

Chairperson,
Excellencies,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women at the opening of this crucial session. I am honoured that this important gathering of Member States and other stakeholders committed to achieving gender equality acknowledges in this visible manner the critical role of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the protection and promotion of the human rights of women.

The forty-ninth session of the Commission will conduct a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly of 2000. These global policy instruments on women's empowerment and gender equality gave unprecedented attention to women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and emphasized the particular role of the Convention in their achievement. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women contributed to both events with assessments of the implementation of the Convention.

It is therefore my pleasure to bring to the attention of the Commission the

States that have since become party to the Optional Protocol. Both mechanisms provided for in the Optional Protocol, that is the individual complaints procedure as well as the inquiry procedure, have become operational. The Committee has issued its first decision and views in relation to complaints submitted by individuals under the Optional Protocol, and has completed its first inquiry under article 8. I wish to extend the Committee's appreciation to the States parties who have cooperated with the Committee by submitting their observations and comments. Such cooperation by States parties is not only called for under the Protocol, but an essential prerequisite for the effective functioning of the procedures which States adhere to based on their own sovereign decision.

The Committee encourages all those who have not yet become party to these key instruments for the protection and promotion of the

