



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
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REFERENCE: HC Correspondence

20 July 2012

Dear Ms Pimentel,

I am writing to you in relation to the continued servicing of sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women at United Nations Headquarters.

The experience of the New York sessions since the transfer of the servicing of the Committee to OHCHR in 2007 has demonstrated the complexities of ensuring the highest quality of service that the UN Secretariat aims to provide and that the Committee expects. The difficulties of ensuring the same support of the Human Rights Treaties Division in New York as in Geneva places much greater strains on both the Committee and the Secretariat.

The current financial climate has only exacerbated this. As you are no doubt aware, the United Nations is increasingly being affected by the global financial crisis. In 2011, the budget of the Secretariat was reduced at the instruction of the Secretary-General by three per cent and was further reduced by the General Assembly upon adoption. Member States continue to press for additional savings and efficiencies in every aspect of the United Nations' work, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In the meantime, the voluntary contributions that have supported a considerable part of the Office's work – including the Human Rights Treaties Division - have also declined substantially during recent years. As a result, I have had to take the unprecedented step of reducing planned expenditures for 2012 by a significant 7.5 per cent. With no end to the global financial crisis in sight, I am concerned that additional reductions will be required in 2013 to bring our cost plans closer into line with projected resources.

Ms Silvia Pimentel  
Chairperson  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
Against Women  
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My senior managers have examined how we can accommodate these reductions in budget and pre-empt, to the extent possible, further reductions in the coming years. My objective has been to ensure that the work of the Office in support of the human rights mechanisms, in spite of these pressures to reduce costs, is maintained at its current level. To do this, I have attempted to identify areas where savings can be possible without significantly affecting the quality of support to the mechanisms and the output of my Office. I am aware that Mr. Ibrahim Salama, Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division, has addressed the Committee and explained in detail these concerns.

With this in mind, I have taken the decision to hold the July session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in Geneva rather than in New York. The July session is funded through a mixture of regular budget funds and voluntary contributions. Already this year, we will experience a shortfall in regular budget resources to support the sessions of the Committee. The relocation to Geneva would enable the Committee to remain within the allocated budget for 2013 and reduce pressure on extra-budgetary resources. It would also demonstrate to Member States our seriousness in identifying efficiencies and cost-saving measures.

Moreover, I am convinced that the relocation of the session to Geneva will improve the support my Office is able to provide to the Committee. Relocated in Geneva, the Committee will have the full support of the Human Rights Treaties Division, beyond the core secretariat of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

I am aware that this decision will require adjustments to be made within the Committee, including in relation to travel and accommodation for the July session. It is for this reason that I am informing you at the earliest possible stage. Please rest assured that I and my Office are committed to ensuring the highest possible support for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Navanethem Pillay  
High Commissioner for Human Rights