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**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

Mandate of the Chair of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice

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Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 15/23.

The Council has, inter alia, entrusted the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice (the Working Group) with developing a dialogue with States, the relevant United Nations entities, national human rights institutions, experts on different legal systems, and civil society organizations to identify, promote and exchange views on best practices related to the elimination of laws that discriminate against women or are discriminatory to women in terms of implementation or impact (paragraph 18 (a) of resolution 15/23).

In the spirit of developing such dialogue, the Group would like to seek information on the measures that your Excellency's transitional Government, in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders, has put in place in order to guarantee women's rights and equality in the transition to democracy and in the process of constitutional reform.

Any information that your Excellency's Government could provide to the Working Group, not only in the immediate future, but also throughout the process, may contribute to informing the compilation of best practices which the Council has tasked us with.

The Working Group invites your Excellency's Government to seize the historical opportunity of the democratic transition process that Egypt is undergoing to ensure full participation of women in the said process, in conformity with the commitments Egypt has undertaken by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention), in particular in relation to article 7. In this respect, the Working Group would like to recall that the equal participation of men and women in the transitional and post-transitional process is one of the prerequisite to establish a long lasting democratic society. It also would like to draw your Excellency's Government's attention to CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 23 on the participation of women in public life which recognized that it is especially in times of political crises that the generalized exclusion of women from political participation has had the effect of silencing and marginalizing women's experiences and contributions. Finally, the Working Group invites your Excellency's Government to make use of General Recommendation No. 25 of the said Committee on temporary special measures to

accelerate the realization of the full participation of women, on an equal footing with men, in public and political life.

In view of the aforementioned, the Working Group would like to request your Excellency's Government to provide information on how it has aimed or will aim to:

- ensure the participation of women in the new government to be formed after the presidential elections;
- ensure that the constitutional guarantee on gender equality is kept in the new Constitution;
- take the opportunity of the momentum of the transitional process:
 - to review existing legislation and remove discriminatory provisions, including in the penal code and the personal status law;
 - to remove reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women, including the general reservation to article 2;
 - to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention;
 - to ensure that women candidates to both parliamentary and presidential elections are protected from gender-based violence.

The Working Group would also appreciate to receive clarifications from your Excellency's Government with regard to the participation of women in the forthcoming presidential and legislative elections. Specifically, the Working Group would welcome information on whether the amendments to the laws regulations the People's Assembly and the Shura Council include provisions to ensure minimum participation of women in both houses, and whether article 26 of the constitutional declaration allows women to serve as president.

The opportunity for your Excellency's Government to advance efforts to respect, protect and fulfill women's rights and equality in cooperation with all relevant actors is unique and the Working Group stands ready to provide you with relevant advisory support.

The Working Group would appreciate to receive a reply to its letter seeking a constructive dialogue with your Excellency's transitional Government on the issue of women's political participation in the transitional and post-transitional political process within 30 days. It undertakes to ensure that this reply is accurately reflected in the report that it will submit to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Kamala Chandrakirana
Chair
Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women,
in law and in practice