



# **SUMMARY OF CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **About the Convention**

Adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, the Convention is often referred to as the Women's International Bill of Rights. Consisting of a preamble and 30 Articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

By accepting the Convention, states (countries) commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end all forms of discrimination against women, protect women and promote equality within the legal system, public institutions and within other organisations and amongst individuals. State parties (i.e. Governments) agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Countries that have ratified or acceded (agreed) to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice, except where they have placed Reservations (when countries cannot agree to implement a certain part of the Convention).

There is also an 'Optional Protocol' attached to the Convention. This allows individuals to take their case to CEDAW Committee if all national options to resolve allegations of discrimination have been exhausted. The UK Government has recently agreed to the Optional Protocol and it will come into force in 2005.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations.

## **Summary of general recommendations**

The following general recommendations have been adopted by the CEDAW Committee:

- **General recommendation No. 1 -- fifth session, 1986 reporting guidelines**

Initial reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention should cover the situation up to the date of submission. Thereafter, reports should be submitted at least every four years after the first report was due and should include obstacles encountered in implementing the Convention fully and the measures adopted to overcome such obstacles.

- **General recommendation No. 2 -- sixth session, 1987 reporting guidelines**

Reinforces general recommendation 1 and adds that the report of a State party should be sent to the Secretariat at least three months before the session at which the report is due to be considered.

- **General recommendation No. 3 -- sixth session, 1987 education and public information programmes**

Urges all States parties effectively to adopt education and public information programmes, which will help eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the full operation of the principle of the social equality of women.

- **General recommendation No. 4 -- sixth session, 1987 reservations**

Suggests that all States parties concerned reconsider such reservations with a view to withdrawing them.

- **General recommendation No. 5 -- seventh session, 1988 temporary special measures**

Recommends that States Parties make more use of temporary special measures such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems to advance women's integration into education, the economy, politics and employment.

- **General recommendation No. 6 -- seventh session, 1988 effective national machinery and publicity**

Recommends that States parties establish and/or strengthen effective national machinery, institutions and procedures, at a high level of Government, and with adequate resources, commitment and authority to:

(a) Advise on the impact on women of all government policies;

(b) Monitor the situation of women comprehensively;

(c) Help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination;

Take appropriate steps to ensure the dissemination of the Convention, the reports of the States parties and the reports of the Committee in the language of the States concerned; include in their initial and periodic reports the action taken in respect of this recommendation.

- **General recommendation No. 7 -- seventh session, 1988 resources**

Recommends to the States parties take all necessary and appropriate steps to ensure that adequate resources and services are available to the Committee to assist it in its functions under the Convention and in particular that full-time staff are available to help the Committee to prepare for its sessions and during its session; and that they ensure

that supplementary reports and materials are submitted to the Secretariat in due time to be translated into the official languages of the United Nations in time for distribution and consideration by the Committee.

- **General recommendation No. 8 -- seventh session, 1988 article 8**

Recommends that States parties take further direct measures in accordance with article 4 of the Convention to ensure the full implementation of article 8 of the Convention and to ensure to women on equal terms with men and without any discrimination the opportunities to represent their Government at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations.

- **General recommendation No. 9 -- eighth session, 1989 statistical data**

Recommends that States parties should make every effort to ensure that their national statistical services responsible for planning national censuses and other social and economic surveys formulate their questionnaires in such a way that data can be disaggregated according to gender, with regard to both absolute numbers and percentages, so that interested users can easily obtain information on the situation of women in the particular sector in which they are interested.

- **General recommendation No. 10 -- eighth session, 1989 tenth anniversary of the adoption of CEDAW**

Recommendations for events and awareness raising around the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention.

- **General recommendation No. 11 -- eighth session, 1989 technical advisory services for reporting**

Recommends to States parties that they should encourage, support and co-operate in projects for technical advisory services, including training seminars, to assist States parties on their request in fulfilling their reporting obligations under article 18 of the Convention.

- **General recommendation No. 12 -- eighth session, 1989 violence against women**

Recommends to the States parties that they should include in their periodic reports to the Committee information about:

1. The legislation in force to protect women against the incidence of all kinds of violence in everyday life (including sexual violence, abuses in the family, sexual harassment at the work place etc.);
2. Other measures adopted to eradicate this violence;
3. The existence of support services for women who are the victims of aggression or abuses;

4. Statistical data on the incidence of violence of all kinds against women and on women who are the victims of violence.

