

Human Rights For All



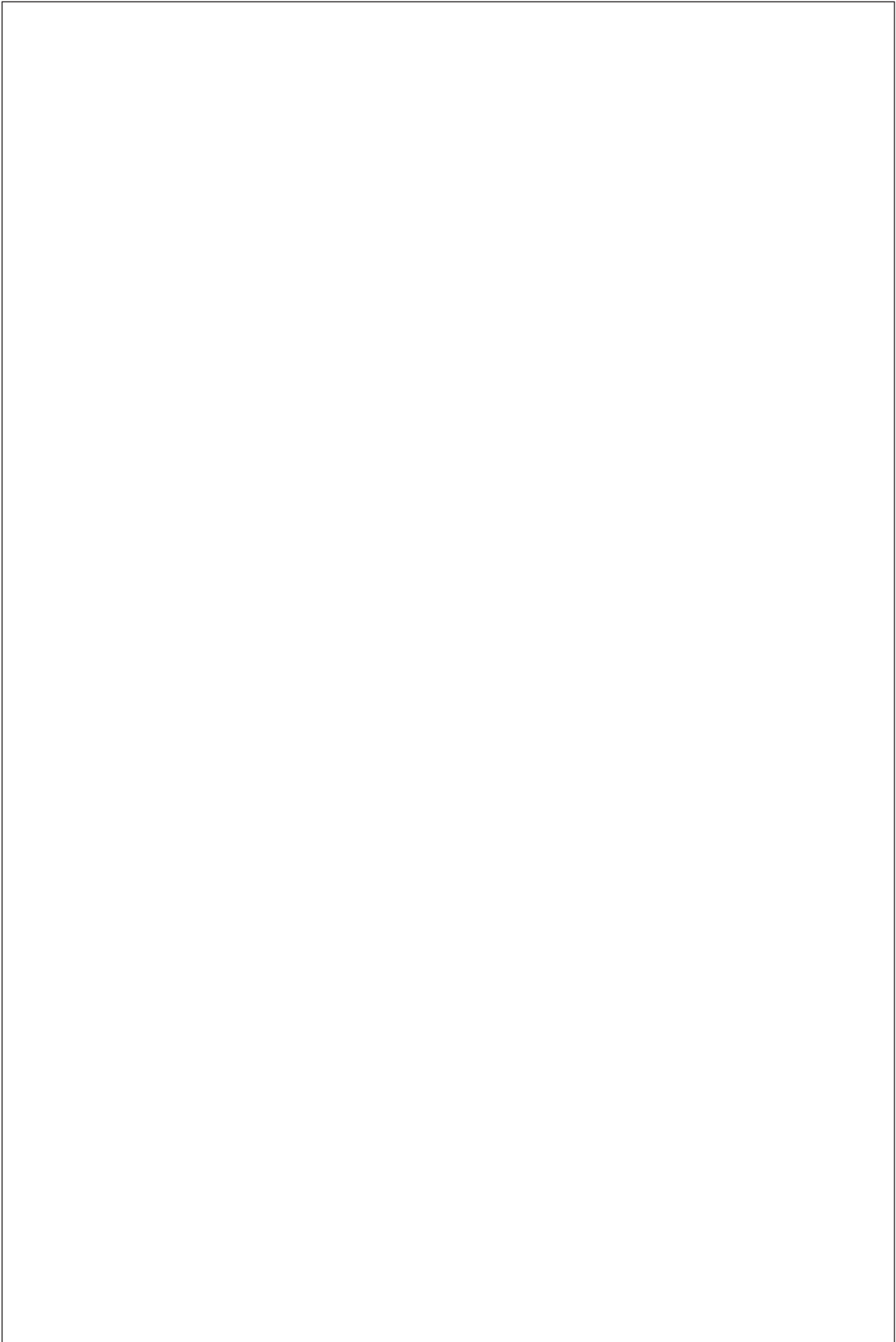
CEDAW:

The Convention on
the Elimination of
All Forms of
Discrimination
Against Women

Working for
Women
Around the World
And
At Home

Compiled & Edited by Leila Rassekh Milani

Working Group on Ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women



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The Working Group on Ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a group of more than 100 national Non-governmental Organizations engaged in outreach and education to achieve ratification by the U.S. of the U.N. treaty that bans discrimination against women.

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Cover Art: 'Guardians' © Ann Altman 1995, www.annaltman.com
Book Design: Pepper Peterson Oldziej

Acknowledgments

Profound thanks to Amy Youssefian, without whose enormous efforts and assistance this publication would not have been possible.

Deep gratitude is owed to the following people for their contribution, consultation, support, and advice:

Sarah Albert, Alex Arriaga, Dwight Bashir, Terri Brelind, Virginia Campbell, Janice Castaneda, Jill Christianson, Zarrin Caldwell, Kit Cosby, Joanne Eide, Billie Heller, LaShawn Jefferson, Christina McGraw, Sum Mehrnama, Hope S. Miller, Cherreka Montgomery, Pat Rengel, Linda Shevitz, Christine D. Smith, Penny Wakefield, and John Weiner.

We also want to thank the following organizations and individuals, which have provided material support for the production of this book:

American Association of University Women
American Bar Association Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities
Amnesty International USA, Women's Human Rights Program
Center for Reproductive Law & Policy
Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Stephen L. Damours
Julia Ernst
Family Violence Prevention Fund
Feminist Majority
General Federation of Women's Clubs
Jewish Women International
Lucy Stone League
Hope S. Miller
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Education Association
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the US
Shoshana Riemer
Sorooptimist International of the Americas
United Nations Association of the United States of America
United Nations Association of the National Capital Area
United Nations Development Fund for Women - Connecticut Branch
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Boston Branch
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- Cleveland Branch (Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,
United States Section

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“Universal acknowledgment of the equality of men and women is fundamental to peace and the survival of humanity. Implementation of the principle of equality challenges traditional practices, necessitates a reexamination of the long-held assumptions underlying all human relationships from the family to society at large. Because it is so interwoven with all other facets of life, the practice of the equality of the sexes impinges on all human beings—women and men alike.”

Janet A. Khan and Peter J. Khan, *Advancement of Women*;
Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1998.

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To Take Action visit:
http://www.us.bahai.org/extaffairs/cedaw/cedaw_index.html
or <http://amnestyusa.org/cedaw/index.html>

Introduction

What is CEDAW?

- CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, is an international “Bill of Rights” for women. It is the first and only international instrument that comprehensively addresses women’s rights within political, cultural, economic, social, and family life. The creation of this treaty was the first step in developing human rights language for women.
- As of November 2001, 168 countries have ratified CEDAW. The United States is among a small minority of countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, and Sudan, and is the only industrialized democracy that has not ratified CEDAW.

What is the Impact of CEDAW around the World?

- CEDAW has had a significant and positive impact on legal developments in countries as diverse as Uganda, Colombia, Brazil, and South Africa.
- CEDAW has encouraged the development of citizenship rights in Botswana and Japan, inheritance rights in the United Republic of Tanzania, and property rights and political participation in Costa Rica.
- CEDAW has fostered development of domestic violence laws in Turkey, Nepal, South Africa, and the Republic of Korea and anti-trafficking laws in Ukraine and Moldova.
- To learn more about ways in which CEDAW has been used to advance women’s rights throughout the world, visit Bringing Equality Home: <http://www.unifem.undp.org/cedaw/indexen.htm> or call UNIFEM at 212-687-8633.

Why Should the United States Ratify CEDAW?

