

**Written Testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Support of the
Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against
Women
(to be submitted into the Congressional Record and Hearing Record)**

**Submitted by the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church
June 10, 2002**

The General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church is a non-governmental organization to the United Nations and has been an ardent supporter of the UN since its inception. As an NGO, the General Board of Church and Society has participated in many consultations, summits and other international events including the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and the yearly reporting sessions on the implementation of the convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It is through these experiences, plus our historical traditions and theological beliefs supporting equal rights for women, that we strongly urge the United States Senate to ratify CEDAW.

The *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church* specifically support rights of women in ¶162, III (F) by affirming “women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We therefore urge that every effort be made to eliminate sex-role stereotypes in activity and portrayal of family life and in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the Church and society. We affirm the right of women to equal treatment in employment, responsibility, promotion and compensation. We affirm the importance of women in decision making positions at all levels of Church life and urge such bodies to guarantee their presence through policies of employment and recruitment.” Additionally, Resolution 181 in the *Book of Resolutions* calls for The United Methodist Church “to urge governments to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which was adopted by the United Nations in December 1979.”

The twenty-two year old United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women is the only comprehensive international standard for eliminating discrimination against women. It addresses women’s rights within social, political, cultural, economic and social life. The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that has not ratified the treaty. To date, 169 countries have ratified this treaty. Afghanistan, Iran and several other developing nations have not ratified this document.

CEDAW is consistent with U.S. constitutional principles opposing discrimination against women. U.S. law is already in substantial compliance with CEDAW. Where discrepancies exist between CEDAW’s principles of nondiscrimination and US law, CEDAW permits progressive implementation. The treaty includes 30 specific articles addressing such issues as non-discrimination in areas of education, health care, protection under the law, economic and social life and encourages equal involvement of women in political life.

Once a country ratifies the treaty, it is responsible for reporting progress toward implementation at least every four years. The process, as witnessed by our staff, is thorough and offers an opportunity to, not only indicate progress and challenges, but also to receive valuable feedback from the “panel of experts.”

The United States should be leading the international fight against gender discrimination. By ratifying this convention, the U.S. could exercise greater political and moral leadership on human rights in the international community and would strengthen its position as a champion of international human rights.

Submitted by:

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