of sexual assault and domestic violence go largely under-reported.

The government has made improvement towards equity primarily in education and labor. Female literacy doubled between 1980 and 1998 from 33% to 60.4%, but still remains behind adult males at 87%. Although women comprise over half the teachers, they tend to remain missing from higher education positions. The role of women in research is limited to medicine, and funds are allocated primarily to males, because females have fewer opportunities to publish their research. Women comprise approximately 27% of the work force, and are prevalent in the fields of teaching, medicine and agriculture. Women seldom own their own businesses.

Since 1949, Syrian women have had the right to vote. President Bashhar Al-Asad nominated the first Arab female to the position of vice president in his government in March 2006. In the March 2007 parliamentary elections, 31 women were elected to seats in the 250 person parliament. The participation of women in the public sphere is evident of the ruling Ba'th Socialist Party, which has tried to promote equality for women, particularly in the armed services, since 1963. Despite this push for gender equity, Syria remains a traditional country, whose religious customs discourage women from entering the public sphere.

The primary women's political organization in Syria is the General Union of Syrian Women, which was founded in 1967. This group is supported by the government, and has encouraged development in childcare and education. Other prominent women's organizations include The National Association for Women Role Development (AWRD), the Syrian Women League (SWL), and Good Shepherd Sisters.

TUNISIA

Ratification:

Tunisia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on September 20, 1985.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Tunisia made reservations to articles 9:2, 15:4, 16, and 29:1 as described in detail below:

- *General declaration:* The Tunisian Government declares that it shall not take any organizational or legislative decision in conformity with the requirements of this Convention where such a decision would conflict with the provisions of chapter I of the Tunisian Constitution.
- *Reservation concerning article 9, paragraph 2:* The Tunisian Government expresses its reservation with regard to the provisions in article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention, which must not conflict with the provisions of chapter VI of the Tunisian Nationality Code.
- *Reservation concerning article 16, paragraphs (c), (d), (f), (g) and (h):* The Tunisian Government considers itself not bound by article 16, paragraphs (c), (d) and (f) of the Convention and declares that paragraphs (g) and (h) of that article must not conflict with the provisions of the Personal Status Code concerning the granting of family names to children and the acquisition of property through inheritance.
- *Reservation concerning article 29, paragraph 1:* The Tunisian Government declares, in conformity with the requirements of article 29, paragraph 2 of the Convention, that it shall not be bound by the provisions of paragraph 1 of that article which specify that any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall be referred to the International Court of Justice at the request of any one of those parties. The Tunisian Government considers that such disputes should be submitted for arbitration or consideration by the International Court of Justice only with the consent of all parties to the dispute.
- *Declaration concerning article 15, paragraph 4:* In accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, dated 23 May 1969, the Tunisian Government emphasizes that the requirements of article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, and particularly that part relating to the right of women to choose their residence and domicile, must not be interpreted in a manner which conflicts with the provisions of the Personal Status Code on this subject, as set forth in chapters 23 and 61 of the Code.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Tunisia has submitted two official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). The combined initial and second report was released in September 1993 and the

combined third and fourth periodic report was submitted in July 2000. In response to the most recent report, the Committee released comments in June 2002 regarding Tunisia's progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee expressed appreciation for Tunisia's report as well as the extensive written replies to the issues raised by the pre-session working group. The Committee also noted the high-level delegation, headed by the Minister for Women and Family Affairs.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Tunisia's report in 2002 as follows:

