

CEDAW Committee Fails to Discern Good from Bad Stereotypes, and Pressures Nations to Eradicate the Identity of Women as Mothers

Prepared by Thomas W. Jacobson (4 June 2010)

In 2007, the CEDAW Committee reviewed a record 38 Party Nations for compliance with the CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW). The Committee, comprised of 22 women and one man, seems bent on eliminating all traditional stereotypes, without discerning which ones are beneficial to marriage, family and society, and which are not or are harmful. Of the 38 nations, the Committee strongly criticized 32 – even those far “advanced” in eliminating distinctions between male and female – for not abolishing “stereotypes.” From 1997 to 2001, the Committee explicitly told Party Nations to “combat the traditional stereotype of women” in the “noble role of mother” [Armenia, 1997]; eliminate “Mothers’ Day and a Mothers’ Award” because they encourage “women’s traditional roles” and are “sex-role stereotypes” [Belarus, 2000]; and stop “over-protective measures for pregnancy and motherhood” [Czech Republic, 1998]. For several years after 2001, the Committee was less explicit, and did not criticize nations for celebrating Mothers’ Day. Yet, at least since 2007, the Committee has focused on “stereotypes” with great intensity. (See last page for list of countries reviewed in 2008, 2009 and 2010.)

Yes, there are cultural or traditional stereotypes that should be ridiculed and eliminated, such as: “male preference” that leads to the infanticide of hundreds of thousands of female preborn children each year; the horrible practice of female genital mutilation; degrading views of girls and women that contribute to physical or emotional abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking; a lower view of girls and women that precludes them from a normal education; etc. These are matters that the CEDAW Committee should and does regularly address.

Yet also, preborn girls should be protected from abortion. Why does the Committee not pressure nations to prohibit abortion generally, especially when more than half of the preborn children aborted are girls? In addition, girls should receive a full education, but in ways that do not reject, but affirm, their vital life-giving roles as wives and mothers. Teaching girls to deny and despise essential and natural functions that only they can fulfill—bearing children and raising them with the unique contribution that only a mother can give—or that they will find fulfillment only in positions of power and influence, is deceitful and harmful to them.

Misinterpretation of the Convention

When addressing “stereotypes,” the Committee regularly references the following articles of the CEDAW Convention:

Article 2: “State Parties ... undertake: (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet

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incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.”

Article 2 (f): “To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.”

Article 5 (a): “To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”

These articles are interpreted through the lens of Article 1:

“For the purposes of the present Convention, the term ‘discrimination against women’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

A Party Nation to this treaty might consider itself in compliance with Articles 1 and 2(a) if it did guarantee the equality of men and women in its constitution and laws, ensuring equality before the law and in the court systems, property ownership rights, the right to vote, etc.; while also having certain considerations that override the strict principle (in Article 1), such as an absent father’s duty to provide financial support to his children, or the prohibition of women in combat positions in the military. It would be harmful, not beneficial, to women for such laws to be abolished.

Having a positive stereotype of women as mothers and homemakers is not discrimination, but healthy and natural. A woman may do other things, but most are concerned about doing well as a wife, mother and grandmother. Expecting husbands and fathers to provide for their families, and portraying them in this role, is not a bad stereotype, but is consistent with the core of who they are created to be; it is natural, beneficial to his wife and children, and usually essential to a stable, healthy family and nation.

Not a Proper Function of Government – Change the Convention

It is *not* a proper function of civil government to change attitudes or stereotypes pertaining to the roles or responsibilities of men, women or children in the family or society.

It was an error to include Article 5(a) in the Convention, and Party Nations should amend CEDAW by removing this provision. This unprecedented and misguided effort to use civil power and manipulation to change the way people think about sexuality and identity is now a political agenda sweeping the world, and all its negative effects are not yet known.

CEDAW Committee “Concluding Comments” Pressuring Nations to Eliminate “Stereotypes”

The following are quotes from the Concluding Comments, or rulings, of the CEDAW Committee after its review of 32 nations in 2007 alone.

AUSTRIA [2007]: “17. While welcoming the State party’s efforts to address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against women and perpetuate inequality between women and men, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of deep-rooted traditional attitudes and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. The Committee expresses its particular concern about the persistent stereotyping of women primarily as mothers and caregivers and of men as breadwinners. Such stereotypes, which undermine women’s social status and are reflected in women’s disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in access to decision-making positions, in their study and professional choices and in the marked division of family and domestic tasks, constitute a significant impediment to the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men, as called for in article 2 (a) of the Convention.

