

file
CEDAW

**NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES**

1320 Nineteenth St., N.W., Suite 701 • Washington, D.C. 20036-1610 • (202) 833-8990 Fax: (202) 833-8988

Office of the Secretary for External Affairs
Email: usnsa-oca@usbnc.org

February 28, 1997

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Page 1 of 6

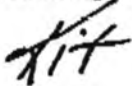
Ms. Melanne Verveer
Deputy Assistant to the President and
Deputy Chief of Staff to the First Lady
100 Old Executive Office Building
fax: (202) 456-6244

Dear Melanne,

As we discussed, please find attached the Los Angeles Times story quoting Phyllis Schlafly on CEDAW. Please also find attached the proposal to the Stanley Foundation about a meeting on the "national NGO mechanism" to follow up on implementation of the Platform for Action.

Thank you so much for meeting with us yesterday and we look forward to seeing you again soon.

Sincerely,



Kit Cosby
Deputy Director

12/11/96

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Clinton Speaks Up for Treaty on Women

■ **Rights:** President calls Senate's failure to ratify U.N. anti-discrimination pact an 'embarrassment.'

By ELIZABETH SHOGREN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — President Clinton on Tuesday called on the Senate to ratify a long-stalled U.N. treaty opposing discrimination against women, saying that failure to do so has been "an embarrassment" for the nation.

"There is no excuse for this situation to continue," Clinton said in remarks timed to coincide with the observation of International Human Rights Day.

Although 154 nations have ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the United States has taken no action on it since then. President Carter signed it in July 1980.

The last effort to bring the treaty to a ratification vote, in 1994, was thwarted by a series of Republican-led legislative maneuvers.

Clinton credited his wife with refocusing his attention on the treaty. In recent years, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has made improving human rights for women throughout the world one of her chief goals.

Clinton also is acutely aware that he owes his election victory largely to women. Republican challenger Bob Dole won among men in the popular vote.

By signing the treaty, nations agree to adjust their legal systems, if necessary, to ensure that women are protected against discrimination in jobs, in education and by individuals or organizations. U.S. laws now provide women with most of the protections specified in the treaty.

But conservative groups ardently oppose the treaty as too intrusive.

"It would be like an equal rights amendment enforced by the United Nations," said Phyllis Schlafly, president of the conservative Eagle Forum lobbying group. "I don't believe in giving any power over U.S. laws to a U.N. body."

The treaty was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1979. After Carter signed it, neither the Reagan nor the Bush administration sought Senate ratification. Secretary of State Warren Christopher revived the treaty by asking Congress to take it up during the first half of Clinton's first term, when Democrats still controlled Congress.

It was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but Republicans blocked it from coming to a floor vote. No action has been taken since Republicans took control of Congress in 1994.

Clinton, in his White House re-

marks, said, "In our country—where we have worked so hard against domestic violence, where we have worked so hard to empower women—it is, to say the least, an embarrassment" that the United States has not ratified the treaty.

Nonetheless, supporters and opponents of the measure alike said that passage by the GOP-controlled Congress is not likely.

Given that the Senate lost moderate Republicans in the last election, there is even less of a chance that the treaty will be considered in the new Congress.

"It will be more difficult this time," said a senior Democratic staff assistant for the Foreign Relations Committee. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the committee's chairman, is known to oppose it.

Proponents argue that by keeping the treaty in limbo, the United States reduces its ability to pressure other nations to abide by international human rights standards.

Schlafly and other conservatives warned that accepting the treaty would be giving in to special interests.

"The fact that it's pushed by Hillary Clinton and her kind of people shows it's clearly a feminist push," Schlafly said. "It's probably promoted by all of her feminist pals."

January 31, 1997

Ms. Joan Winship
The Stanley Foundation
216 Sycamore Street, Suite 500
Muscatine, IA 52761-3831

Dear Joan:

On behalf of the working group on an NGO mechanism we wish to submit the enclosed proposal for meeting to be sponsored by the Stanley Foundation. The meeting would explore the possibility of an NGO structure to coordinate and support efforts to address local and national issues within a context informed by the momentum from the Fourth World Conference on Women and to implement the *Platform for Action*.