- Its political will and commitment to implementing the Convention and to achieving equality between women and men, as reflected in a range of laws, institutions, policies, plans and programs to address discrimination against women in Tunisia.
- Early reforms of its Personal Status Code, which abolished polygamy and granted the right to divorce to both spouses, and its reform of the inheritance law. The Committee welcomes the continuing legislative reforms by the State party. It welcomes the amendments to the Personal Status Code, which provide women with the capacity to institute legal proceedings in their own name, affirm the principle of equality and partnership between spouses, provide that both parties should cooperate in managing family affairs, prevent manipulation of divorce proceedings by the husband, allow spouses to agree to a joint property regime and grant women the right to give their family name to a child born of an unknown father and the opportunity for gene-testing to prove parenthood. The Committee also welcomes the reform of the Penal Code, which imposes heavy penalties for the killing of a woman for adultery.
- Reforms made to the nationality law introduced by the State party in working towards harmonizing the law with article 9 of the Convention.
- Progressive development of the national machinery and the reconstitution of the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs as a full Ministry in 1999. The Committee notes with appreciation that the Ministry's budget has doubled since 1994. The Committee further commends the efforts of the State party to consolidate the status of Tunisian women through the establishment of the commission for monitoring the image of women in the media and a national commission for the promotion of rural women.
- Progress made in increasing the enrolment and retention of girls in schools at all levels, including in higher education, the diversification in their areas of study, and reduction of female illiteracy. The Committee commends the measures taken to improve women's health, including through the provision of reproductive health services and reduction of maternal and child mortality rates. The Committee also notes that rural women are enjoying an overall improvement in the quality of rural life due to a combination of regional development and overall sectoral policies, and that these women are benefiting from technical and financial support through the efforts of the economic and financial authorities in Tunisia.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Tunisia's report in 2002 as follows:

- Expedite the steps necessary for the withdrawal of its reservations.
- Continue the process of legislative reform and review relevant existing laws in consultation with women's groups.
- Include the definition of discrimination against women in accordance with article 1 of the Convention in its national law and to ensure adequate mechanisms to enable women to seek and obtain redress from the courts for violation of the rights protected by the Convention and the Constitution, with appropriate remedies.
- Intensify education and training programs on the Convention to enhance the knowledge of judges, lawyers and law enforcement personnel, and provide, in its next report,

information about complaints filed in courts based on the Convention, as well as any court decisions that refer to the Convention.

- Devise a structure for systematic data collection on all such forms of violence against women.
- Ensure that all violence against women is prosecuted and punished and that women victims of violence have immediate means of protection and redress. In the light of its general recommendation 19, the Committee requests the State party to enact specific legislation on domestic violence, including marital rape and sexual harassment. It recommends that the number of shelters for women victims of violence be increased and that full sensitization of public officials, especially law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health-care providers and social workers, to all forms of violence against women is ensured.
- Create public awareness of violence against women as an infringement of human rights that has grave social costs for the whole community.
- Include in its next report information and data on, and the measures taken to prevent and combat, trafficking in women and girls and exploitation of prostitution, as well as the measures taken to protect, rehabilitate and reintegrate women and girls who have been victims.
- Take measures to increase the representation of women in high-level decision-making positions through, inter alia, the implementation of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention in order to realize women's right to participate in all areas of public life and, particularly, at high levels of decision-making.
- Adopt appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to paid employment, and adopt and enforce appropriate legislation to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the public and private sectors of the labor market, and to prevent direct and indirect discrimination in employment. The Committee requests the State party to include in its next report sex-disaggregated data on wages, pensions and social rights.
- Further implement programs specifically designed to reduce female illiteracy, particularly among rural and older women.
- Include in its next report information on the situation of single women with children born out of wedlock, including the measures taken to ensure that their rights are protected.
- Accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.
- Taking account of the gender dimensions of declarations, programs and platforms for action adopted by relevant United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions (such as the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (the twenty-first special session), the special session of the General Assembly on children (the twenty-seventh special session), the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Second World Assembly on Ageing), the Committee requests the State party to include information on the implementation of aspects of these documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention in its next periodic report.
- Disseminate widely in Tunisia the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Tunisia, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and the future steps required in that regard.

- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century".

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in Tunisia.

Recent Updates:

Tunisia is often referred to as the most progressive country on women's issues in the Arab world. Over the past several decades, government commitment to incorporating women into the public sphere, coupled with reforms to the personal status code, have helped the country achieve near gender equality. Under the Tunisian Code of Personal Status, women have rights nearly equal to that of their male counterparts, particularly with regards to marriage, divorce, child custody and autonomy of persons. Although Islam provided a foundation for these laws, there are no direct references to the religion in the Code. The Ministry of Women and Family Affairs have developed several media campaigns to promote awareness of women's legal rights, particularly among illiterate women.

