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A Cautious Welcome to the Adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Amnesty International welcomed today the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, however it does not believe that the Protocol has gone far enough in addressing the situation of women who suffer human rights violations.

“Whilst this is an important step towards implementing the government’s commitments for the protection of the human rights of women, as articulated in Vienna and Beijing, the negotiations have at times lost sight of the very purpose of elaborating a protocol to the Women’s Convention,” Amnesty International said.

“The Protocol should have enabled women to claim their rights under the Convention and to participate fully in the human rights system. However, to have done so, it needed to acknowledge the real situations of women and the many forms of gender discrimination affecting their capacity to claim their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.”

The Protocol adopted today responds only partially to those needs and thus Amnesty International believes that an opportunity has been missed to establish a clear and progressive basis for effective access by women to remedies.

Amnesty International has worked with many other non governmental organisations towards achieving the adoption of a strong and effective Optional Protocol since the beginning of the negotiations, through its campaigning both at the international level and through the action of its members throughout the world.

“Despite the flaws, the Optional Protocol is an important tool and Amnesty International will work together with other non governmental organisations to promote a clear and grassroots understanding of how it can be used to protect women’s human rights;” Amnesty International stressed.

“This Protocol should come into force as soon as possible and Amnesty International will work tirelessly to ensure its speedy ratification during this 20th anniversary year of the Women’s Convention”.

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