- CEDAW provides a universal definition of discrimination against women that establishes a basis for every government's domestic and foreign policy against discrimination.
- CEDAW will improve U.S. women's access to decision making.
- CEDAW will improve U.S. women's economic rights.
- CEDAW will help U.S. girls and women achieve educational parity.
- CEDAW will enhance U.S. laws on violence against women.
- As long as it remains one of the few nations that have failed to ratify CEDAW, the United States compromises its credibility as a world leader in human rights.
- CEDAW is a tool that women around the world are using to fight the effects of discrimination: violence against women; poverty; lack of legal status in inheritance and property rights; and access to credit.
- Women around the world need the United States to speak loudly and clearly in support of CEDAW so that it becomes a stronger instrument in support of their struggles. Without U.S. ratification, some other governments feel free to ignore CEDAW's mandate and their obligations under it.

To Take Action visit:

http://www.us.bahai.org/extaffairs/cedaw/cedaw_index.html
or <http://amnestyusa.org/cedaw/index.html>

History and Background

On December 18, 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, “The Women’s Convention” or “CEDAW.” The call for a Women’s Convention emerged from the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. Until 1979, when the General Assembly adopted the Convention, there was no document that addressed comprehensively women’s rights within political, cultural, economic, social, and family life. Often called an international **“Bill of Rights”** for women, CEDAW is the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. As of November 2001, 168 countries have ratified the Convention. The creation of this treaty was the first critical step in developing appropriate human rights language for women. This language addresses abuses (physical, sexual, economic, and political) of women and promotes women’s full enjoyment of their rights and well-being.

The CEDAW Committee

The paramount action-causing agent in implementing CEDAW is the political will of governments. This political will is developed to the extent that constituencies, religious groups, civic groups, legal groups, women’s groups, and government agencies present their well-defined human rights action plans. In order to consider and review the progress made in implementing the Convention, CEDAW established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee). This Committee of twenty-three independent experts reviews reports from individual governments and assesses the Convention’s implementation at the national level. It is through the interplay of government reports and the CEDAW committee that women’s perspectives, understandings, and expectations find a voice. This dialogue and voice reflect the vast interests of women representing a kaleidoscope of cultures, religions, and ethnicities/race groups and contribute to the establishment of universal standards of human rights.

Dialogue and Consultation

CEDAW is not a newly drafted treaty. Rather its twenty years of existence provides a much valued measuring tool by which its pur-

pose and intent can be assessed. The primary goal of the Convention is to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights throughout the world. The language used signifies the incremental, or progressive, nature of the obligation of State Parties to comply. The Convention's language, such as "appropriate measures to introduce," indicates the drafters' commitment to identify areas where women are still lagging behind and promotes consultative dialogue in developing appropriate remedies. A survey of what has developed in the more than 160 countries which have ratified CEDAW offers the actual, rather than the speculative, proof of how CEDAW has helped secure fundamental rights and freedoms of women throughout the world, one change at a time and one day at a time.

The Role of the United States

The United States was active in drafting the Convention. President Carter signed the treaty on July 17, 1980, and the Convention was transmitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in November 1980 for a vote on ratification. A decade later, in the summer of 1990, the committee held hearings on the Convention. In the spring of 1993, sixty-eight senators signed a letter to President Clinton asking him to take the necessary steps to ratify the Women's Convention. In June 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna that the Clinton Administration would pursue the Women's Convention and other human rights treaties.

In September 1994, the Convention was reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee favorably by a vote of 13 to 5 (with one abstention). This vote occurred in the last days of the Congressional session and several senators put a hold on the Convention, thereby blocking it from a vote on the Senate floor during the 103rd Congress. When the new Senate, under new leadership, convened in January 1995, the Convention reverted back to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The committee has taken no action since then.

In order for an international treaty to be ratified by the United States, two-thirds of the Senate, or sixty-seven "yes" votes, are required for the Senate to consent to ratification. Action by the House of Representatives is not required for ratification of international treaties. To date, U.S. ratification has been endorsed by legislatures in nine states: California, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, and Vermont. The Connecticut State Senate and the House of Representatives in Florida, South Dakota, and Illinois have also endorsed U.S. ratification.

Treaty Summary

Article 1: defines **discrimination against women** as 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 marital status, on the basis of equality between men and women, of human rights or fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field;

Article 2: mandates States Parties to condemn discrimination in all its forms and to ensure a legal framework, including all laws, policies and practices that provide protection against discrimination and embody the principle of equality;

Article 3: requires that States Parties take action in all fields - civil, political, economic, social, and cultural - to guarantee women’s human rights;

Article 4: permits States Parties to take “**temporary special measures**” to **accelerate equality**;

Article 5: declares the need to take appropriate measures to modify cultural patterns of conduct as well as the need for family education to recognize the social function of motherhood and the common responsibility for raising children;

Article 6: obligates States Parties to take measures to **suppress traffic in women** and the exploitation of prostitution of women;

Article 7: mandates the States Parties to **end discrimination against women in political and public life**, and to ensure women’s equal rights to vote, be eligible for election, participate in the formulation of policy, hold office, and participate in associations and non-governmental organizations in these spheres;

Article 8: requires action to allow women to represent their governments internationally on a equal basis with men;

Article 9: mandates that women will have equal rights with men to acquire, change, or retain their nationality and that of their children;

Article 10: obligates States Parties to end discrimination **in education**, including in professional and vocational training, access to curricula and other means of receiving an equal education; as well as to **eliminate stereotyped concepts** of the roles of men and women;

Article 11: mandates the end of discrimination **in the field of employment**, including the right to work, to employment opportunities, to **equal remuneration**, to free choice of profession and employment, to **social security**, and to protection of health, including maternal health, and also in regard to discrimination on the grounds of marriage or maternity;

Article 12: requires steps to eliminate discrimination from the field of **health care**, including **access to services** such as family planning;

Article 13: requires that women be ensured the same rights as men in all areas of social and economic life, such as **family benefits, mortgages, bank loans**, and participation in **recreational activities and sports**;

Article 14: focuses on the particular problems faced by **rural women**, including the areas of women's participation in development planning, access to adequate health care, credit, education, and adequate living conditions;

Article 15: obligates States Parties to take steps to ensure **equality before the law** and the same legal capacity to act in such areas as **contracts**, administration of **property**, and choice of residence;

Article 16: requires steps to ensure **equality in marriage and family relations**, including equal rights with men **to freely choose marriage, equal rights and responsibilities toward children**, including the right to **freely determine the number and spacing of children** and the means to do so, and the **same rights to property**;

Article 17: calls for the **establishment of the Committee** on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to evaluate progress made in implementation of the Convention;

Article 18: establishes a **schedule of reporting** on progress by ratifying countries;

Article 19: establishes the ability of CEDAW to adopt rules of procedure and sets a two-year term for its officers;

Article 20: sets annual CEDAW meetings to review States Parties reports;

Article 21: directs CEDAW to report annually to the General Assembly through ECOSOC and **to make suggestions and general recommendations** based on the States Parties' reports;

Article 22: allows for representation of the specialized agencies of the U.N. and for CEDAW to invite reports from them; and

Articles 23-30: set forth elements of the operation of the treaty, including the manner by which the treaty comes into operation, the limits on the scope of permissible reservations, and the way in which disputes between States Parties can be settled.

Countries That Have Ratified CEDAW

168 countries have consented to protect and promote the equal rights of women using CEDAW:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus Republic, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi.

Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France.

Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgystan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg.

Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda.

Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Tuvalu.