“18. The Committee calls upon the State party to put in place a comprehensive approach to overcoming traditional stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in society and in the family, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. Such an approach should include legal, policy and awareness-raising measures, involve public officials and civil society and target the entire population, in particular men and boys. It should also aim at the involvement of different media, including radio, television and print, and encompass both specialized and general programmes. The Committee calls upon the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls and to encourage enhanced sharing of family responsibilities.”

[Review on 23 January 2007, 37th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/AUT/CO/6]

AZERBAIJAN [2007]: “15. The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Azerbaijan, in particular in rural areas, which are reflected in women’s educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their low level of participation in political and public life. The Committee is concerned about persistent stereotypes found in school textbooks.

“16. The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to overcome persistent and deep-rooted stereotypes that are discriminatory against women, and to galvanize action by all parts of society to bring about cultural change where women’s equal rights and dignity are fully respected. It also urges the State party to disseminate information on the Convention through the educational system, including human rights education and gender-sensitivity training, so as to change existing stereotypical views and attitudes about women’s and men’s roles. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues and to revise educational textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes. It calls on the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls, and urges the State party to encourage a public dialogue on the educational choices girls and women make and their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labour market. It recommends 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. The Committee invites the

State party to specifically target rural areas in the implementation of such measures, and to regularly monitor and evaluate their impact. ...

“23. The Committee continues to be concerned about the occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market and the gap in their wages. The Committee is also concerned about the potential negative impact on women of the Labour Code, which appears to be overly protective of women as mothers and to restrict women’s economic opportunities in a number of areas. The Committee regrets that no information was provided on the women’s bank to provide loans and credits for small enterprises organized by women, which the Committee had welcomed in its previous concluding comments.

“24. The Committee recommends that efforts be strengthened to eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, and to adopt measures to narrow and close the wage gap between women and men by applying job evaluation schemes in the public sector connected with wage increases in sectors dominated by women. The Committee requests the State party to introduce provisions on equal pay for work of equal value. It also requests the State party to carefully review and analyse the impact of the Labour Code on women’s opportunities in the labour market, and make necessary amendments that will ensure the health and safety of all workers, encourage sharing of family responsibilities between women and men, and contribute to the elimination of stereotypes and traditional attitudes that discriminate against women...”

[Review on 23 January 2007, 37th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/AZE/CO/3]

BRAZIL [2007]: “19. While recognizing the efforts being undertaken, particularly in the educational sector, to deconstruct myths and negative stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and the wider community, the Committee is concerned about the prevalence of these stereotypes and the need to achieve further cultural change.

“20. The Committee calls upon the State party to implement comprehensive measures to accelerate change in the widely accepted attitudes and practices that trap women in subordinate roles and the stereotypical roles applied to both sexes. Such measures should include awareness-raising and educational campaigns addressing women and men, girls and boys, parents, teachers and public officials, in accordance with the obligations under articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party increase its efforts to encourage the media to discuss and promote non-stereotypical and positive images of women and promote the value of gender equality.”

[Review on 25 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/BRA/CO/6]

COLOMBIA [2007]: “24. While noting the efforts made to eliminate stereotypes in the educational system, including through the Gender and Diversity Education Programme, the Committee is concerned that the impact of such measures is not being adequately monitored. It is further concerned about the absence of studies or research and by the lack of analysis of the social impact and consequences of the persistence of gender-role stereotypes for the promotion of gender equality.

“25. The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to address stereotypes that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women. It encourages the State party to study and analyse systematically the impact of prevailing gender-role stereotypes for the promotion of gender equality. It encourages the State party to strengthen educational measures and to develop a more comprehensive and wide ranging strategy across all sectors to eliminate stereotypes, working with a broad range of stakeholders, including women’s and other civil society organizations, the media and the private sector in order to achieve progress in this

area. It calls on the State party to monitor the impact of measures taken and to provide the results achieved in its next periodic report.”

[Review on 25 January 2007, 37th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/COL/CO/6]

ESTONIA [2007]: “12. The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Estonia, which are reflected in women’s educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their under-representation in political and public life and decision-making positions. While noting the regulation approved by the Minister of Education in October 2005 requiring the removal of stereotypes from school textbooks and teaching materials, the Committee is concerned that such a revision of educational textbooks and materials has yet to be undertaken. The Committee is concerned about the low number of women professors among academic staff.

“13. The Committee encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts and take proactive measures to eliminate gender stereotyping. It recommends that awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues and to speedily complete the revision of educational textbooks and materials to eliminate gender stereotypes. The Committee urges the State party to disseminate knowledge about the Convention and gender equality through the educational system with a view to changing existing stereotypical views on and attitudes towards women’s and men’s roles. The Committee calls on the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls ... and implement programmes aimed at counseling women and girls on educational choices The Committee urges the State party to adopt policies to increase the number of women professors among academic staff.”

