

November 29, 2010

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Subcommittee:

As 118 organizations and individuals supportive of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including members of the CEDAW Task Force, a broad-based, diverse coalition coordinated by the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights and made up of over 160 organizations, we submit this statement in strong support of CEDAW ratification. Our organizations have come together to increase the visibility of CEDAW and to build a greater understanding among policymakers and the public about the need, importance and impact of the United States' ratification of CEDAW. We thank the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law for convening this hearing and turning its attention to CEDAW.

CEDAW is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world. Recognizing that women's rights are human rights, it seeks to end sex trafficking and violence against women, prohibit forced marriage and child marriage, expand girls' access to education, ensure women's right to vote, help families by fighting maternal mortality, and end workplace discrimination against women. By providing a practical blueprint for achieving progress for women and girls, it has helped millions of women around the world.

In countries that have ratified CEDAW, women and their advocates have partnered with their governments to improve the status of women and girls. As a result, laws and policies have changed to create greater opportunity and security for women and their families. For example, Mexico responded to an epidemic of violence against women by passing the Mexican General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence in 2007, which draws on CEDAW and today has been adopted by all of Mexico's 32 states. In 2009 the High Court of Bangladesh, relying in part on CEDAW, for the first time issued guidelines to prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace. Women in Kuwait won the right to vote for the first time in 2005 immediately after the CEDAW reporting process brought international attention to Kuwaiti women's disenfranchisement. And in 2009, the Philippines passed a comprehensive women's rights law that relied heavily upon CEDAW provisions. These are only a few examples of the way that CEDAW has led ratifying nations to take steps to improve the lives of women.

The United States is one of only seven countries in the world that has not ratified CEDAW. It is in unlikely company. The others are Iran, Sudan, Somalia, and three small Pacific Island nations. Ratification of CEDAW would not only continue the United States' proud bipartisan tradition of promoting and protecting human rights, it is in our own best interests. Empowerment of women leads to more prosperous, stable, peaceful societies the world over. By ratifying CEDAW, the United States would strengthen its

global leadership in standing up for the rights of women and girls, promote poverty reduction and economic development, and enhance political stability internationally.

CEDAW stands for and advances values that the American public strongly supports, including equality, fairness, and access to education for all. Ratifying CEDAW would be an important affirmation of these values and an impetus for the United States to recommit itself to continuing to improve the status of women and girls not only abroad, but also at home. CEDAW serves as a catalyst for countries to increase awareness of gender disparities, engage in a serious and sustained analysis of where more efforts are needed, and consider new strategies for moving forward. In this way, it would provide an additional tool for the United States to address domestic violence, combat the increasing problem of human trafficking, improve educational opportunities for women (particularly in critical fields such as math and science), expand employment opportunities, achieve equal pay, and promote women's health.

The United States has long been a world leader in championing human rights and women's rights. Ratification of CEDAW would enhance and forward this leadership, to the benefit of women and girls around the world. It is our profound hope that this hearing is an important step toward a renewed commitment to ratification of CEDAW by the United States.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Association for Affirmative Action
American Association of University Women
American Association of University Women-Massachusetts
American Civil Liberties Union
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish World Service
Amnesty International USA
Anti-Defamation League
Asian-American Justice Center
Professor Caroline Bettinger-López, Director, Human Rights Clinic, University of Miami
School of Law
Break the Cycle
CARE USA
Catholics for Choice
Center for International Human Rights at John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women Policy Studies
Center for Women's Global Leadership
Church Women United
Citizens for Global Solutions
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition of Labor Union Women

Communications Workers of America
D.C. Rape Crisis Center
Demos
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
Direct Care Alliance
Professor Margaret B. Drew, University of Cincinnati College of Law, Director of
Clinics and Experiential Learning and Director, Domestic Violence and Civil
Protection Order Clinic
Equal Justice Society
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Everywoman Opportunity Center, Inc. (New York)
Family Care International
Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
Feminist Majority Foundation
Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media
Georgetown Human Rights Action
Georgetown University Law Center Women's Legal Alliance
Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches
Global Summit of Women
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Human Rights Advocates
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
International Center for Research on Women
International Labor Rights Forum
International Women's Rights Action Watch, University of Minnesota Law School
Iowa United Nations Association
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
JASS (Just Associates)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs (JACPAC)
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Risa E. Kaufman, Executive Director, Human Rights Institute, Columbia Law School
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of Women Voters of the U.S.
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Ms. Foundation for Women
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
NA'AMT USA
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Jewish Women

National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Congress of American Indians
National Committee on the United Nations Convention on the
Elimination of Discrimination against Women
National Education Association
National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the U.S.
National Women's Law Center
9to5, National Association of Working Women
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Pennsylvania NOW, Inc.
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Project Keshet (Illinois)
Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy, Northeastern University School of
Law
The Population Institute
Queens Legal Services (New York)
Cynthia F. Racer, MA, MPH, President, CRISIS: Global Public Health, Member, APHA
Sakhi for South Asian Women (New York)
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Secular Coalition for America
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
Sierra Club
Soroptimist International of the Americas
Southern California Chapter of the U.S. Committee for UNIFEM
Tahirih Justice Center
United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society
United Methodist Women
United Nations Association of the USA
United Nations Association of the USA, Linn County Chapter (Iowa)
United Nations Foundation
Urban Justice Center
U.S. National Committee for UNIFEM (part of UN Women)
U.S. Women Connect
U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration
JoAnn Kamuf Ward, Counsel, Human Rights in the U.S. Project, Human Rights Institute,
Columbia Law School
West Pinellas National Organization for Women (Florida)
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Women's Business Development Center
The Women's City Club of New York
Women Graduates-USA, Inc.

Women's Intercultural Network
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section
Women's Learning Partnership
Woman's National Democratic Club
WomenNC (North Carolina)
Women Thrive Worldwide
Women's UN Report Network
YWCA USA
Zonta International and Zonta International Foundation