Female adult illiteracy has dropped 27% since 1980, but remains significant at 42%. Nevertheless, this figure is expected to drop as nearly 100% of girls were enrolled in primary school by 1998. Women currently make up approximately 31% of the workforce. President Ben Ali has been outspoken regarding the need to encourage women to participate in the workforce, in order to benefit overall economic development. It is known that Tunisia has a take a progressive view on women's economic participation, particularly with regards to maternity leave policies and equal employment laws, which were established in 1966.

Women hold few high-level government positions, but their interests appear to be well-represented by the number of government bodies working to advance women's rights. These include the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs, the National Women and Development Commission, and the National Council of Women and the Family. In addition, President Ben Ali announced in November 2007 that he would increase the ratio of women's presence on the Constitutional Democratic Rally Party's parliamentary and municipal election lists to at least 30%.

Aside from the government's initiatives, several women's organizations work to advance women's rights in Tunisia. The largest civil society group is the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT), which has advocated for women's access to education. Other groups, such as the Center for Studies, Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF) as well as the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Democrates, are active in researching and publicizing women's issues. It is important to note, however, that some women's organizations have been denied representation by the government.

On April 21, 2009, Magharebia in Tunis had an [interview](#) with Bochra Bel Haj Hmida, a lawyer, women's rights activist, and former president of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, regarding the status of women's rights in Tunisia. In 1999, Ms. Hmida created the Democratic Women petition, calling for equal inheritance rights among men and women. She is also an outspoken proponent of abolishing harassment against women, and opening the dialogue on sexually-based violence against women in Tunisia.

In her interview, Ms. Hmida made note of a possible decline in Tunisian Women's gains for four main reasons: 1) the political and cultural landscape in the Arab world, 2) western policies affected the Arab region, 3) propaganda used by the state, and 4) the media. Despite the overall progress towards advancing women's rights in Tunisia, Ms. Hmida warned that the government's inconsistent views towards Islam in the political, social and cultural spheres cast doubt on the legitimacy of the rights enjoyed by Tunisian women.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Ratification:

The United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on October 6, 2004.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, the United Arab Emirates made reservations to articles 2f, 9, 15:2, 16 and 29:1 as described in detail below:

- *Article 2 (f)*: The United Arab Emirates, being of the opinion that this paragraph violates the rules of inheritance established in accordance with the precepts of the Shariah, makes a reservation thereto and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.
- *Article 9*: The United Arab Emirates, considering the acquisition of nationality an internal matter which is governed, and the conditions and controls of which are established, by national legislation makes a reservation to this article and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.
- *Article 15 (2)*: The United Arab Emirates, considering this paragraph in conflict with the precepts of the Shariah regarding legal capacity, testimony and the right to conclude contracts, makes a reservation to the said paragraph of the said article and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.
- *Article 16*: The United Arab Emirates will abide by the provisions of this article insofar as they are not in conflict with the principles of the Shariah. The United Arab Emirates considers that the payment of a dower and of support after divorce is an obligation of the husband, and the husband has the right to divorce, just as the wife has her independent financial security and her full rights to her property and is not required to pay her husband's or her own expenses out of her own property. The Shariah makes a woman's right to divorce conditional on a judicial decision, in a case in which she has been harmed.
- *Article 29 (1)*: The United Arab Emirates appreciates and respects the functions of this article, which provides: "Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months...the parties are unable... [any one of those parties] "may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice..." This article, however, violates the general principle that matters are submitted to an arbitration panel by agreement between the parties. In addition, it might provide an opening for certain States to bring other States to trial in defence of their nationals; the case might then be referred to the committee charged with discussing the State reports required by the Convention and a decision might be handed down against the State in question for violating the provisions of the Convention. For these reasons the United Arab Emirates makes a reservation to this article and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

The United Arab Emirates has yet to submit their initial periodic report to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”).

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, no shadow report has been submitted regarding the application of CEDAW in the United Arab Emirates.

Recent Updates:

In the United Arab Emirates, women’s personal status is governed by Islamic law. Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men and may not leave the country without permission from a male guardian. Although women typically receive child custody in cases of divorce when the children are under seven years old, older children often become the father’s legal charge.