[Review on 24 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/EST/CO/4]

GREECE [2007]: “13. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. These stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of violence against women, as well as of the disadvantaged position of women in a number of areas, including in all sectors of the labour market and in political and public life.

“14. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to bring about changes in traditional patriarchal attitudes and in gender-role stereotyping. Such measures should include awareness-raising and public educational campaigns addressed at women and girls, as well as, in particular, men and boys, 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 also recommends that the State party further clarify the causes of persistent inequality between women and men, including through studies on the institutional rules that reinforce gender-role stereotyping, the specific manifestations of stereotypical ideology in the State party, the costs of placing the burden of homemaking solely on women and the monetary value of women’s unpaid labour, and use the insights gained as basis for taking enhanced measures to address these stereotypes.”

[Review on 24 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/GRC/CO/6]

GUINEA [2007]: “22. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of a patriarchal ideology with firmly entrenched stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. It is also concerned about the persistence of deep-rooted adverse cultural norms, customs and traditions, including forced and early marriage and female genital mutilation, that discriminate against women, perpetuate violence against women and constitute serious obstacles to women’s enjoyment of their human rights.

“23. The Committee urges the State party to view culture as a dynamic dimension of the country’s life and social fabric, subject to many influences over time and therefore to change. It urges the State party to put in 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. It also urges the State party to put in place monitoring mechanisms to regularly assess progress made towards the achievement of established goals. It requests the State party to undertake such efforts in collaboration with civil society, women’s organizations and community and religious leaders, and to report on measures taken and results achieved in its next periodic report.”

[Review on 25 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/GIN/CO/6]

HONDURAS [2007]: “26. While appreciating the efforts of the State party to incorporate a gender equality approach in the Basic National Curriculum and to work with a range of educational institutions to remove stereotyped images of women and men from curricula, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. Such stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in all areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life.

“27. The Committee urges the State party to address stereotypical attitudes towards the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including cultural patterns and norms that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives. It calls upon the State party to implement and monitor comprehensive measures to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women. Such measures should include awareness-raising and educational campaigns addressing women and men and 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.”

[Review on 26 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/HON/CO/6]

HUNGARY [2007]: “16. The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Hungary, which are reflected in women’s educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their under-representation in political and public life and decision-making positions. The Committee is also concerned about the continuing stereotypical portrayal of women in the media and about the increase in the extent of pornography.

“17. The Committee encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts and take proactive measures to eliminate gender stereotyping. It recommends that awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project

positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues. The Committee urges the State party to disseminate knowledge about the Convention and its concept of substantive gender equality through the educational system, with a view to changing existing stereotypical views on and attitudes towards women's and men's roles. The Committee calls on the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls. It urges the State party to develop and implement programmes aimed at counseling women and girls and men and boys on educational choices, bearing in mind their subsequent equal opportunities and chances in the labour market.”

[Review on 31 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/HUN/CO/6]

INDIA [2007]: “34. While welcoming the State party's efforts to eliminate gender-based stereotypes through the review and revision of textbooks at the national level, the Committee is concerned that such review and revision has not taken place at the state level in most states. The Committee is also concerned that teachers in schools are not gender-sensitized, to the detriment of female students.

“35. The Committee calls upon the State party to initiate and monitor the reform of textbooks at the state level to eliminate all gender-based stereotypes and to strengthen its efforts, at the national, state and union territory levels, to combat the widespread acceptance of stereotypical roles of men and women. It recommends that gender issues and sensitivity training be made an integral and substantive component of all teacher training.”

[Review on 18 January 2007, 37th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/IND/CO/3]

INDONESIA [2007]: “16. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of entrenched patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society that discriminate against women. Such stereotypes and attitudes constitute serious obstacles to women's enjoyment of their human rights and the implementation of the Convention and are the root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life. In particular, the Committee is also concerned about requirements that a woman obtain her family's consent before engaging in night work. The Committee is further concerned about the requirement that a woman obtain her husband's consent regarding sterilization and abortion, even when her life is in danger.

“17. The Committee encourages the State party to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes to foster a better understanding of and support for equality between women and men at all levels of society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. Such efforts should aim at changing stereotypical attitudes and traditional norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family and society and at strengthening societal support for gender equality. The Committee further urges the State party to remove family and spousal consent requirements in the areas of women's employment and health.

