



UN committee discusses new forms of discrimination against women



Combating Trafficking In Persons Handbook

21 July 2009 – The United Nations committee which monitors compliance with the international convention on eliminating discrimination against women is 30 years old this year, but as it meets this week at UN Headquarters in New York, it is considering some very modern problems.

"We're asking countries about the impact of the financial crisis on their basic social services, including women's salaries and women's unemployment," says the chair of the committee, Naela Mohammed Gabr, in an interview with UN News Centre. She adds that committee is also considering the "scourge" of trafficking in women, and the impact on women of diseases including outbreaks of influenza.

"Don't worry, there will still be plenty of work for us in another 30 years' time," Ms. Gabr laughs. "There is no ceiling for improvement in the human situation."

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) has various means of influencing countries' behaviour, including the publication of its observations, with recommendations to be followed up.

All the committee's findings go to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, and form part of the Universal Periodic Review process, which involves a review of the records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. Ms. Gabr believes that a good report is "important for the image and credibility of each country."

Ms. Gabr believes that sooner or later, all Member States will join the Convention, including the United States, which has signed but not ratified it. She hopes the new

US administration will move to ratify it soon. "The issue is that they will join, with or without reservations," she said, adding that even some countries that had joined the Convention without reservations did not have a perfect record of implementation. "The issue is that the US should and will join," Ms. Gabr said.

At this week's meeting, the committee's 22 independent experts will review the situation of women in Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Denmark, Guinea-Bissau, Laos, Japan, Liberia, Spain, Switzerland, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu.