Interactive dialogue

Ending discrimination in law

Thursday, 19 March 2020, 11.30 – 1.00 pm, United Nations Headquarters

Concept note

Overview

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women laid out a blueprint for women’s rights, including commitments to embody the principle of equality between men and women in law and in practice. The elimination of discriminatory laws and strengthened implementation of legal frameworks underpin the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. At the five-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, States set a target to remove discriminatory provisions under the law by 2005. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development builds on these commitments and reinforces efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The objective of the interactive dialogue on Ending discrimination in law is to highlight recent progress and concrete results of sectoral and/or comprehensive legal reforms, and how those have been instrumental in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

There has been important progress, with provisions on equality and non-discrimination now contained in as many as 191 constitutions, with standalone women’s rights provisions in 24 constitutions. Despite this progress, discriminatory laws persist in many forms. Over 2.5 billion women and girls across the world are affected by discriminatory laws. For example, daughters and sons are still treated unequally in more than one in five countries for which data are available; and male and female surviving spouses do not have equal rights to inherit assets from each other in one in five countries. Discriminatory legal frameworks extend to different standards for women and men in applying for a passport, choosing employment, transferring nationality to a child or foreign spouse, participating in court proceedings, and deciding when and whom to marry. (See E/CN.6/2020/3.)

Format and participation

The interactive dialogue will be chaired by Ms. Devita Abraham (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. A moderator will support the Chair.

The interactive dialogue will serve as a platform for sharing good practices and collaborative strategies among key actors involved in legislative reforms. Panelists will give examples of
experiences and lessons in addressing discriminatory legislation at national level. Following their presentations, the floor will be open for comments and questions from Member States and other stakeholders. Panelists will respond to questions posed and make short concluding comments, time permitting. The moderator will wrap up and close the meeting.

**Leading questions**

Participating stakeholders in the interactive dialogue are invited to address the following questions:

- What key strategies have been utilized towards eliminating discriminatory laws? What has worked and what has been less successful?
- What are lessons learned for overcoming the challenges of reversing discriminatory laws?
- What alliances and partnerships are needed to achieve results?

**Outcome**

The outcome of the interactive dialogue will be in the form of a Chair’s summary, prepared in consultation with the regional groups through the members of the Bureau.