“18. The Committee is concerned about the discriminatory provisions in the Marriage Act of 1974, which perpetuate stereotypes by providing that men are the heads of households and women are relegated to domestic roles, allow polygamy and set a legal minimum age of marriage of 16 for girls. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of progress in the law reform process with respect to marriage and family law, which allows the persistence of discriminatory provisions that deny women equal rights with men. In particular, it expresses concern that

amendments to the Marriage Act of 1974 have not yet been completed, although the Committee expressed concerns about the discriminatory provisions in this Act in its previous concluding comments.

“19. The Committee requests the State party to take immediate steps to revise the Marriage Act of 1974 in accordance with its obligations under the Convention, the Committee’s general recommendation 21, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the State party’s expressed intention to amend the law without delay. It further urges the State party to put in place an effective strategy with clear priorities and timetables to eliminate discrimination against women in the areas of marriage and family relations.

[Review on 27 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/IDN/CO/5]

JORDAN [2007]: “19. While noting that the Ministry of Education is gradually revising school textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes and incorporate principles of human rights and women’s rights and that the Ministry of Religious Affairs is developing a guide for preachers and imams emphasizing women’s rights in Islam, the Committee continues to be deeply concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted cultural stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society in Jordan, as already expressed in the previous concluding comments (A/55/38, part one, para. 165). These stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life, and are also a root cause of violence against women.

“20. The Committee urges the State party to view culture as a dynamic aspect of the country’s social fabric and life and therefore subject to change. It calls upon the State party to 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. Such measures should include awareness-raising and programmes 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. The Committee recommends that the State party 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.”

[Review on 2 August 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/JOR/CO/4]

KAZAKHSTAN [2007]: “13. While noting the introduction of a number of courses on gender-related subjects in institutions of higher education, the Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Kazakhstan, which are reflected in women’s educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their low level of participation in political and public life. The Committee is concerned about persistent stereotypes found in school textbooks.

“14. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues and to revise educational textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes. The Committee urges the State party to disseminate information on the Convention through all levels of the educational system, including human rights education and gender-sensitivity training, so as to change existing stereotypical views and attitudes about women’s and men’s roles. The Committee calls on the State party to further encourage diversification of the

educational choices of boys and girls. It also urges the State party to encourage public dialogues on the educational choices girls and women make and their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labour market. It recommends 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.”

[Review on 16 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/KAZ/CO/2]

KENYA [2007]: “21. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life. The Committee is concerned that such customs and practices perpetuate discrimination against women, and that they are reflected in women’s disadvantageous and unequal status in many areas, including in public life and decision-making and in marriage and family relations, and the persistence of violence against women ... thus far, the State party has not taken sustained and systematic action to modify or eliminate stereotypes and negative cultural values and practices.

“22. The Committee requests the State party to view its cultures as dynamic aspects of the country’s life and social fabric and as subject, therefore, to change. It urges the State party to put in place without delay a comprehensive strategy, including legislation, to modify or eliminate cultural practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. Such measures should include efforts to raise awareness of this subject, targeting women and men at all levels of society, including traditional leaders, which should be undertaken in collaboration with civil society. The Committee urges the State party to address harmful cultural and traditional customs and practices, such as the use of the bride price and polygamy, more vigorously. The Committee encourages the State party to effectively use innovative measures to strengthen understanding of the equality of women and men and to work with the media to enhance a positive and non-stereotypical portrayal of women.”

[Review on 27 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/KEN/CO/6]

LIECHTENSTEIN [2007]: “21. While welcoming the State party’s efforts to address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against women and perpetuate inequality between women and men, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of traditional attitudes and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. The Committee is concerned that women continue to be stereotyped as mothers and caregivers, while men are stereotyped as breadwinners. Such stereotypes undermine women’s social status, as reflected in women’s disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in access to decision-making positions, and affect women’s choices in their studies and professions. The Committee notes that such stereotypes constitute a significant impediment to the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men, as called for in article 2 (a) of the Convention.

“22. The Committee calls upon the State party to put in place a comprehensive policy, targeted at men and women, boys and girls, to overcome traditional stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in society and in the family, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. Such a policy should include legal, administrative and awareness-raising measures, involve public officials and civil society and target the entire population. It should also focus on the involvement of different media, including print and the Internet, and encompass both specialized and general programmes.”

[Review on 26 July 2007, 39th session, UN document CEDAW/C/LIE/CO/3]

MALDIVES [2007]: “17. While the Committee welcomes the efforts made to change stereotypes, including awareness-raising and sensitization activities, and other noteworthy developments, such as the inclusion of a gender equality provision in the national media policy, the Committee is concerned about the subordinate and subservient role women and girls continue to play within the family and the deep-rooted, traditional stereotypical attitudes that persist, and which are reflected particularly in women’s professional and educational opportunities and choices and their participation in public and political life.