Over the past several decades, women have enjoyed increased access to education, both primary and higher education. Female illiteracy hovers around 20% and approximately 87% of girls are enrolled in primary school. The majority of students enrolled in higher education tend to be women, because men often travel overseas to attend foreign universities while women generally attend national universities. In terms of employment, women comprise approximately 15% of the workforce, and are most prevalent in the fields of education, government and transportation (taxi drivers). Though this number is relatively low, it should be noted that under Islamic law, married women must seek their husband’s permission in order to work outside the home. Women are also seen in the private sector, as they are legally allowed to own businesses.

The government is actively trying to encourage female participation in the workforce, and guarantees public sector employment for all female applicants. However, very few women hold senior government positions, and in November 2004, a female minister was appointed for the first time. The movement to involve women in politics began in 2006 when a woman became the first elected female member of the national parliament. Currently, women occupy 9 seats out of 40 in the parliament.

On April 22, 2009, the Emirates News Agency released an [article](#) in which the United Arab Emirates’ Permanent Representative to the UN European Headquarters spoke of the importance of equality, as evidenced by the legal rights provided for in the national constitution as well as the recent accession to CEDAW.

Also on April 22, 2009, the Emirates News Agency reported in an [article](#) that the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking announced that the United Arab Emirates is committed to combating trafficking, especially among women and children.

YEMEN

Ratification:

Yemen ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) on May 30, 1984.

Reservations:

Upon ratification, Yemen made reservations against article 29 as described in detail below:

- The Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen declares that it does not consider itself bound by article 29, paragraph 1, of the said Convention, relating to the settlement of disputes which may arise concerning the application or interpretation of the Convention.

Summary of Official CEDAW Reports:

To date, Yemen has submitted six official periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee (“Committee”). The initial report was submitted in January 1989, the second in June 1989, the third in November 1992, the fourth in March 2000, the fifth in January 2002 and the sixth report in March 2007.

In response to the most recent periodic report, the Committee released comments in July 2008 regarding Yemen's progress in implementing CEDAW as well as the areas of concerns. The Committee commended Yemen for its sixth periodic report, but noted that it does not provide any information on the implementation of each recommendation made in the previous concluding observations of the Committee. The Committee expressed appreciation to the State party's high-level delegation as well as the frank dialogue that took place between the Committee and the delegation.

A detailed account of progress expressed by the Committee following Yemen's report in 2007 as follows:

- The work of the Women's National Committee on its promotion of women's rights in its role as a consultative body within the Government. It commends its recommendations to the Government, although not yet adopted by the Parliament, to amend the many remaining discriminatory laws, such as the Personal Status Law, the Crime and Penalty Law, the Election and Referendum Law, the Nationality Law, the Labor Code and the Prison Law.
- Ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in December 2004 and on the involvement of children in armed conflict in March 2007, in particular as these international instruments cover the human rights of the girl child.
- Adoption of Law No. 26 of 2003 amending the prisons regulations with regard to pregnant women in custody and Law No. 25 of 2003 on the obligation for public and private institutions that employ 50 or more female workers to provide a nursery for their children.
- The State party's signature of several memorandums of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2005, 2007 and 2008, with regard to HIV/AIDS, and its commitment to prepare a refugee law and promote it as well as to open permanent registration centre for Somali refugees.

- The government's commitment to adopt temporary special measures in the form of programs to narrow the gap between men and women in political and public life, and especially the recent tentative acceptance of a quota system which would be instituted for the next elections for the Parliament, through an amendment of the electoral law in order that women hold at least 15 per cent of parliamentary seats.

