



6 April 2005

S05.21

Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Harmonisation of CEDAW Reporting

Introduction

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 41 Nationally Organised Societies. It has 33 branches throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated. This submission is written on behalf of the Board of Management. NCWNZ is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this paper and commends the United Nations Secretariat for the clarity of the presentation and the thoughtful rationale behind the proposals.

Summary

The recommendations will enable States parties to streamline reporting on the range of human rights conventions without duplication and reduce the work required for each separate report. It should have a flow on effect of reducing the time needed for reports to be produced and enable States parties to keep within the timeframes laid down for reporting.

Specific Comment

NCWNZ supports the concept of harmonised reporting on implementation of human rights treaties, using the model of a core document in conjunction with targeted reports specific to each individual treaty, as outlined on page 4. NCWNZ considers that there is a base of information, as required in the core document, which is common to all human rights treaties and is an integral part of the necessary reporting. States parties collect statistical data to support their report and such data sets show duplication if repeated in each report. The use of a core document will reduce repetition and overlap, and reduce the volume of each individual report. This will reduce the workload of those preparing the report, particularly if the core document is updated regularly as suggested in the guidelines (p.11), and those receiving it; it will also enable the time taken by a State party to present its report to be shortened.

Similarly, each treaty has its own specific reporting requirements that do not overlap and must be presented to the designated monitoring committee (p.7, # 17). For this section States parties require information and discourse to be specialised and reflect the implementation of clauses of individual treaties.

NCWNZ considers the guidelines offer helpful mechanisms for States parties undertaking the reporting process so that they are enabled to present reports which convey the particulars required. They also set out why they should be followed to encourage reports to conform so that reports are consistent from all States parties. The inclusion of both progress and difficulties (p.16, clause 2) gives the total picture of implementation in countries. It allows for differing rates of change in individual countries and the impact of different cultural beliefs on implementation. Overall, reporting should be improved and information on progress will be more readily obtainable (p.16, clause 3).





NCWNZ has some concerns regarding the management of the reporting process across the several monitoring committees (p.12, clause 27). It would be an ideal for States parties to present their reports to monitoring committees as a unified cycle, but there is potential for the committees to become out of step with each other. This could happen easily if one group took longer than the allotted time to consider the report presented - illness or high workload would be among possible factors contributing to delays.

NCWNZ is pleased to support the recommendations and guidelines from the Secretariat and looks forward to participating as part of New Zealand's civil society (p12, clause 29) in the next reporting for the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Elizabeth Bang
Acting National President

Barbara Arnold
International Secretary