“18. The Committee urges the State party to strengthen measures to eradicate negative stereotypes and to carry out training for parliamentarians and decision-makers on the importance of equality of women and men in a democratic society. It also recommends that information on the content of the Convention be disseminated in the educational system, including in the rural (atoll) areas, that school textbooks and teaching materials be reviewed and revised and that human rights education have a gender perspective, with a view to changing existing stereotypical views on and attitudes towards women’s and men’s roles in the family and society and creating an environment that is supportive of the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men. It recommends that the media continue to 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.

[Review on 19 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/MDV/CO/3]

MOZAMBIQUE [2007]: “20. The Committee expresses a general concern about the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes and cultural practices and traditions of a patriarchal nature relating to the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, as they constitute serious obstacles to women’s educational and professional prospects and the enjoyment of their human rights and contribute to the persistence of violence against women.

“21. The Committee urges the State party to view culture as a dynamic aspect of the country’s social fabric and life, which is therefore subject to change, and encourages the State party to adopt a comprehensive strategy to promote cultural change and eliminate discriminatory stereotypes with respect to the roles of women and men, in line with its obligations under articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. The Committee recommends that such a strategy include educational and awareness-raising programmes targeting women and men at all levels of society, that it be undertaken in collaboration with civil society and women’s organizations and that it aim for the creation of a favourable environment for positive cultural change.”

[Review on 23 May 2007, 38th session, UN document CEDAW/C/MOZ/CO/2]

NAMIBIA [2007]: “16. The Committee expresses concern about the persistence of strong patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. The Committee is also concerned that the Traditional Authorities Act (Act No. 25 of 2000), which gives traditional authorities the right to supervise and ensure the observance of customary law, may have a negative impact on women in cases where such laws perpetuate the use of customs and cultural and traditional practices that are harmful to and discriminate against women.

“17. The Committee calls upon the State party to take measures to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women. Such efforts should include comprehensive awareness-raising and educational campaigns that address women and men and girls and boys, with a view to eliminating the stereotypes associated with traditional gender roles in the family and in society, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. The

Committee urges the State party to monitor carefully the impact of these measures and to report on the results achieved in its next periodic report. The Committee also calls on the State party to study the impact of the implementation of the Traditional Authorities Act (Act No. 25 of 2000) and the Community Courts Act (October 2003) so as to ensure that customs and cultural and traditional practices that are harmful to and discriminate against women are discontinued.”

[Review on 17 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/NAM/CO/3]

NEW ZEALAND [2007]: “36. While the Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to support women’s participation in the labour force, the Committee is concerned that the rates of participation for mothers of young children and single mothers remain below the average for States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Committee also expresses concern that seasonal and temporary workers remain ineligible for paid parental leave. The Committee is also concerned about the low rate of participation of men in paid parental leave programmes and about the barriers to access to childcare and parental leave policies faced by rural women, as well as Maori, Pacific and other minority women.

“37. The Committee requests that the State party act expeditiously to amend eligibility criteria to ensure that seasonal and temporary workers are eligible for paid parental leave. It also urges the State party to undertake further measures to increase the participation rate of mothers of young children and single mothers in the labour force by strengthening parental leave programmes for men and encouraging men to share child-rearing responsibilities with women. The Committee further requests that the State party analyse and assess the barriers that rural and Maori, Pacific and minority women face in accessing childcare and parental leave, and implement measures to reduce these barriers and increase their access to such services.”

[Review on 2 August 2007, 39th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/NZL/CO/6]

NICARAGUA [2007]: “11. The Committee remains concerned about the persistence and pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men within the family and in all spheres of society at large. The Committee regrets that, despite its previous recommendations, no sustained, systematic action has been taken by the State party to modify and eliminate stereotypes and negative cultural attitudes and practices that discriminate against women and prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights.

“12. The Committee urges the State party to put in place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy, including clear goals and timetables, to modify and eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices and deep-rooted stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. It urges the State party to undertake such efforts in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, and involving all sectors of society, so as to facilitate social and cultural change and the creation of an enabling environment that is supportive of gender equality. It also urges the State party to monitor such efforts and regularly assess progress made towards the achievement of established goals, and to include an assessment of results achieved in its next periodic report.”