- **General recommendation No. 13 -- eighth session, 1989 equal remuneration for work of equal value**

Recommends to the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that:

1. In order to implement fully the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, those States parties that have not yet ratified ILO Convention No. 100 should be encouraged to do so;
2. They should consider the study, development and adoption of job evaluation systems based on gender-neutral criteria that would facilitate the comparison of the value of those jobs of a different nature, in which women presently predominate, with those jobs in which men presently predominate, and they should include the results achieved in their reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
3. They should support, as far as practicable, the creation of implementation machinery and encourage the efforts of the parties to collective agreements, where they apply, to ensure the application of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

- **General recommendation No. 14 -- ninth session, 1990 female circumcision**

Recommends that States parties take appropriate and effective measures with a view to eradicating the practice of female circumcision (FGM) and provides various suggestions for what these activities could be and a requirement to include this in reports.

- **General recommendation No. 15 -- ninth session, 1990 women and AIDS**

Recommends that States parties intensify efforts in disseminating information to increase public awareness of the risk of HIV infection and AIDS, especially in women and children, and of its effects on them, that programmes to combat AIDS should give special attention to the rights and needs of women and children, and to the factors relating to the reproductive role of women and their subordinate position in some societies which make them especially vulnerable to HIV infection; that States parties ensure the active participation of women in primary health care and take measures to enhance their role as care providers, health workers and educators in the prevention of infection with HIV; and that all States parties include in their reports under article 12 of the Convention information on the effects of AIDS on the situation of women and on the action taken to cater to the needs of those women who are infected and to prevent specific discrimination against women in response to AIDS.

- **General recommendation No. 16 -- tenth session, 1991 unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises**

Recommends that States parties include in their reports to the Committee information on the legal and social situation of unpaid women working in family enterprises; collect statistical data on women who work without payment, social security and social benefits in enterprises owned by a family member, and include these data in their report to the

Committee; and take the necessary steps to guarantee payment, social security and social benefits for women who work without such benefits in enterprises owned by a family member.

- **General recommendation No. 17 -- tenth session, 1991 measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the GNP**

Recommends that States parties encourage and support research and experimental studies to measure and value the unremunerated domestic activities of women; for example, by conducting time-use surveys as part of their national household survey programmes and by collecting statistics disaggregated by gender on time spent on activities both in the household and on the labour market; take steps, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, to quantify and include the unremunerated domestic activities of women in the gross national product; and include in their reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention information on the research and experimental studies undertaken to measure and value unremunerated domestic activities, as well as on the progress made in the incorporation of the unremunerated domestic activities of women in national accounts.

- **General recommendation No. 18 -- tenth session, 1991 disabled women**

Recommends that States parties provide information on disabled women in their periodic reports, and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, including special measures to ensure that they have equal access to education and employment, health services and social security, and to ensure that they can participate in all areas of social and cultural life.

- **General recommendation No. 19 -- eleventh session, 1992 violence against women**

The Convention in Article 1 defines discrimination against women. The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence.

See the full recommendation:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

- **General recommendation No. 20 -- eleventh session, 1992 reservations**

The Committee recommended that States parties should raise the question of the validity and the legal effect of reservations to the Convention in the context of reservations to other human rights treaties; reconsider such reservations with a view to strengthening the implementation of all human rights treaties; and consider introducing

a procedure on reservations to the Convention comparable with that of other human rights treaties.

- **General recommendation No. 21 -- thirteenth session, 1994 equality in marriage and family relations**

Builds on the existing articles and other human rights treaties to explain what measures States should be taking to realise this.

See the full recommendation:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

- **General recommendation No. 22 -- fourteenth session, 1995 article 20 of the Convention**

Relates to the amendment of the meeting time of the Committee.

- **General recommendation No. 23 -- sixteenth session, 1997 women in political and public life**

Builds on the existing articles and other human rights treaties to explain what measures States should be taking to realise this.

See the full recommendation:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

- **General recommendation No. 24 -- twentieth session, 1999 article 12 - women and health**

Builds on the existing articles 12 and other human rights treaties to explain what measures States should be taking to realise this.

See the full recommendation:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

- **General recommendation No. 25 -- thirtieth session, 2004 article 4 paragraph 1 - Temporary special measures**

See the full recommendation:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20%28English%29.pdf>

- **General recommendation No. 26 -- 2008 – Women migrant workers**

See the full recommendation:

[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/GR\\_26\\_on\\_women\\_migrant\\_workers\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/GR_26_on_women_migrant_workers_en.pdf)

- **General recommendation No. 27 – forty-seventh session, 2010 – Older women and the protection of their rights**

See the full recommendation:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW-C-2010-47-GC1.pdf>

- **General recommendation No. 28 – forty-seventh session, 2010 – Core obligations of states parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women**

See the full recommendation:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW-C-2010-47-GC2.pdf>

- **General recommendation No. 29 - on the protection of women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations was adopted at 49<sup>th</sup> session in New York July 2011**