

July 30, 2002

Ecumenical Statement in Support of the US Ratification of CEDAW

As leaders of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations, we strongly urge the U.S. Senate to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Since we believe all peoples are created equally in the eyes of God, each of our denominations and organizations supports universal ratification of CEDAW.

CEDAW establishes a legal landmark that women are entitled to all human rights and has proven to be one of the most potent tools for systematically uprooting gender inequality and oppression. This has been evident in the reports made to the United Nations by many of the 169 countries which have ratified CEDAW since its adoption by the General Assembly in 1979. The Convention calls on governments to abolish laws that discriminate against women and actively promote equality by ensuring that women have equal access to education, health care, employment, economic benefits and public life.

This Convention has successfully created an international standard against which the treatment of all women can be measured in all fields of life—including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. After ratifying CEDAW, many countries enacted laws that extend the equal rights of women. Developing democracies have even included the equality of women in their new constitutions as a result of their ratification of this Convention.

Nations look to the United States for leadership in the international sphere. By ratifying this Convention, the U.S. will be making a statement to other nations that human rights and the equality of women are a priority to the U.S. and for U.S. foreign policy. Ratification of this treaty would promote the basic rights of women both in our own country and globally.

While the United States is a leader in the human rights arena, there are still many instances of gender inequality in the U.S. that need to be addressed. We have learned from U.S. government reports that women are still discriminated against in employment opportunities. One example is “A New Look Through the Glass Ceiling: Where are the Women?” compiled by the U.S. General Accounting Office in January 2002.

We uplift the words of First Lady Laura Bush on International Women’s Day 2002: “Our dedication to respecting and protecting women’s rights in all countries must continue if we are to achieve a peaceful, prosperous, and stable world.” The ratification of this Convention is a clear step towards this goal.

Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)

James E. Winkler, General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church

The Reverend John L. McCullough, Executive Director
Church World Service

Division for Church and Society
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