[Review on 17 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/6]

NIGER [2007]: “17. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of a patriarchal ideology with firmly entrenched stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. It is further concerned about the persistence of deep-rooted adverse cultural norms, customs and traditions, including forced and early marriage, female

genital mutilation and repudiation, that discriminate against women, perpetuate violence against women and constitute serious obstacles to women's enjoyment of their human rights.

"18. The Committee urges the State party to ... put in place ... 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. It also urges the State party to put in place monitoring mechanisms to regularly assess progress made towards the achievement of established goals. ...

"31. While noting provisions on the right to work in the Constitution of the Niger, the ratification of certain International Labour Organization Conventions and other laws, including the Labour Code, prohibiting discrimination against women in the field of employment, the Committee is concerned about their poor implementation and the lack of an efficient monitoring mechanism. The Committee is concerned about the lack of data on women's participation in the labour force and in the informal sector, especially about their de facto situation. In particular, the Committee lacks a clear picture with regard to women's participation in the labour force in urban and rural areas, their unemployment rates and salary, vertical and horizontal labour force segregation and their ability to benefit from new economic opportunities. The Committee is concerned that some of the State party's labour laws, which are overly protective of women as mothers and restrict women's participation in a number of areas, may create obstacles to women's participation in the labour market and perpetuate gender role stereotypes.

"32. The Committee urges the State party to ensure equal opportunities for, and equal treatment of, women and men in the labour market in accordance with article 11 of the Convention, and in particular to strengthen its labour inspectorate. The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to ensure that all employment-generation programmes are gender-sensitive and that women can fully benefit from them. It calls on the State party to provide in its next report detailed information, including data disaggregated by sex, and analysis on the situation of women in the field of employment, in both the formal and informal sectors, and trends over time, and about measures taken and their impact on realizing equal opportunities for women in the world of work. The Committee recommends that the State party conduct regular reviews of legislation, in accordance with article 11, paragraph 3, of the Convention, with a view to reducing all barriers women face in the labour market."

[Review on 29 May 2007, 38th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/NER/CO/2]

NORWAY [2007]: "17. While welcoming the State party's innovative activities to address the social conduct of women and men and related stereotypes, such as the design and use of programmes for teaching and discussion and a joint research project of the Nordic countries to promote an understanding among youth of gender equality issues, the Committee is concerned that stereotypical cultural attitudes persist. These stereotypes are reflected in particular in women's position in the labour market, where they predominate in part-time work, and in their educational choices, particularly in higher education.

"18. The Committee recommends that the State party take additional measures to eliminate traditional stereotypical attitudes, including through sensitization and training of educators and school counselors and sustained awareness-raising campaigns directed at both women and men, and at young people. Considering the important role of the media in regard to cultural change, the Committee recommends again that the State party encourage the media to project a positive image of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres."

[Review on 1 August 2007, 39th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/NOR/CO/7]

PAKISTAN [2007]: “28. The Committee is strongly concerned about pervasive patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted traditional and cultural stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family, in the workplace and in society, which constitute serious obstacles to women’s enjoyment of their human rights and impede the full implementation of the Convention. The Committee is also concerned that prevailing trends of fundamentalism, intimidation and violence incited by non-State actors, including through illegal media, are seriously undermining women’s enjoyment of their human rights in the name of religion.

“29. The Committee urges the State party to increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes to foster a better understanding of and support for equality between women and men at all levels of society. Such efforts should aim at modifying stereotypical attitudes and traditional norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family, the workplace and in society, as required under articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention, and to strengthen societal support for equality between women and men. The Committee also calls on the State party to take prompt action to counteract the influence of non-State actors, which, through the misinterpretation of Islam and the use of intimidation and violence, are undermining the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights.”

“36. The Committee is concerned about the high illiteracy rate of women, the low enrolment of girls in schools and their high dropout rate, especially in rural areas. The Committee is further concerned at the persistence of gender-based segregation in educational fields and its consequences for women’s professional opportunities. The Committee is also concerned about the persistence of stereotypes in school curricula and textbooks.

“37. The Committee calls upon the State party to place high priority on the reduction of the illiteracy rate of women, in particular those who are from rural areas. The Committee urges the State party to enhance its compliance with article 10 of the Convention and to raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and a basis for the empowerment of women. It encourages the State party to take steps to overcome traditional attitudes that constitute obstacles to girls’ and women’s education and recommends that the State party implement measures to ensure equal access of girls and women to all levels of education and the retaining of girls in school. It further recommends that women be actively encouraged to diversify educational and professional choices. It requests the State party to undertake a comprehensive review of educational curricula and textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes and to introduce gender sensitization training for teachers.”