Uganda, Ukrainian Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Countries That Have Not Ratified CEDAW

23 countries have **not consented** to promote and protect the equal rights of women using CEDAW:

Europe and North America:

Monaco
San Marino
United states of America (S)

West Asia (Middle East):

Bahrain
Iran
Oman
Qatar
Syrian Arab Republic
United Arab Emirates

Asia Pacific/Central Asia:

Afghanistan (S)
Brunei Darussalam
Cook Islands*
Kiribati*
Marshall Islands
Micronesia (Federated States of)*
Nauru
Palau
Solomon Islands
Tonga*

Africa:

Sao Tome and Principe (S)
Somalia
Sudan
Swaziland

Latin America/Caribbean:

All ratified

Non-member state of the United Nations
(S) *Signed, not ratified or acceded*

In Her Own Words:

A statement by Meme Isaac,
Client of the Tahirih Justice Center, Falls Church, VA

"My name is Meme Isaac. I am a Nigerian citizen, Christian by religious affiliation, and a secretary by profession.

"My community in Nigeria believes that if a girl is not circumcised, she will have loose morals, she will bring dishonor upon her family, and be unable to find a husband. (Circumcision) is performed by tribal elders in small villages in the most dangerous and merciless conditions. No anesthesia is permitted, no antiseptic is allowed, and no antibiotics are used. The instruments used – a dirty, rusty knife, razor or broken glass – are not sterilized.

"For me, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has meant excruciating pain, miscarriages, and other numerous health complications. For my sister, it meant death as a young child. For my aunt, it meant death from complications related to her mutilation during a pregnancy. For my cousin, it also meant death.

"FGM is just one of the many forms of violence against women that exist in the world today. It is my culture's manifestation of the inequality of women and men, but all cultures around the world have their own manifestations of the subjugation of women. Women have been the most consistently and extremely oppressed group throughout the world's history.

"It is time to change that. It is time for humanity to evolve and to enable the two distinct wings of women and men to be equally strong, so that together, they may fly towards the apex of prosperity. The international community must unite in its voice of opposition to the subjugation of women.

"The United States must be a part of the chorus supporting women in their struggle for equality. Without the United States' ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the United States will fail to fulfill its potential to lead the world spiritually in doing what is right and just. Rather, it will lag behind, along with only Afghanistan and Sao Tome, in failing to formally recognize the rights of women.

"I have faith that the United States will, eventually, do the right thing and take its rightful place in the world as the upholder of the rights of the downtrodden. It must. It must for the sake of its own dignity and for the protection of women throughout the world."

In Her Own Words:

Excerpts of statements made by Afghan women who have fled the Taliban's gender apartheid rule

Compiled by the Feminist Majority Foundation's Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

An Afghan woman who escaped a Taliban death decree:

"The Taliban's take over of Afghanistan affected women more than any other sector of Afghan society. Women suffer in Afghanistan because they are forced to abandon their social lives and live as prisoners in their own homes. Women suffer in Afghanistan because they no longer have their freedom of movement, freedom to work, freedom to be educated and the right to live free from violence. Widows, often times, are the sole providers for their families and suffer even more because of the Taliban's edicts that outlaw women's employment. Women watch their children suffer from malnutrition, disease, and even death. Women in Afghanistan suffer from war crimes because they are raped, murdered, trafficked, kidnapped, and forced to marry against their will."

Young woman who was a teenager when the Taliban took control of her village:

"The Taliban's rule in Afghanistan has been the most terrifying experience in my life. I remember with fear that day in 1995 when the Taliban took over my city, and life for women forever changed. I remember the day that I was forced to wear the burqa, the day schools were closed to women, the day learning and work became forbidden to women, and darkness engulfed the lives of all women living in Afghanistan. I remember that I was beaten by the Taliban for going to the public bath and the day women in my city demonstrated against the closing of public baths and schools. The Taliban retaliated by murdering ten of those women and arresting forty others, who since that day have not been seen nor located."

An Afghan woman beaten by the Taliban:

"During the first week of the Taliban's capture of Kabul, friends and neighbors helped my family with shopping because I only had sisters and no brothers and my father was dead. One day I decided to go for shopping alone because my neighbors could no longer help with our shopping. I wore a long dress and covered my face and head with the chador. I went shopping for food at a market near my home. When I arrived at the market I was approached by a man with a long beard, a black turban, a gun on his shoulder,

and a long stick in his hand. This man was Taliban. He asked me why I was out alone and who else was with me. When he saw that there was no man with me, I immediately tried to explain that I had no man in my house and that my family was without food to eat. The Talib would not listen to my explanations. He began to beat me with his stick as he shouted at me to go home and leave here. My entire body ached from the bruises and slashes of the stick.

“In Afghanistan, women have been stripped of their most basic human rights. The Taliban has prohibited women and girls from working, attending school and leaving their homes without a close male relative. Women’s punishment for violation of Taliban decrees include brutal beatings, imprisonment and even death.

“CEDAW upholds all of the rights and freedoms that women living in Afghanistan are denied with the cruelest methods imaginable. The United States should ratify CEDAW in order to give strength to the treaty that will set universal standards and remedies to end all forms of discrimination against women and protect the rights of women and girls worldwide.

“Universal standards set by CEDAW and its reinforcement through United States ratification gives the women and girls of Afghanistan hope for a better future. The United States ratification of CEDAW reassures the women in Afghanistan that they are not forgotten and that one day they will regain their human rights to live free from violence and to attain economic, social and political rights.”

Importance of U.S. Ratification

The Convention provides a universal definition of discrimination against women that establishes a basis for every government's domestic and foreign policy to combat discrimination against women.

Keeping Our Commitment

As one of the few nations that has failed to ratify the Women's Convention, the United States compromises its credibility as a world leader for human rights. The United States made ratification of the Women's Convention by the year 2000 one of its public commitments at the U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. The United States must keep that commitment.

Linking Discrimination and Violence Against Women

The Women's Convention is a tool that women around the world are using to fight the effects of discrimination: violence against women, poverty, lack of legal status, inability to inherit or own property, lack of access to credit, etc. Women need the United States to speak loudly and clearly in support of the Women's Convention so that the Convention becomes a stronger instrument in support of their struggles to achieve full equality and the protection of their human rights. Without U.S. ratification, some other governments can feel free to ignore the Convention's mandate and their obligations under it.

Violence against women seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy inalienable rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men. But, violence against women itself emerges from the phenomenon of discrimination against women, which makes them a target of violence. To effectively combat the crime of violence against women, U.S. policy must address this linkage between discrimination and violence. By ratifying the Women's Convention, the United States will reinforce its commitment to eliminate sex discrimination and, therefore, move closer to effectively combating violence against women.

Gaining U.S. Membership on the CEDAW Committee

Ratification of the Women's Convention will entitle the United States to nominate a U.S. expert to be a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which monitors worldwide reports of progress on the status and treatment of women from countries that have ratified the Convention. In this capacity, the U.S. expert could bring the benefit of the U.S. experience in combating discrimination against women to this international forum.

Education

Prepared by Janice Castaneda

CEDAW Obliges Parties to End Discrimination in Education

US Law – Mathematics, Science, and Technological Opportunities for Women

- Title IX of the Education Amendment 1972 is a federal mandate that prohibits sex discrimination in all federally-funded education programs, including bans on barriers to female entry into the fields of math and science. However, a recent study by the American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund found that many schools are not in full compliance with Title IX.
- In 1974, Congress passed the Women’s Educational Equity Act to help local school districts comply with Title IX by providing funding for the development of teaching materials, projects, and programs to schools to eliminate gender bias. The federal government generally spends about \$3 million annually for this purpose, but such funding has been targeted for elimination in recent years.
- Sex bias continues in the area of girls and women achieving parity with boys and men in fields requiring scientific or technological expertise. Only 16% of scientists, 6% of engineers, and 4% of computer scientists in the United States are women.
- By the year 2000, 65% of jobs required technology skills. According to a recent study, only a small percentage of girls take computer science courses and are more likely to enroll in clerical and data entry classes, while boys take advanced computer programming.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW promotes the development of programs that will encourage women to pursue vocations in math and science by targeting and recruiting girls and women, featuring female role models and mentors, and providing career and salary information.
- CEDAW ratification would encourage expansion of both public and private programs that have boosted female participation in these fields.

U.S. Law – Sexual Harassment in Schools

- Sexual harassment is still prevalent in schools. National surveys conducted by such organizations as the American Association of University Women show that as many as 81% of 8th through 11th graders, 30% of undergraduate students, and 40% of graduate students have experienced sexual harassment.
- Sexual harassment is covered by Title IX law and students may file complaints with their local school systems or with the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education. They may also file private lawsuits in court if certain conditions are met.
- A 1992 Supreme Court decision, *Franklin v. Gwinnett County*, established that private lawsuits could be filed by victims of harassment in schools based on adult-to-student harassment. The Supreme Court’s 1999 decision on *Davis v. Monroe County* recognized that a student-on-student sexual harassment could also be a basis for legal action. A substantial burden of proof was set for private legal action by the *Davis v. Monroe* case. The complainant must show that the harassment is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it affects access to educational opportunities and that the school district is deliberately indifferent to the harassment.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would support current sexual harassment law and would encourage schools to adopt and enforce stringent policies against sexual harassment and its detrimental effects on the academic performance of girls and young women. It would bolster programs for education and students, such as seminars and counseling to prevent and address sexual harassment in education.

U.S. Law – Academic and Athletic Scholarships for Women

- Title IX guarantees sex equality in most scholarships and study grants offered by schools.
- Girls account for 40% of high school athletes and 37% of all college varsity athletes. However, female athletes receive only 23% of athletic scholarship dollars and 27% of athletic recruiting dollars. Women are also disproportionately affected by limits placed on monetary aid conferred to part-time and re-entry students.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would encourage schools to review and revise their scholarship requirements to ensure that they make available the same financial opportunities to women as they do to men.

U.S. Law Affirmative Action for Women

- Affirmative action, or special measures aimed at helping achieve equality between men and women in specific settings, historically has been upheld by U.S. courts against the charge that they constitute unlawful gender discrimination. Although in recent years, the bar in certain race-based affirmative action programs is considered, affirmative action programs have been recognized as legitimate means of eradicating the effects of prior discrimination and promoting equality.
- The U.S. Department of Labor's Glass Ceiling Commission Report, released in March 1995, showed that men hold 95% of senior management positions. White men represent 65% of physicians, 71% of lawyers, 80% of tenured professors, and 91.6% of engineers.
- In 1996, California voters approved Proposition 209, a referendum measure that banned the use of preferences in admission decisions at California's public education institutions. The legislatures of Texas and Washington have passed similar anti-affirmative action laws. Twelve other states also enacted legislation restricting the use of race or gender-based affirmative action in many situations.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW permits and encourages, but does not require, affirmative action measures. Ratification could help in implementing policies that aim to aid women in gaining gender equity in all areas.

How CEDAW Has Helped Women and Girls around the World

- Countries that have ratified CEDAW and taken steps to improve women and girls' access to education include:
- **Slovenia and Switzerland**, which have changed their school admissions policies to benefit girls.
- **Pakistan**, which introduced co-education in primary schools in 1996-97 and saw sharp increases in female enrollment, especially in rural areas.
- **India**, which has made increasing educational opportunities available to women a key priority. In 1997, the Integrated Child Development Services program was universalized, with girls accounting for nearly half of all pre-schoolers.

Employment

Prepared by Leila Rassekh Milani

Some of the most significant concerns of women’s day-to-day lives involve the denial or limitation of economic rights. Equal employment opportunities for women remain illusory in the United States. Occupational segregation, sex-based wage disparities, and sexual harassment in employment continue to hamper women workers in the United States.

U.S. Law

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects women against discrimination in the field of employment. An employer with fifteen or more employees may not engage in gender-based discrimination with respect to any aspect of employment, including hiring and firing, promotion and transfer, working conditions, benefits, and remuneration. Under Title VII, sex discrimination includes sexual harassment.
- Title VII does not apply to small-operation employers with fewer than fifteen employees, certain religious organizations and private clubs, Native American tribes, aliens employed outside the United States, and certain non-civil service employees of federal legislative and judicial branches. Consequently, not all women in the United States benefit from Title VII.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991 limits the amount of compensatory and punitive damages for intentional discrimination, including sex discrimination and sexual harassment, based on the size of the business.
- The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits unequal pay for equal work performed by men and women. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. However, women still earn 74.4 cents to each dollar a man earns. Women’s lower wages are due in part to the segregation of women into low-paying, female-dominated occupations. Current law does not address the pay inequities created by occupational sex segregation.

How CEDAW Would Help

- In compliance with CEDAW, the U.S. would take appropriate measures to remove the gaps that exist in addressing employment discrimination based on sex.

- In compliance with CEDAW, the U.S. would be encouraged to study the development and adoption of job evaluation systems based upon gender-neutral criteria. This kind of assessment would facilitate comparisons of the economic value of jobs in which women predominate with those in which men predominate.

CEDAW Calls for the Prevention of Discrimination against Women on the Grounds of Marriage and Maternity

U.S. Law

- The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1992 requires employers of 50 or more employees to provide up to four months of unpaid leave. In addition, most states have disability programs that provide for women to receive paid disability leave after the birth of a child.
- Title VII requires that employers who provide paid personal leave for other reasons, such as sick leave and vacation, must allow women to take such leave for maternity purposes.
- U.S. law currently does not require paid maternity leave. Women who work in small businesses and women who cannot afford to take extended unpaid leaves continue to pay a penalty in the workplace for fulfilling family responsibilities. Because women bear a disproportionate share of child care responsibilities, their employment opportunities and career advancement are circumscribed in a way that men's are not.

How CEDAW Would Help

- In compliance with CEDAW, the U.S. would take appropriate measures to introduce paid maternity leave without loss of employment, seniority, or benefits.

CEDAW Calls for the Protection of Women's Safety in the Workplace

U.S. Law

- The federal Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA) imposes on employers an affirmative duty to protect their employees' health and safety from workplace hazards. However, it does not distinguish between women and men in the duties it imposes on employers.
- OSHA does not contain provisions relating to pregnancy or dangers to women who are pregnant.

How CEDAW Would Help

- In compliance with CEDAW, the U.S. would take appropriate measures to accommodate the health and work needs of pregnant women.

How CEDAW Has Helped Women and Girls around the World

- **Twenty-two** of the countries that have ratified CEDAW have instituted policies and enacted laws to promote women's equal opportunity in employment.
- After ratification of CEDAW, the **Australian** government passed national legislation against sexual harassment in employment based on the new international obligations it had undertaken as a party to the Women's Convention.
- **Germany, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and Guatemala** are among countries that have improved maternity leave and child care provisions for employed women, some with varying degrees of restrictions, in compliance with CEDAW.

Violence Against Women

Prepared by Terri Brelind and Christine McGraw

CEDAW Calls for States to Condemn Violence Against Women and Take Concrete Steps to Eliminate It

U.S. Law

- Condemns violent crimes motivated by gender.
- Provides funding for training law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges and advances efforts toward ensuring that public institutions, charged with protecting women against discrimination are effective.

How CEDAW Would Help

- Ratification of CEDAW will reinforce Congress' commitment to eliminate discrimination against women in the form of gender-based violence.

