



Feminist Majority Foundation

FACTSHEET

CEDAW: The Women's Treaty

On December 18, 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women treaty, which is the most comprehensive and detailed international agreement which seeks the advancement of women. CEDAW has been ratified by 186 countries. **The United States is the only industrialized country that has not ratified the treaty**, putting us in the company of countries such as Sudan, Iran and Somalia.

The Women's Treaty addresses basic human rights of women. It can be a useful tool to reduce violence and discrimination against women and girls, ensure girls and women receive the same access as boys and men to education and health care, and secure basic legal recourse to women and girls against violations and abuses of their human rights. Women around the world have used **The Women's Treaty** to achieve important reforms in their country that reduce violence and discrimination. Measures have been taken against sex slavery, domestic violence and trafficking of women; millions of girls are now receiving primary education that were previously denied access; women's health services have improved, saving lives during pregnancy and childbirth; and women have secured the right to own or inherit property.

Ratification of **The Women's Treaty** commits nations to take concrete action to improve the status of women and to reverse the tide of discrimination and end violence against women in their own country and around the world.

Ratifying countries commit to:

- Take measures to ensure women can enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Establish judicial procedures to ensure the effective protection of the rights of women.
- Take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.
- Submit national reports every four years on measures they have taken to comply with the treaty to protect and promote the rights of women in their country.

In the United States, the Senate ratifies international treaties. A vote of two-thirds of the Senate (67 votes) is required for ratification. No action is required by the House of Representatives.

Sources: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women; Working Group on the Ratification of CEDAW www.womenstreaty.org

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