A detailed account of recommendations made by the Committee following Yemen's report in 2007 as follows:

- In order to implement the Convention fully, incorporate the principle of equality between women and men in its Constitution, or other appropriate legislation, in line with article 2 (a) of the Convention, and reflect fully the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention in its national legislation, and enact and implement a comprehensive law on gender equality that is binding on both public and private sectors and inform women of their rights under such legislation.
- Clearly establish the status of international conventions within its domestic legal framework, ensuring precedence of international instruments, including the Convention, over national laws, and conformity of this legislation with these instruments.
- Disseminate the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations widely among all stakeholders, including Government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, political parties, NGOs, the private sector and the general public.
- Address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives, and increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programs to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men at all levels of society with a view to transforming stereotypical attitudes and negative cultural norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family and society, in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention.
- Encourage religious authorities to promote positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in society.
- Enact without delay, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 19, legislation on violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, to ensure that all violence against women constitutes a criminal offence, that women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of protection, including shelters, and redress and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished adequately.
- Amend, without delay, the Penal Code to ensure that marital rape is criminalized, and establish clear procedures for filing complaints on violence against women and establish female sections in police stations to deal with such complaints and investigations.
- Conduct detailed studies on the causes and extent of violence against women and girls, including sexual and domestic violence, collect disaggregated data on all forms of violence against women and provide information in its next periodic report on the laws and policies in place dealing with such violence and the impact of the measures taken.
- Repeal any discriminatory penal provisions of the Penal Code, including articles 273, 275 and, in particular, 232, as already proposed by the Women's National Committee several years ago, to ensure that homicides committed against women by their husbands or male relatives are prosecuted and punished in the same way as any other murders.
- Adopt comprehensive and effective measures to prevent and combat trafficking and smuggling in persons, especially women and girls, and investigate thoroughly such cases, in accordance with article 6 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 19.

- Increase international cooperation efforts to prevent trafficking, to prosecute and punish traffickers in proportion to the gravity of their crime, and to ensure the protection of the human rights of women and girls who are victims of trafficking.
- Ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It further calls upon the State party to provide to the Committee, in its next periodic report, statistical data related to trafficking and smuggling, concrete interventions and their results.
- Take effective and sustained legal measures, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to increase the representation of women at all levels and spheres of politics, especially in decision-making positions. In this regard and in order to accelerate the representation of women, establish legal quotas for women for the coming elections to Parliament, and undertake awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in decision-making for society as a whole, including in the public and private sectors.
- Implement measures to ensure access to girls and women to all levels of education, including access to proper and dedicated toilets facilities, which have a direct impact on the realization of their right to education, especially in rural areas.
- Adopt temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to ensure the access and retention of girls in school.
- Strengthen its efforts to improve the literacy level of girls and women through the adoption of comprehensive programs of formal and non-formal education and training, and to increase training and employment of female teachers, the development of gender-sensitive educational materials and the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved towards time-bound targets.
- Raise general awareness of the importance of education as a human right and as a basis for the empowerment of women, and to take steps to overcome traditional attitudes that perpetuate discrimination.
- Implement targeted policies and programs, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, in order to increase the number of women in the formal workforce, especially in the public sector, and take measures to change stereotypical attitudes and negative cultural norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men, promoting the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities between women and men, and to design and implement awareness-raising programs directed at all levels of society.
- Increase women's access to primary health-care services, especially in rural areas, including reproductive health care and means of family planning. In the light of its general recommendation No. 24, the Committee also recommends that the State party increase awareness campaigns on the importance of health care, including information on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as well as on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies through family planning and sex education.
- Reiterating its previous recommendations, take urgent legislative measures to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls, in line with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as being below the age of 18, and the provision on child marriage in article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention, and stipulate that child marriages have no legal effect.