CEDAW Calls for States to Condemn the Misconception That One Sex is Inferior or Superior to the Other

U.S. Law

- Current law prohibits acts of violence from an intimate partner, acquaintance, or stranger in many settings including homes, schools, campuses, public transit systems, and parks.
- According to a U.S. Department of Justice 1998 study and a Commonwealth Fund 1998 study, estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend per year to three million women who are physically abused by their husband or boyfriend per year.

How CEDAW Would Help

- Although the law provides protection, half of all women, regardless of religious, ethnic, racial, economic, and educational background, will experience physical violence in an intimate relationship. CEDAW would encourage elimination of the pattern which is embedded in American society of violent behavior against women.

CEDAW Calls for States to Grant Women the Equal Right to Acquire, Change, or Retain Their Nationality for Their Own Protection

U.S. Law

- Improves battered immigrant women’s access to shelter services and allows them to obtain orders of protection from abusive partners.
- Gives an immigrant victim the right to self-petition for status as a legal resident of the United States, independent of the battering spouse’s support or consent.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would ensure a remedy against the most powerful threats abusers use against a battered immigrant – the threat of deportation. Abusers frequently threaten battered immigrants with deportation if they complain, threaten to leave, or call the police or others for help. Regardless of their actual immigration status, many battered immigrants believe that they will be deported if they seek help.

CEDAW Calls for States to Eliminate Violence Against Women in Educational Settings

U.S. Law

- Provides for a national study on campus sexual assault that examines the scope of the problem and effectiveness of existing policies to protect female students.
- Provides for rape prevention and education programs for school-age children.
- Provides for the design and implementation of four model domestic violence programs for students in primary, middle, secondary and post-secondary schools.

How CEDAW Would Help

- Ratification of CEDAW would reinforce the commitment to obviate the problem of violence against women. It also would allow a U.S. expert to become a member of the CEDAW Committee and thereby contribute his or her knowledge and experience to eliminate violence against women at the international level.

CEDAW Calls for States to Address the Service and Protection Needs of Women Living in Rural Areas

U.S. Law

- Provides for funding of a toll-free, 24-hour, nationally accessible telephone hotline that provides counseling and referral services to victims of domestic violence.
- Provides for development of cooperative efforts to investigate and prosecute incidents of domestic violence in Native American tribes and rural areas and encourages the development of collaborative treatment, counseling, and community programs.

How CEDAW Would Help

- Poverty, geographic isolation, lack of transportation, limited educational opportunity, lack of anonymity, and traditional attitudes contribute to insufficient legal and social services. Only 44% of all rural counties have full-time prosecutors. Ratification would help reinforce the need to improve the social and legal services and protection for women living in rural areas in the United States.

CEDAW Calls for States to Ensure Women Freedom of Movement with Full Protection of the Law in Any State

U.S. Law

- Gives full force and credit to any protection order across state, tribal, and territorial boundaries and provides for its full recognition in other state courts.

How CEDAW Would Help

- Victims of domestic violence are often limited in their ability to travel because protection orders issued in one state are not always enforced by other states and it is incumbent upon the victim to produce the order each time she calls the police for help. The failure to enforce protection orders is perhaps the weakest link in legal safeguards available to women in the U.S. Ratification will reinforce U.S. commitment to ending violence against women, regardless of where they live or travel.

Health Care

Prepared by John Weiner and Virginia Campbell

CEDAW calls for women's equal access to health care and family planning with special attention to those living in rural communities. CEDAW also highlights the necessity of increasing women's access to nutrition services during pregnancy and lactation, to related educational resources, and to job security during pregnancy and maternity leave.

U.S. Law

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that federally-funded health care be available to anyone, regardless of race, color, or national origin. However, federal law does not prevent discrimination against women in health care.
- There is no law that guarantees comprehensive health care coverage during pregnancy. Medicaid specifically guarantees "family planning services and supplies" to those with low income.
- The Child Nutrition Act of 1966, which created WIC (supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants & Children), provides for food subsidies like milk, infant nutritional formulas and other foods to support both mother and child. However, many pregnant women who are eligible for assistance do not receive it for a variety of reasons, including their inability to reach designated health care facilities and a lack of knowledge of programs available to them.

Equal Access to Health Care

- Access to health care encompasses much more than the ability to see a doctor. Equal access addresses: equality of health insurance coverage, as well as its availability; equal money spent on research for drugs and treatment for both women and men; and equal treatment of men and women's issues in health education.
- Women are less likely than men to get the health care they need in the United States, even though the National Institute of Health (NIH) has determined that:
 - Women, because they live longer, will constitute a larger proportion of the population and will be more susceptible to disease in the future;
 - Women's health generally is worse than men's is; and
 - Certain women's health problems are unique to women or affect women differently.

Equal Access to Research

- Researchers have excluded women from medical research primarily because of a women's potential to bear children. As a result:
 - Effects of many new drugs and treatments have never been tested on women;
 - It is largely unknown what medications and over-the-counter drugs are safe for women who are pregnant or lactating; and
 - Although some institutes have imposed equal sex representation rules for testing, there are others who use federal money, but do not feel that the inclusion of women as test subjects is necessary.
- Because of limited research and testing on women, many symptoms of heart disease in women go unheeded and incorrect treatments are used:
 - Heart disease affects more than 2.5 million American women every year;
 - Women are twice as likely to die from a heart attack as men due to misdiagnosis and delays in treatment; and
 - Currently, women are less likely to be sent to specialists or to receive clot-busting drugs or bypass surgery.

Equal Access to Insurance

- Many women, particularly women with low income, do not receive proper health care because of insufficient insurance. Analysis indicates that 60-70% of Medicaid patients are women (most of the remaining patients are children);
- Women are less likely to receive health insurance from their place of employment and are far more dependent on spouses than the government for coverage;
- Women pay approximately 68% more out-of-pocket for health expenses than men, partially because many insurance policies do not cover reproductive health care; and
- In 19 of 24 identical surgical procedures conducted on women and men, men were reimbursed by their insurance carriers at a higher rate than women.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would encourage the U.S. to take a more active role in eliminating inequalities that exist in the current health care system.

- CEDAW would encourage equal representation of women in medical research.
- Compliance with CEDAW would generally improve the health of women and their children.

How CEDAW Has Helped Women and Girls around the World

- **Australia** has launched efforts to promote awareness and prevention of breast and cervical cancer, including a postcard campaign that has reached more than three million women reminding them to get pap smears.
- **Argentina** has developed a program to prevent early maternity among teens and provide necessary care when it does occur, particularly for homeless girls.
- **Argentina, Mexico, and Australia** have instituted programs to provide health care to indigenous and migrant women.
- **Israel** has allocated funds to pay for mammograms for women ages 50-74.
- **Luxembourg** has worked to raise awareness of the necessity of early detection of breast cancer.
- **The Philippines** has established a Maternal Health Care Program to provide both preventative and curative care throughout the pre- and post-natal period, as well as immunization for newborns.

Property Rights

Prepared by LaShawn Jefferson

Women's equality in accessing and owning property individually, through inheritance, or through marriage is fundamental to women's substantive equality and to women being able to participate fully in the economic and social life of their countries.

U.S. Law – Legal Autonomy

- The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment has been used to establish that women have a legal identity that is separate from, but equal to, that possessed by men. Therefore, statutory provisions requiring a husband to concur in, or consent to, his wife's property transactions or contracts are unconstitutional.
- The Equal Credit Opportunity Act is a federally enacted statute that prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status with respect to all aspects of a credit transaction, including access to commercial credit, retail store credit, credit card companies, and banks and other lending institutions. It is binding upon states under the Supremacy Clause, which enables federal legislation to override state law when the two are in conflict.
- In 1977, women-owned businesses constituted just over a third of all businesses and only a quarter of businesses with other employees. Despite legal equality, women are a minority presence in the business world, which indicates that a gap remains between their legal capacity to administer and acquire property and their realistic ability to exercise that capability.
- The number of woman-owned businesses is increasing at more than double the rate of all other businesses and their receipts are almost triple those of other businesses. Although nearly three quarters of women-owned firms have access to credit, only 32% use commercial banks as a source of financing; 60% use non-traditional sources such as finance companies and personal credit cards. Only 1.7% of federal prime contract dollars went to women-owned firms in 1996.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would reinforce compliance with already existing federal obligations and laws granting women legal autonomy and protection against discrimination in matters of property and contract.

