Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

New York, 18 December 1979

Objectives

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, establishing legally binding obligations to end discrimination. Often described as the international bill of rights for women, the Convention provides for equality between women and men in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Discrimination against women is to be eliminated through legal, policy and programmatic measures and through temporary special measures to accelerate women's equality, which are defined as non-discriminatory.

Key Provisions

States parties are required to end all forms of discrimination against women and to ensure their equality with men in political and public life with regard to nationality, education, employment, health and economic and social benefits. Obligations are also imposed to eliminate discrimination against women in marriage and family life and to ensure that women and men are treated equally before the law. States are required to take account of the particular problems of women in rural areas, and their special roles in the economic survival of the family.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women. In addition, it obliges States parties to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women in order to eliminate prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.

The Convention establishes a monitoring body - the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women - which comprises 23 independent experts. The Committee is mandated to consider reports from States parties and to make suggestions and general recommendations based on these reports. The Committee directs its suggestions to the United Nations system and its general recommendations to States parties. As of May 2000, the Committee had adopted 24 general recommendations, including recommendations on female circumcision, on violence against women, and on women and health.

Entry into force: 3 September 1981 Status as at 15 June 2000: Signatories: 97 Contracting Parties: 165