- Enforce the requirement to register all marriages in order to monitor their legality and the strict prohibition of early marriages as well as to prosecute the perpetrators violating such provisions, and develop awareness-raising campaigns, with the support of civil society organizations and religious authorities, on the negative effects of early marriage on the well-being, health and education of girls.
- Adopt, without delay, the Safe Motherhood Law recently presented to Parliament, which includes provisions prohibiting any practice that endangers women's health, such as early marriages and female genital mutilation, in addition to ensuring the provision of contraceptives in all health centers. In this respect, the State party should ensure that such contraceptives are free or affordable.
- Adopt all necessary measures to prevent these negative phenomena and combat this form of sex tourism. The State party should actively consider the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee of Islamic jurisprudence legislators on this issue, such as amending the Personal Status Law, and prosecute the perpetrators of such acts.
- Develop awareness-raising campaigns, with the support of religious authorities and civil society organizations, on the negative implications of "temporary marriages" for the girls and their families.
- In the light of its general recommendations Nos. 14 and 19, as an act of violence against women inflicting physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, adopt urgently legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation, and recommends that the State party enforce its prohibition through the prosecution and adequate punishment of offenders.
- Strengthen its awareness-raising and education efforts, targeted at both men and women, with the support of civil society organizations and religious authorities, in order to completely eliminate this practice and its underlying cultural justifications, and seek technical assistance from relevant United Nations agencies and bodies.
- Adopt temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to ensure that rural women enjoy their political, social, economic and cultural rights without any discrimination, especially with regard to access to education, public services, justice, health care and micro-financing.
- In accordance with article 16 of the Convention and in the light of the Committee's general recommendation No. 21, amend the Personal Status Law to prohibit polygamy and to abolish the institution of guardianship, as they contravene women's right to equality with men, and repeal any other discriminatory provision against women in this Law.
- Ensure equal rights between women and men with regard to personal status, especially in marriage, divorce, testimony, property, nationality, child custody and inheritance. Amend all other discriminatory provisions, including the right of a child born to a Yemeni mother to acquire his or her mother's nationality in the same circumstances he or she would acquire it from a Yemeni father, and grant the same five-year residency rights a non-Yemeni wife of a Yemeni husband has to a non-Yemeni husband of a Yemeni wife.
- Ensure equal rights between women and men in the justice and penitentiary systems and to eliminate all discriminatory measures against women in those sectors, and ensure that women in detention are segregated from men and under the exclusive supervision of female guards, including during pre-trial detention, and that they have access to adequate health facilities and rehabilitation programs to reintegrate them into the community, notwithstanding the refusal of the guardian or family to receive them. Special attention should also be given to children detained with their mother with regard to food, medicine and education.

- Take measures through its mainstreaming efforts and poverty reduction strategy to address the specific vulnerability of women in poverty, including efforts to ensure women's representation in the participatory approaches taken in the management of poverty reduction programs. Utilize temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to this effect.
- Consider carefully all recommendations made by the Committee and ensure that its obligations under the Convention, its religious principles and its cultural and social values are made compatible, in order to promote and protect fully the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Yemen's women. It recommends that the State party avail itself of the technical cooperation and assistance from relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Health Organization, in order to implement de facto and de jure the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's recommendations.
- Transform the Women's National Committee into a ministry within the Government in order for it to participate in the decision-making process, directly supporting its legislative proposal to the Parliament and mainstream women's rights through the Government and the public administration, with sufficient budget allocation in order for it to carry out its mandate.
- Consider the establishment of an independent national human rights institution, with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, in accordance with the Paris Principles (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex).
- Continue to strengthen its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and adopt the draft refugee law, in compliance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. Grant full access to UNHCR to detention centers for refugees, not to deport refugees without previous UNHCR verification of their status and to ensure refugees their right to security, especially for women and children due to their exposure to violence, including sexual violence.
- Improve the collection and analysis of statistical data, and to include in its next periodic report statistical data and analysis on the situation of women, disaggregated by age, rural and urban areas, ethnicity and region, thus providing a clear picture of the situation of women in the State party. It also calls upon the State party to indicate the impact of measures taken and the results achieved in the practical realization of women's substantive equality.
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and also invites the State party to accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.
- While reaffirming that the Government has the primary responsibility and is accountable in particular for the full implementation of the State party's obligations under the Convention, the Committee stresses that the Convention is binding on all branches of Government and it invites the State party to encourage its national parliament, in line with its procedures, where appropriate, to take the necessary steps with regard to the implementation of the present concluding observations and the Government's next reporting process under the Convention.
- Ensure the wide participation of all ministries and public bodies in the preparation of its next periodic report, as well as to consult with non-governmental organizations during that phase.

- Utilize fully in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- The Committee emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.
- Disseminate widely in Yemen the present concluding observations in order to make the people of Yemen, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and the future steps required in that regard.
- Continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
- Consider ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Provide, within two years, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 368, 380, 384 and 388 above, and consider seeking technical cooperation and assistance, including advisory services, if necessary and when appropriate for implementation of the above recommendations.
- Respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its next periodic report to be submitted under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its seventh periodic report, which is due in May 2009, and its eighth periodic report, which is due in May 2013, in a combined report in 2013.