The strong feeling of the working group is that such an effort would be most effective if it included a wide array of voices and opinions at the outset of the endeavor. Therefore, the working group views the enclosed proposal as an initial meeting that we hope will be sponsored by the Stanley Foundation. We anticipate that future meetings might be sponsored by the Stanley Foundation or other foundations and groups which also endorse the principles of the effort.

We look forward to hearing from you about the response of the Stanley Foundation to our proposal. Please feel free to contact Anne Mosle (202-956-5127), Maria Riley (202-635-2757 x34), Suzanne Kindervatter (202-667-8227 x115) or Kit Cosby (202-833-8990) for further information or to convey the decision of the Stanley Foundation to the working group.

Yours truly,

for the working group on an NGO mechanism

Kit Cosby
Baha'is of the U.S.

Anne Mosle
Center for Policy Alternatives

Maria Riley
Center for Concern

I. CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM: BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing was a watershed event for the global women's movement crowning some 25 years of intense activity and launching a new phase for the U.S. Women's Movement. Adopted by more than 180 nations, the conference's *Platform for Action* set forth the common agenda of the women of the world. To realize the potential of the UN conference and the implement the *Platform for Action*, U.S. women need to demonstrate further their solidarity with the global women's movement and across the diversity of the U.S. women's movement. The success and enthusiasm generated at the September 28, 1996 nationwide meetings sponsored by the President's Interagency Council show a broad momentum which should not be allowed to dissipate.

There is at present no structure to carry out this process on behalf of American women and men. One means to carry on the momentum would be a new non-governmental umbrella mechanism that would involve many domestic women's constituencies and would bring the issues of women's empowerment, enunciated at the Fourth World Conference on Women, home to the American public and to governments at the local, state and federal levels.

For the past nine months, an ad hoc working group of primarily Washington, DC-based women NGOs with national and international connections has been exploring the best methods for effectively advocating a women's agenda, based upon the *Platform for Action*, that will involve many different women's constituencies around the country. A paper was circulated through dozens of networks asking whether their members saw a need for such an NGO mechanism. Several individuals and organizations did provide their positive responses and suggestions.

The working group also examined the reports of the September 28 conferences. For those that did respond to the question about a mechanism there was an overwhelming desire for such a structure to coordinate and support efforts to address local, national and state issues, and to implement the *Platform for Action*. The working group has worked diligently to share information with other leaders and organizations across the country who are working to implement the *Platform for Action*; however, distance and limited resources have hampered the effectiveness of these efforts.

The working group believes it is time now to extend that exploration beyond the results already achieved.

Page 2

We are proposing that the Stanley Foundation sponsor a two-day, by invitation meeting of national, regional and local women who have been engaged in post-Beijing conference follow-up and those who may not be involved directly with conference follow-up but are strategic to the successful implementation of the *Platform for Action*. The meeting would explore the needs and scope of the next phase for continuing the momentum and building the local-global movement.

The purpose of the meeting would be five-fold:

- _ To address the question: "What kind of a national mechanism would most effectively serve as a clearing house and a national voice for state, regional, and local NGO coalitions already working in support of the *Platform for Action*?";

- _ To identify how to keep the Beijing momentum alive in the U.S. and connected to the global women's movement;

- _ To build on the past accomplishments and organizing at the local, state and national levels by bringing together women from representative groups;

- _ To explore new ways to increase the effectiveness and cohesion of the U.S. women's movement in naming their agenda relative to the *National Action Agenda* and in the *Platform for Action*;

- _ To determine what steps need to be taken to move forward, including human and financial resources.

II. PARTICIPATION

The informal NGO working group has convened regularly to examine the history of U.S. presidentially-appointed Women's Commissions and to consider alternatives and new initiatives for maintaining the momentum of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women. Members of the working group represent a wide array of organizations, ranging from Interaction to Girls Scouts of America to Church Women United, many of which have constituencies outside the Beltway with whom they are in regular contact. A full list of the NGO working group is attached..

A meeting sponsored by the Stanley Foundation would be an exciting opportunity to augment the work that has already been done and to explore the possibility of building an even more active NGO movement, voice and structure.

Page 3

Individuals would be invited to attend a Stanley Foundation-sponsored meeting who reflect diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds; ages; professional/occupational expertise; socio-economic levels; organization and non-organization experience; small and urban communities; and local, national, and international experience in women's issues.

All participants would be required to attend and fully participate in the entire meeting.

