



Achieving this goal requires action at many different levels, and by all stakeholders. Non-discriminatory legislative and constitutional frameworks are a critical starting point. However, gender-neutral laws may in practice perpetuate discrimination against women. Policies, programmes and practices must be in place to ensure the effective and non-discriminatory application of the law. Remedies must be available, to all women, for alleged violations of their rights, and they must be empowered to take advantage of those remedies. Action must be taken to change stereotypes and attitudes that are discriminatory to women and assign gender-specific roles and responsibilities to women and men – often to the disadvantage of women.

Your Committee, especially in its general recommendation 25 on article 4.1 made it very clear that equality under the Convention means substantive equality. You have clarified that a purely formal legal or programmatic approach is not sufficient to achieve women's de facto equality with men. You have stated that equality of results is the logical corollary of de facto or substantive equality.

The Secretary-General has submitted to the membership a report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", which contains far-reaching proposals for the reform of the Organization. Discussions, based on his proposals, for an outcome document are under way and also focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women. A number of concerns are especially highlighted, namely women's and girls' access to education; reproductive health and rights; equal access to labour markets; representation in government; elimination of violence against women, to name but a few.

One of the pillars in the Secretary-General's report is the protection and promotion of human rights. The Secretary-General proposes to revitalize the United Nations entire human rights machinery, starting with the replacement of the discredited Commission on Human Rights with a new Human Rights Council. In the same report, the Secretary-General requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, to put forward proposals for strengthening support for human rights work. In May 2005, the High Commissioner launched her Plan of Action, entitled "Protection and Empowerment". The Plan aims to strengthen the Office so that it would be better positioned to respond to today's human rights imp

As to the long term, the High Commissioner discusses the need to find means to consolidate the work of the existing treaty bodies – and those which may be established in the future - so that they can function as a single unified body. The Plan of Action, therefore, includes the creation of a unified standing treaty body. In developing proposals for a unified standing treaty body, the High Commissioner believes that serious discussions will be required with committee members, States parties, United Nations system entities, non-governmental