[Review on 22 May 2007, 38th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/3]

POLAND [2007]: “16. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of deep-rooted prejudice and stereotypical attitudes regarding the traditional division of roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society at large. Such stereotypes perpetuate discrimination against women and are reflected in many areas, such as in women’s situation in the labour market, their low level of participation in political and public life and the persistence of violence against women. It also expresses its concern at the limited scope of, and support for, women’s and gender studies programmes at universities, which results in a lack of research and specialized expertise on gender equality issues.

“17. The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to overcome persistent and deep-rooted stereotypes that are discriminatory against women, and to galvanize action by all parts of society, especially the educational system, the media and non-governmental organizations, in order to counteract stereotypical attitudes and portrayals of women and to bring

about cultural change whereby women's equal rights and dignity are fully respected. It also urges the State party to support the establishment and maintenance of women's and gender studies departments at universities, including through the provision of adequate State funding."

[Review on 16 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/POL/CO/6]

REPUBLIC OF KOREA [2007]: "25. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, especially in rural areas, which are reflected in women's academic and professional choices, their limited participation in public and political life and in their disadvantaged position in the labour market. The Committee is also concerned that these stereotypes are a root cause of violence against women.

"26. The Committee calls upon the State party to take sustained and systematic measures to overcome persistent and deep-rooted stereotypes that are discriminatory to women. Such measures should include awareness-raising and public educational campaigns, aimed in particular at men and boys, including women and girls, 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. The Committee calls upon the State party to specifically target rural areas in the implementation of such measures and to regularly monitor and evaluate their impact. The Committee calls on the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls, bearing in mind their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labour market. It also calls upon the State party to address stereotypes, the unequal power relations between women and men and women's position of inferiority, which perpetuate discrimination against women, including violence against women. The Committee recommends that the State party encourage the media to project a positive image of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres."

[Review on 31 July 2007, 39th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/KOR/CO/6]

SIERRA LEONE [2007]: "20. The Committee is deeply concerned about the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions and of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life. The Committee is concerned that such norms, customs and practices justify and perpetuate discrimination against women, including violence against women, and that no sustained and systematic action has yet been taken by the State party to modify or eliminate such negative cultural values, practices and stereotypes.

"21. The Committee urges the State party to view culture as a dynamic dimension of the country's life and social fabric, subject to many influences over time and therefore to change. It urges the State party to put in 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. Such a strategy should include specifically designed educational and awareness-raising programmes targeting women and men at all levels of society, including tribal chiefs, should be undertaken in collaboration with civil society and women's organizations and should be aimed at creating an enabling environment for the transformation and change of stereotypes and discriminatory cultural values, attitudes and practices. It also urges the State party to put in place monitoring mechanisms ... with the participation of tribal chiefs and women's organizations.

[Review on 17 May 2007, 38th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5]

SINGAPORE [2007]: “31. The Committee reiterates its concern about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men within the family and society at large. These stereotypes present a significant obstacle to the implementation of the Convention, are a root cause of violence against women in the private and public spheres, put women in a disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market, and limit their access to leadership positions in political and public life.

“32. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to bring about changes in traditional patriarchal attitudes and in gender-role stereotyping. Such measures should include awareness-raising and public education campaigns, with a special focus in the curriculum on human rights education and women’s rights and children’s rights issues, in cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the national machinery for the advancement of women, women’s organizations, trade unions, the National Employers Federation, the media, educational institutions and the People’s Association, 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 recommends that the State party expand its current awareness-raising efforts and training activities to leaders of political parties and senior managers in the private sector. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that all measures to enhance work/life balance are targeted at both women and men in the public and private sectors, so as to further support the equal sharing of family and work responsibilities between women and men.”

[Review on 1 August 2007, 39th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3]

SURINAME [2007]: “17. The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Suriname, which are reflected in women’s educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their low level of participation in political and public life. The Committee is concerned about persistent stereotypes found in school textbooks and curricula.

“18. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues and to revise educational textbooks and curricula to eliminate gender-role stereotypes. The Committee urges the State party to disseminate information on the Convention through the educational system, including human rights education and gender-sensitivity training, so as to change existing stereotypical views and attitudes about women’s and men’s roles. The Committee calls upon the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls. It also urges the State party to encourage a public dialogue on the educational choices girls and women make and their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labour market. It recommends 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.”

[Review on 25 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3]

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC [2007]: “27. While appreciating the efforts of the State party to revise school curricula to remove stereotyped images of women and men, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. These stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of

the disadvantaged position of women in all areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life.

“28. The Committee urges the State party to 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. It calls upon the State party to 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.”