U.S. Law – Marital Property

- Nine states have adopted varying versions of community property law, which is premised on the inherent equality of husband and wife. Community property generally is comprised of all earnings, property acquired from earnings, and debts incurred during the marriage. From the moment it is acquired, the husband and wife own an undivided one-half interest in community property.
- In all other states, spouses do not automatically acquire an equal interest in property obtained during marriage. Property interests depend upon each state’s constitution and statutory provisions or an express agreement between the spouses.
- Despite the principles of equality and equity embodied in the letter of the law, courts generally exercise their discretion to award two-thirds of the assets going to the higher wage earner (traditionally the husband) one one-third to the other spouse (traditionally the wife).
- In 1996, 42.3% of female-headed families with children were living below the poverty line, compared with 8.5% of families in which males were present, which indicates that the end of a relationship has an adverse economic impact on women. Property laws that either create or ignore such impacts contribute to the economic marginalization of women.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would encourage guidance in the exercise of judicial discretion to fulfill existing obligations to fairly divide marital property equitably. CEDAW also would encourage recognition of the fact that women, whether legally married or not, are more likely than men to face poverty when a relationship ends.

U.S. Law – Inheritance

- Inheritance laws are governed by statute. In cases where a person dies without a will, succession expressly favoring the male line over the female would be considered unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
- In community property states, upon the death of one spouse, the surviving spouse automatically owns half of all property acquired during the marriage, including pension benefits.
- In all other states, statutes have granted each spouse the right to claim one quarter to one half of the other spouse’s estate, regardless of what the deceased’s will specifies.

- In non-community property states, the right to claim a large portion of the deceased spouse's estate is only accessible through a legal challenge to the will. Given that women age 65 and over are almost three times as likely to be widowed than men and that they are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty, this need to litigate places an unequal burden on elderly women, which arguably contributes to the feminization of poverty among the elderly.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW would help policymakers acknowledge and address the connection between women's poverty and existing inheritance laws.

How CEDAW Has Helped Women and Girls around the World

- In 1997 the **Georgian Republic** enacted a Civil Code that expanded the equality of property rights and the obligations of spouses, including the recognition of joint property during marriage.
- Since 1989, legislation in **China** has highlighted the equality between men and women. The Women's Act, for example, guarantees joint ownership in marital property and equal rights to property inheritance.

Civil and Political Rights Prepared by Leila Rassekh Milani

U.S. laws, while reflecting a commitment to the civil and political rights of all individuals, do not create rights for women that are specific to their day-to-day reality. CEDAW advances the interests of humanity in a way that integrates the situation of women into the social fabric of the United States.

U.S. Law

- Although a number of federal statutes, such as Title VII, bar discrimination on the basis of sex, there are still a significant number that do not expressly address discrimination based on sex.
- CEDAW prohibits both intentionally discriminatory laws and laws that, while on surface do not discriminate, have the effect or impact of discriminating based on sex. U.S. law does not prohibit discriminatory effects or “impact” in all contexts.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW ratification would encourage the adoption of measures that provide protection from discrimination against women on a uniform and nationwide basis.

CEDAW Calls Upon State Parties to Adopt Temporary Special Measures Aimed at Accelerating De Facto Equality Between Men and Women

U.S. Law

- Special measures aimed at accelerating equality between men and women, or “affirmative action” programs, have long been upheld by U.S. courts against the charge that they constitute unlawful gender discrimination. Programs providing preferential treatment to women have been recognized as a legitimate means of eradicating the effects of prior discrimination and promoting equality.
- Various federal laws are designed specifically to encourage women to become involved in non-traditional education and employment fields in order to achieve equality of opportunity.

- However, the current trend in state law reflects a retreat and withdrawal from affirmative action programs. Since 1996, the states of Texas and Washington, as well as more than a dozen cities, have barred use of affirmative action laws.

How CEDAW Would Help

- CEDAW ratification would reflect the country's commitment to maintaining temporary special measures that advance the equal participation of women in civil, political, economic, social, and cultural arenas until that goal is achieved.
- States will be able to incorporate this national commitment and international standard in reviewing their affirmative action programs.

CEDAW Calls Upon State Parties to End Discrimination against Women in Political and Public Life and to Ensure That Women Have the Opportunity to Represent Their Governments at the International Level

U.S. Law

- Participation in the U.S. political process is primarily based up one's right to vote and run for office. Although the constitution affirmatively protects women's right to vote, through the passage of the 19th Amendment in the year 1960, only 13 of the 100 members of the United States Senate are women. Of the 435 members elected to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, only 60 are women. Moreover, as of 2001, women hold only 26 percent of statewide elective executive positions, which include governor and lieutenant governor as well as elected secretary of state, attorney general, state treasurer, controller, and various other offices.
- No federal law currently ensures non-discrimination in private non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.
- U.S. law does not impose any formal restrictions regarding the political appointment of women to international positions. However, federal law does not specifically prohibit discrimination against women in this area.
- Title VII, which generally protects women from discrimination in employment, does not apply to appointments to legislative or executive positions because such jobs are not in the competitive

service.

- Several provisions of the Foreign Service Act take affirmative steps to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex.
- To date, women in the United States do not enjoy political status, access, or influence equal to that of men.

How CEDAW Would Help

- In compliance with CEDAW, the U.S. would take appropriate measures to involve more women at the decision-making levels of government. The U.S. could use CEDAW to create measures that advance women's integration into politics. Such efforts, undertaken by the government, could set a standard for inclusion of women in all decision-making levels in the private sector.
- CEDAW would further strengthen the applicability of the Foreign Service Act in its facilitation and encouragement of equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment without regard to sex.

How CEDAW Has Helped Women and Girls around the World

- The **Brazilian** constitution was redrafted in 1988 and now includes extensive guarantees of women's human rights. CEDAW was a very useful tool for women's advocacy around this constitution.
- The **Ugandan** constitution was rewritten in 1995 and the women working on proposals for the new constitution referred to CEDAW as establishing a minimum acceptable standard. The Convention is reflected in a number of important provisions of the Ugandan constitution.
- In **Burundi**, women played a key role in the peace process. The Arusha Accords formed the basis for building lasting peace and granted equal status to women and men, in accordance with the Convention.
- **Twenty-two** of the countries that have ratified CEDAW have adopted laws and policies to advance equal participation of women in decision-making.

Dispelling Myths About CEDAW: Fear Versus Fact

Why hasn't the United States ratified the authoritative document that sets comprehensive standards on women's equality? In part, hesitancy to ratify this important document stems from unfounded fears associated with the implementation of CEDAW in the United States. These fears are addressed below.

FEAR: U.S. ratification of CEDAW would give too much power to the international community with the provisions of the Convention superseding U.S. federal and state law.

FACT: As with many international agreements, countries can express "reservations, understandings and declarations" in cases where there are discrepancies between the international convention or treaty and domestic law. For the most part, U.S. law complies with the requirements of the Convention and the Convention is compatible with the principles of the U.S. Constitution. And, where any differences do exist, the Convention calls for appropriate measures to be taken to progressively promote the principle of nondiscrimination. Such language implies no enforcement authority by the international community.

