

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

At its eighteenth session, in 1963, the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote women's rights, to prepare a draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women (resolution 1921 (XVIII) of 5 December 1963). At its resumed thirty-sixth session, in 1964, the Economic and Social Council transmitted the resolution to the Commission on the Status of Women, which considered the issue of a draft declaration at its eighteenth session, in 1965, and set up a drafting committee to prepare a preliminary text (see report of the Commission on the Status of Women, E/4025). Unable to complete its work in 1965, the Commission continued its work on the topic the following year, at its nineteenth session, and completed a draft declaration that was submitted, on 8 March 1966, to the Economic and Social Council (Commission on the Status of Women resolution 1 (XIX)). On 26 July 1966, the Economic and Social Council unanimously adopted resolution 1131 (XLI), by which it transmitted the draft declaration to the General Assembly. The Assembly did not have enough time to review the text of the draft resolution in 1966, but adopted resolution 2199 (XXI) of 16 December 1966, in which it requested the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to review the text of the draft at its next session, bearing in mind the amendments submitted by Member States at the forty-first session of the Economic and Social Council, the twenty-first session of the General Assembly, as well as the relevant discussions in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly during their respective sessions in 1966. The Assembly further decided that it would give the draft declaration high priority at its twenty-second session, in 1967. Thus, in 1967, the Commission on the Status of Women completed a review of the draft text and adopted unanimously a revised draft declaration on 2 March 1967 (resolution 1 (XX)). The Economic and Social Council transmitted the draft to the General Assembly (Economic and Social Council resolution 1206 (XLIII) of 29 May 1967) and the Assembly decided to refer it to the Third Committee for consideration. On 16 October 1967, the Third Committee adopted the text recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women, and, on 7 November, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2263 (XXII), in which it proclaimed the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In 1972, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to consider, at its twenty-fifth session, in 1974, proposals for a new instrument or instruments of international law to eliminate discrimination against women (resolution 5 (XXIV) of 24 February 1972). It also asked the Secretary-General to prepare a working paper on the question, based on the views and proposals that would be transmitted by Member States concerning the nature and the content of this new instrument. Furthermore, it decided that a working group composed of 15 members of the Commission should be established five days prior to the beginning of its twenty-fifth session and would begin working on the preparation of the new draft instrument.

On 24 January 1974, the Commission, following the recommendation of the Working Group, which had held 11 meetings from 7 to 11 and on 18 January 1974, decided that a single comprehensive draft convention on the elimination of discrimination against women should be prepared, without prejudice to the preparation of any future instrument which might be elaborated dealing with discrimination in specific fields (see report of Commission on the Status of Women on its twenty-fifth session, E/5451, para. 2). The Commission also asked the Secretary-General to invite governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations with the consultative status at the United Nations to comment on the text of the draft

convention prepared by the Working Group as contained in its report (E/CN.6/574) (see resolution 1 (XXV) of 25 January 1974 reproduced in E/5451).

The World Conference of the International Women's Year, which took place in Mexico in 1975, adopted resolution 25, in which it called upon the Economic and Social Council to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to prepare at its twenty-sixth session a draft convention for submission to the Council and to the General Assembly, and urged that high priority should be given by all concerned actors to the preparation of the Convention in 1976 (see report of the Conference, E/CONF.66/34).

At its twenty-sixth and resumed twenty-sixth sessions, in 1976, the Commission on the Status of Women had before it the working paper prepared by the Working Group, which was based on the comments received from Governments, specialized agencies, and non-governmental organizations (E/CN.6/574). On 17 December 1976, the Commission approved the draft Convention and submitted it to the Economic and Social Council (Commission on the Status of Women resolution 1 (XXVI)). In 1977, the Council submitted the draft to the General Assembly, recommending that the latter consider it as a matter of urgency and inviting Member States and specialized agencies to submit comments as soon as possible to the Secretary-General (Economic and Social Council resolution 2058 (LXII) of 12 May 1977).

At its thirty-second session, in 1977, the General Assembly decided to refer the question to the Third Committee, which had before it the report of the Secretary-General presenting an analysis of the draft text based on comments received from Governments and specialized agencies (A/32/218 and Add. 1 and 2). On 19 October 1977, a working group was established within the Third Committee to consider and finalize the draft Convention. On 16 December 1977, the General Assembly decided to include the draft convention on the agenda of its thirty-third session in 1978, and recommended that another working group be established at that session with the mandate to continue consideration of articles which have not been completed during the current session (General Assembly resolution 32/136).

The Working Group established by the Third Committee at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly held 21 meetings without being able to complete the draft convention. Thus, on 20 December 1978, the General Assembly adopted resolution 33/177, in which it recommended that a working group be established at the beginning of its thirty-fourth session, to consider the final provisions and to reconsider the articles which have not yet been completed with a view to the adoption of the Convention at the thirty-fourth session, in 1979. The Working Group, established on 24 September 1979, approved the text of the final draft convention, and submitted it to the Third Committee on 29 November. After considering the draft convention during four meetings, on 6 and 7 December 1979, the Third Committee approved it with several amendments. On 18 December 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with a vote of 130 to 0, with 11 abstentions (General Assembly resolution 34/180). The Convention was opened for signature at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 1 March 1980. It entered into force on 3 September 1981, thirty days after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification, in compliance with the relevant final provisions contained in its article 27.