III. PROCESS

At the meeting an opening presentation would provide an overview of the challenges and themes stemming from the Beijing conference and implementation of the *Platform for Action*, focusing on the issues related to a potential NGO mechanism. The presentation would also outline a framework for the discussions to follow.

An experienced facilitator who is not a member of the working group should be engaged to encourage highly interactive and consultative discussions with a balance between small break-out groups and plenary sessions.

Small breakout groups would participate in discussions of various aspects of the proposed NGO mechanism to determine its validity and its appropriate function.

IV. OUTCOME

The goal of the sessions would be to design strategies and recommendations for the next phase of an NGO mechanism to implement the *Platform for Action* and establish connections with domestic women's organizations for long and short term action plans in issue areas ranging from violence against women to economic empowerment to women's human rights. These ideas could then be compiled in a working paper that could be disseminated widely and used as a basis for subsequent discussions and action next steps.

The working paper would include a series of questions about next steps, along with proposed strategies to build the human and financial resources necessary for such an endeavor. Recommendations for communication mechanisms, such as current or new Web sites, bulletin boards, and newsletters should also be included.

Because the meeting could not possibly include all the individuals who might wish to be involved in the formative dimension of such an endeavor, the working group hopes that future meetings could be held around the country to solicit and engage as broad participation as possible.

IV

104TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. RES. 220**

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Senate should ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 12, 1995

Ms. WOOLSEY (for herself, Mr. YATES, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. FROST, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. FILNER, Mr. WARD, Mr. BEILENSEN, Mr. UNDERWOOD, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. HILLIARD, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. PORTER, Mrs. MORELLA, Mr. DEL-LUMS, Ms. FURSE, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. NADLER, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. ACKERMAN, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. JACKSON-LEE, Mr. TORRES, Ms. HARMAN, Ms. DELAURO, and Ms. WATERS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Senate should ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) the full realization of the rights of women
4 is vital to the development and well-being of people
5 of all nations; and

2

1 (2) the Senate should, therefore, give its advice
2 and consent to the ratification of the Convention on
3 the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
4 Against Women.

○

NOV- 2-95 THU 15:52

CEDAW

1.02

*Women's
Convention*



THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

September 29, 1995

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I wanted to contact you as soon as possible following my attendance at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing with an important issue that I raised there. In my speeches both to the Conference and to the NGO Forum, I stressed the need to follow through on ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the entire U.S. Delegation to the Conference, to explain why I believe it was important to make this particular point -- among others -- in Beijing.

Although the Administration has made ratification of the Convention an urgent priority, and despite its overwhelming approval by the Foreign Relations Committee during the last session of Congress, this important human rights treaty has yet to be considered by the Committee this session.

The Women's Convention is a comprehensive multilateral treaty which promotes the recognition and protection of women's rights in accordance with internationally accepted standards. Not only does the Convention broadly define discrimination against women, it also calls for appropriate governmental action to ensure that women enjoy equality of opportunity and access in a broad range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. As carefully demonstrated last fall in both the Administration's submission to the Committee and during the Committee's hearing on the treaty, existing U.S. law and practice already accord such rights to women with the United States and, accordingly, U.S. ratification can be premised upon only a few narrowly drawn reservations, declarations and understandings.

The Honorable
Jesse Helms,
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee,
United States Senate.

The Convention is widely accepted around the world, including by nearly all of our democratic allies. As of September 1995, some 145 countries have ratified the treaty, including every other country in our hemisphere.

Throughout the Conference on Women and the NGO Forum, women and men representing countries and cultures from all over the world were able, despite their diverse backgrounds and perspectives, to reach a consensus on the need for action, rather than rhetoric, to advance women's rights. At the center of this consensus was widespread support for the purposes, principles and provisions of the Convention. The U.S. Delegation to the Conference loudly and clearly affirmed women's rights as human rights. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Honorary Chair of our Delegation, addressed this issue in her speech to the Plenary on September 5, 1995.

I believe that the leadership and spirit of partnership which the U.S. Delegation exhibited in Beijing should be supported and endorsed by the United States Senate. The time has come for the United States, through ratification of the Convention, to formally embrace this set of internationally agreed principles on women's rights. On behalf of the U.S. Delegation, I urge you to give early and favorable consideration to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

If you would like to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be happy to do a briefing on the Women's Conference for you and other members, if there is interest.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Albright

Madeleine K. Albright