[Review on 24 May 2007, 38th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/SYR/CO/1]

TAJIKISTAN [2007]: “19. The Committee is concerned about the resurgence of patriarchal attitudes subordinating women and of strong stereotypes regarding their roles and responsibilities in the family and society in the context of the breakdown of the previous political system, the civil war (1992-1997) and rampant poverty. These attitudes and stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of women’s disadvantaged position in the labour market, their difficulties in accessing their land rights, the continuing existence of polygamy, domestic violence and the high dropout rates of girls from school.

“20. The Committee calls upon the State party to implement comprehensive measures, in particular in rural areas, to initiate change in the widely accepted subordination of women and the stereotypical roles applied to both sexes. Such measures should include awareness-raising and educational campaigns addressing religious and community leaders, parents, teachers, officials and young girls and boys themselves, in accordance with the obligations under articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party encourage the media to discuss and promote non-stereotypical and positive images of women and promote the value of gender equality ... (T)he Committee reminds the State party of its obligation under paragraph 2 of article 19 of the Law on State Guarantees, according to which the organs of the State must publish annual reports on their implementation of the Law in the mass media ... Such annual reports could include discussions on the elimination of gender-role stereotypes.” ...

“27. While noting that some efforts have been made in the area of education ... the Committee is concerned that ... dire poverty and social stereotypes concerning women’s roles and responsibilities ... rate of non-attendance by girl children at the primary school level ... sharp decline in the enrolment of girls at the secondary school level and there is a low enrolment rate of female students in institutes of higher education....

“28. The Committee urges the State party to place high priority on educating women and girls and to immediately take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and in the Committee’s general recommendation 25, to eliminate the disparity in school enrolment rates and to achieve universal primary education for girls in accordance with its international obligations under the Convention and other commitments. It urges the State party to address the obstacles effectively which prevent girls from attending school or continuing their education. The Committee recommends that the image of teachers be improved through further salary increases, the media and other public forums. The Committee also recommends that additional training be provided to teachers ... (on) gender equality, democracy and market opportunities. The Committee further

recommends that: communities be mobilized ... in favour of the education of girls; seminars ... helping parents to understand the important role of education for girls; and education for girls be made affordable and special measures be implemented to allow girls and women who have dropped out of school to re-enter the education system ... It also requests the State party to continue to review all school textbooks to eliminate gender role stereotypes.”

[Review on 26 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/TJK/CO/3]

VANUATU [2007]: “22. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions, as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes, regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life. The Committee is concerned that such customs and practices perpetuate discrimination against women, and are reflected in women’s disadvantageous and unequal status in many areas, including in public life and decision-making, and in marriage and family relations, and the persistence of violence against women, and that so far, the State party has taken ad hoc, rather than sustained and systematic, action to modify or eliminate stereotypes and negative cultural values and practices.

“23. The Committee requests the State party to view its specific culture as a dynamic aspect of the country’s life and social fabric and therefore subject to change. It urges the State party to put in place without delay a comprehensive strategy, including legislation, to modify or eliminate cultural practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. Such measures should include awareness-raising efforts targeting women and men at all levels of society, including traditional leaders, and be undertaken in collaboration with civil society and women’s organizations. The Committee encourages the State party to effectively use innovative measures in targeting young people and adults through the educational system to strengthen understanding of the equality of women and men, and to work with the media so as to enhance a positive and non-stereotypical portrayal of women. It also requests the State party to put in place monitoring mechanisms and to regularly assess progress made towards the achievement of established goals in this respect.”

[Review on 18 May 2007, 38th Session, UN document CEDAW/C/VUT/CO/3]

VIET NAM [2007]: “12. The Committee reiterates its concern about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes, including the preference for male offspring, regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men within the family and society at large. These stereotypes present a significant obstacle to the implementation of the Convention, are a root cause of violence against women and put women in a disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life.

“13. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to bring about changes in traditional patriarchal attitudes and in gender-role stereotyping. Such measures should include awareness-raising and public educational campaigns ... 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. Special attention should be given to the role of the media in perpetuating such stereotypes, as well as their role in contributing to a social and cultural change towards an environment that is supportive of gender equality. The Committee recommends, in particular, that the Convention be translated into those ethnic minority languages ... and that radio programmes in the languages of ethnic minorities ... be used in regularly disseminating information on the Convention and on gender equality.”

[Review on 17 January 2007, 37th session, UN document CEDAW/C/VNM/CO/6]

For similar statements made by the CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments, or rulings, for nations reviewed in 2008, 2009 and 2010, the pertinent paragraphs in each compliance report are listed below.

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