Summary of Shadow Reports:

To date, two shadow reports have been submitted by civil society organizations regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Yemen. The first report was written in 2002 and the second, most recent report was submitted in 2006. 30 individuals, representing a variety of NGO's in Yemen, contributed to the 2006 shadow report. The report made a number of recommendations to the government, which covered the following areas of life in which Yemeni women still face problems.

The report made note of the following challenges for women in Yemen:

- There are a lot of discriminatory provisions in the Yemeni legislations which do not equalize between women and men, such as the Penal Code, Citizenship Law, Evidence Law, Personal Status Law, and Labor Law. In addition, most laws do not have bylaws and there is a huge gap between the law and the implementation of the law which result ripping off the rights of women guaranteed in the law.
- Women prisoners suffer from deteriorating conditions.
- Illiteracy rate is high among women. Educational policies do not encourage women to complete their education. They actually contribute in girls dropouts. The abyss between

males and females is tremendous in all levels and education fields. Curricula, despite change, still devote stereotypes for women.

- Women participation in athletics is very weak, marginal and has no social acceptance. There is only one women union for all sorts of sports in which women started to participate in comparison to 26 unions for men.
- As for the political participation of women, it is very low. Women rate 0.33% in the parliament, and 0.08% in Local Councils. Their representation in the executive, judiciary and political parties is very low as well. There are no positive discriminatory procedures for women like adopting a quota, closed constituency or others.
- All forms of violence poses a major problem that different women in Yemen suffer from. There is no law incriminating domestic violence, street violence, work violence, etc. Besides, recently a number of quasi official newspapers are defaming civil society women activists, which negatively affects women's encouragement to participate in public life.
- The health sector in general is still poor. The budget for medical care represents only 4% of the total budget. Women's mortality and fertility rates are the highest in the world. They cannot make decisions related to their health without the consent of the husband, like going under a cesarean section or use birth control.
- There is still a huge gap between males and females involvement in public life in favor of males. Women work in agriculture in rural areas is unpaid and not reflected in the national income. The high-rated corruption in all the official sectors and establishments doubles the difficulty of women involvement in the public life.
- The marginalized women (Akhdam) suffer from doubled violence and exclusion in all social, economical, political, and cultural fields resulting from their marginalizing class, and absence of serious and successful policies and programs to contribute to social incorporation of this social group.

Recent Updates:

The Yemeni Constitution provides for equal rights and equal opportunity for all citizens; however, discrimination based on race, sex, and disability existed. Entrenched cultural attitudes often affected women's ability to enjoy equal rights. Women's personal status is determined by Islamic law, which forms the basis of the Yemeni personal status code. Under this law, women face many restrictions in both the private and public spheres, specifically with regards to freedom of movement, citizenship, right to choose a domicile, access to divorce, access to education and obedience to male relatives. It should be noted that these restrictions are more prevalent in the north than in the south, where women have access to greater independence and opportunity. Since unification of the north and the south, the resurgence of Islamic values has encouraged women to remain at home in the private sphere.

Nevertheless, as Yemeni politics have become increasingly democratic, women have been afforded a larger role in government and politics. Women in Yemen have the right to vote, and comprised approximately half of all voters during the 2003 parliamentary elections. Although not a single woman was on a political party's candidate list, one independent female candidate won a seat in parliament. In addition, both the president and prime minister have made numerous public statements in support of women's rights and development.

Adult female illiteracy in Yemen is high at approximately 75% and doubles that of men. In terms of employment, women comprise approximately 28% of Yemen's workforce, with higher participation in the south than in the north. Unfortunately, women have faced increasing social discrimination and unemployment as a result of unification.

Many women's rights organizations have developed over the past decade. The most prominent organizations include the Social Association for Productive Families, the Women and Children's Department of the Center for Future Studies, the Woman and Child Development Association, and the Yemeni Council for Motherhood and Childhood.