FEAR: "Discrimination" is too broadly defined in CEDAW, and its implementation in the United States would result in "frivolous" lawsuits.

FACT: While implementation of CEDAW could raise U.S. legal standards, a flurry of frivolous lawsuits is unlikely. CEDAW's definition of discrimination includes both discrimination that is intentional and that which is the result of laws, policies, and practices. When applied, these provisions have the impact (sometimes unintentionally) of discriminating against women. U.S. law already governs discrimination in private and public employment, prohibiting policies and practices that unintentionally burden women more than men. Regardless, claims in the United States related to sex discrimination are not subjected to the same "strict scrutiny" standards applied to claims of race discrimination. The implementation of CEDAW could help to rectify these discrepancies in U.S. law over time, but is unlikely to result in frivolous lawsuits any more than challenges to race discrimination have.

FEAR: CEDAW can be used to destroy the traditional family structure in the United States by redefining “family” and the respective roles of men and women.

FACT: CEDAW does not, and would not, seek to regulate any constitutionally protected interests with respect to family life. Both CEDAW and the U.S. Constitution recognize the restraints of any governing authority to interfere with an individual’s most basic decisions regarding family. CEDAW simply urges State Parties “to adopt education and public information programs, which will eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the full operation of the principle of the social equality of women.”

FEAR: Implementation of CEDAW would usurp the proper role of parents in child rearing.

FACT: CEDAW simply calls for recognition of the “common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children” and maintains “the parents’ common responsibility (is) to promote what is in the best interest of the child.” The U.S. Constitution limits the power of government to interfere in certain private matters such as decisions by parents concerning the upbringing of their children. CEDAW implementation would not change this fact.

FEAR: CEDAW may discourage or eliminate single-sex schools and/or force local school districts to “gender neutralize” school textbooks and programs.

FACT: CEDAW does not require the prohibition of single-sex education, but, in fact, asks State Parties to encourage co-education, as well as other types of education that may encourage education equality. This language is meant particularly to address the needs of many countries that, unlike the United States, have yet to develop educational programs accessible to both young girls and boys. In the United States, CEDAW would encourage the development of equal educational materials, taught in single-sex or mixed schools.

FEAR: CEDAW supports abortion through its promotion of access to “family planning.”

FACT: CEDAW does not address the matter of abortion and, according to the United States State Department, is “abortion neutral.” Many countries in which abortion is illegal – such as Ireland, Burkina Faso and Rwanda – have ratified this Convention.

FEAR: U.S. ratification of CEDAW might be used to sanction same-sex marriages.

FACT: The Convention makes clear that it is not aimed at all sex-based discrimination, but only discrimination that is directed specifically against women. A same-sex marriage claim would include a charge that both men and women who want to marry individuals of their own sex are experiencing discrimination. The Convention contains no provision that would compel the U.S. Congress, or other national legislature, to pass same-sex marriage laws in order to comply with the Convention.

States, Counties, and Cities That Have Passed Resolutions Calling for CEDAW Ratification

States

California (twice)
Connecticut (Senate)
Florida (House)
Hawaii (House)
Illinois (House)
Iowa
Maine
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
New York
North Carolina
Rhode Island (General Assembly)
South Dakota (House)
Vermont
Wisconsin (Senate)
Territory of Guam

Counties

Cook Co., IL
Cuyahoga Co., OH
Dade Co., FL
Dane Co., WI
Fayette/Lexington Co., KY
Jefferson County Fiscal Court, KY
Los Angeles Co., CA
Marin Co., CA
Milwaukee Co., WI
San Francisco Co., CA
San Mateo Co., CA
Santa Barbara Co., CA
Santa Clara Co., CA
Santa Cruz Co., CA
Spokane Co., WA
Ventura Co., CA

Cities

Auburn, CA
Bay Village, OH
Berea, OH
Brook Park, OH
Burlington, VT
Chicago, IL
Cleveland Hts., OH
East Cleveland, OH
Evanston, IL
Fairview Park, OH
Fond du Lac, WI
Highland Park, IL
Independence, OH
Iowa City, IA
Lakewood, OH
Los Angeles, CA
Louisville, KY
Madison, WI
Mayfield Hts., OH
Middleburg Hts., OH
Milwaukee, WI
Montpelier, VT
N. Olmsted, OH
New York City, NY
Parma Hts., OH
Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh, PA
Portland, ME
Redlands, CA
Rocky River, OH
Roseville, CA
San Bernadino, CA
San Diego, CA
San Francisco, CA
San Jose, CA
Santa Rosa, CA
Shaker Hts., OH
Spokane, WA
Strongsville, OH
University Hts., OH
West Hollywood, CA
Westlake, OH

Model Resolutions

Model State Legislation

State Legislators in 23 states have pushed for U.S. ratification of CEDAW. Nine states have passed specific resolutions in favor of CEDAW ratification including:

- California – AJR 18
- California – AJR 68
- Delaware – HCR 23

To read more about these resolutions, please visit Center for Policy Alternative’s State Action site at:

<http://www.stateaction.org/issues/cedaw/model.cfm>.

Model City Ordinances

In April 1988, San Francisco became the first city in the United States to adopt an ordinance implementing CEDAW locally. It also established a Task Force that works with various commissions and departments with the City to identify discrimination against women and girls and to implement human rights principles. To find out more about the content of this statute, please visit the SF CEDAW Ordinance at <http://www.ci.sf.ca.us/cosw/cedaw/index.htm>.

Organizations That Support Ratification

Action for Development
*American Association of Retired Persons
*American Association of University Women
*American Bar Association
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Council for The United Nations University
American Federation of Teachers
*American Friends Service Committee
*American Jewish Committee
*American Nurses Association
American Veterans Committee
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
*Amnesty International USA
Association for Women in Development
Association for Women in Psychology
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
Ayuda
*Bahá'ís of the United States
Black Women's Agenda
*B'nai B'rith International
Bread for the World
*Business And Professional Women/USA
BVM Network for Women's Issues
Catholics for a Free Choice
Center for Advancement of Public Policy
Center for Policy Alternatives
Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
Center for Women's Global Leadership
Center of Concern
Chicago Catholic Women
Church of the Brethren, Washington Office
*Church Women United
Coalition on Religion & Ecology
Coalition for Women in International Development
Columban Fathers' Justice & Peace Office
Commission on the Advancement of Women/InterAction
D.C. Statehood Solidarity Committee
Earthcommunity Center
Eighth Day Center for Justice
Episcopal Church
*Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Family Violence Prevention Fund
*Feminist Majority Foundation
Francois Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights

Friends of the U.N.
 *Friends Committee on National Legislation
 *General Federation of Women's Clubs
 Global Commission to Fund the U.N.
 Gray Panthers
 Guatemala Human Rights Commission
 Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
 Health & Development Policy Project
 Human Rights Advocates
 Human Rights Watch/Women's Rights Division
 The Humane Society
 International Center for Research on Women
 International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
 International Human Rights Law Group
 International Women's Health Coalition
 International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic
 International Women Judges Foundation
 The J. Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
 Jewish Council for Public Affairs
 *Jewish Women International
 Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.
 Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
 *Leadership Conference of Women Religious
 *League of Women Voters of the United States
 Louisville Women-Church
 Maryknoll Mission Association of the Faithful
 Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns
 Massachusetts Women-Church
 McAuley Institute
 Menonite Central Committee
 Menonite Central Committee U.S.
 Na'amat USA
 *National Association of Commissions for Women
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Association of Women Lawyers
 National Audubon Society
 National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 National Coalition of American Nuns
 *National Council of Jewish Women
 *National Council of Negro Women
 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
 National Council of Women of the USA
 *National Council of Women's Organizations
 *National Education Association
 National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council
 National Women's Conference Committee
 *NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund
 NETWORK – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
 OWL
 Oxfam America
 Planned Parenthood Federation of America

*Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Washington Office
 Psychologists for Social Responsibility
 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights
 Safe Horizon, Inc.
 San Francisco Bay Area Women's Ordination Conference
 *Sierra Club
 Sisterhood is Global Institute
 Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
 Soka Gakkai International - USA
 Society for International Development/Women in Development
 *Sorooptimist International of the Americas
 Human Rights for All - Organizations
 Tahirih Justice Center
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations
 *Unitarian Universalist Association, Washington Office
 Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
 United Church of Christ Office for Church And Society
 *United Methodist Church
 *United Nations Association of the United States of America
 United States Committee for UNICEF
 United States Committee for UNIFEM
 Washington Office on Africa
 Winrock International
 Women's National Democratic Club
 Women Empowering
 *Women Legislator's Lobby (WILL)
 Women of Indian Nations (WEWIN)
 Women of Reform Judaism
 Women for International Peace and Arbitration
 Women for Meaningful Summits
 Women Law and Development International
 *Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
 *Women's Action for New Directions/Women Legislators Lobby
 Women's Environment and Development Organizations
 Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
 *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
 Women's Legal Defense Fund
 Women's Ordination Conference
 World Citizen Foundation
 *World Federalist Association
 World Organization Against Torture U.S.A.
 *YWCA of the U.S.A.

Organizations - July 2001

*Active National Membership

In Their Own Words:

Statements made by U.S. government officials in support of upholding human rights

And repressed people around the world must know this about the United States ... we will always be the world's leader in support of human rights.

— President George W. Bush – Remarks at Reception
Honoring Cuban Independence Day (May 18, 2001)

I think (human rights) derives from our values. It derives from the God-given rights that all of us have. Any of you can see it in our own founding documents. So – the rights of men and women to live in peace, to live in freedom, the rights they enjoy to pursue their own destiny I think have to be part of the essential value system that we use within our own nation and that we take to other nations as an example of the way one should behave and how one should treat one's citizens.

— Secretary of State Colin Powell – Confirmation Hearing
of General Colin Powell to be Secretary of State before
the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. 107th Cong. (2001).

I would hope that every senator would agree that we should promote equal rights for women at every opportunity – not when it suits us or when it is the “best use” of our “energies.” Advancing human rights and human liberty – for women and for everyone else – is a never-ending struggle. Of course, the United States has a powerful voice, and we do not need to be a party to this Convention in order to speak out on women's rights. But we should join this Convention so we can be heard within the councils of the treaty.

— Senator Joseph Biden, 9 March 2000 (Congressional Record S1382)

Women deserve equal rights, voting rights, human rights. They deserve to be protected from violence, either in their own homes or walking down the street. They should be protected against institutional violence. It is very important for us to lead in the world we must be a leader on this treaty (CEDAW).

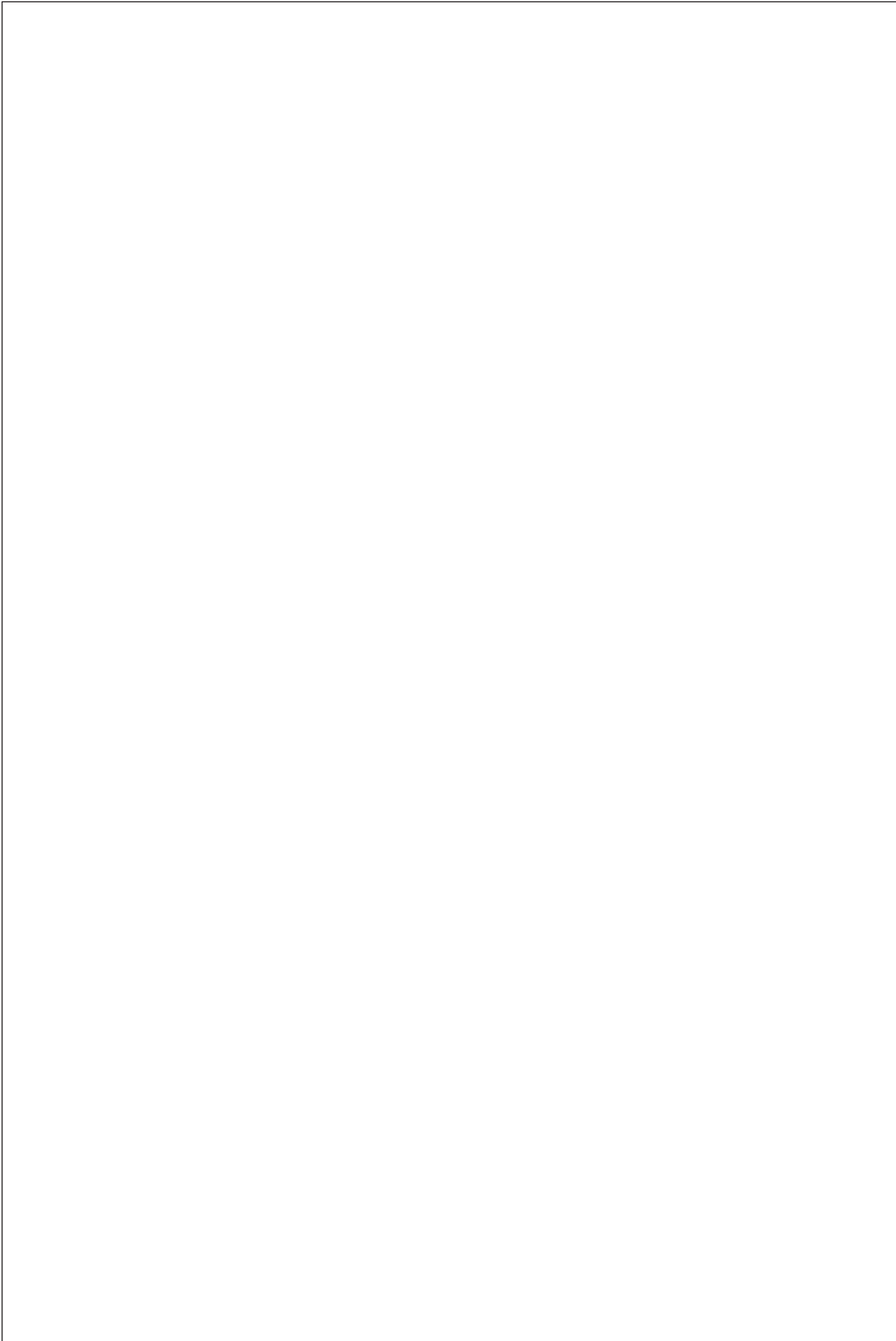
— Senator Barbara Boxer, 8 March 2000 (Congressional Record S1293)

There are many important ways that we can further protect women's human rights and improve the status of women and their families both domestically and internationally. One of the ways that the United States Senate can work toward that end is by acting upon the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW. Two decades have passed since the U.S. signed this important treaty, and yet it remains pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I once again call upon the committee to hold hearings on CEDAW so that the Senate can offer its advice and consent on this treaty.

— Senator Russell Fiengold, 8 March 2001 (Congressional Record S2064)

(I)n honor of International Women's Day on March 8, 68 of my House colleagues and I sent a letter to the Secretary of State urging the Bush administration to support U.S. ratification of CEDAW, the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Let us send a message loud and clear to women in this nation and all over the world that the United States is truly committed to protecting women's rights.

— Representative Lynn Woolsey, 22 March 2001 (Congressional Record H1065)



For more information about CEDAW, please contact:

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