

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SCWO'S NATIONAL NGO SHADOW REPORT ON CEDAW**

**"Equal Space, Equal Voice, Equal Worth"**

When a country becomes a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it voluntarily accepts a range of legally binding obligations to eliminate discrimination against women and bring about equality between women and men. By becoming a signatory to CEDAW in 1995, we have a road-map to a gold standard of equal rights for women, free from discrimination, in public and private life. The responsibility of working to achieve this lies with the signing state. Singapore submitted the 4<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report in March 2009 and will be making an Oral presentation at the 49<sup>th</sup> CEDAW session on 22 July 2011.

SCWO as the National Coordinating Body for the women's groups in Singapore has submitted an independent commentary on the State's Report on CEDAW to the UN Committee, and will also be addressing the UN CEDAW Committee at its 49<sup>th</sup> session in New York in July 2011.

The completed 2011 SCWO CEDAW Shadow Report attached, is the result of consultations, two dialogue sessions with member organisations, a Closed-Door SCWO-MCYS Consultation and extensive and exhaustive research. This report acknowledges the progress made on many fronts in Singapore, while also identifying and making recommendations in areas which continue to pose challenges and to which we would like to see more resources allocated to.

Since Singapore's submission of the Fourth Periodic Report in March 2009, we can look with pride on many achievements by Singapore women. We have scaled the highest peaks of Everest, conquered the South Pole, won Olympic Silver, assumed the helm of major corporations and broken new ground in many areas of research, both scientific and academic. We are also pleased to acknowledge the Government's various progressive initiatives as outlined in the Executive Summary of this Report which has seen equality in citizenship rights, Penal Code amendments to better protect women and girls from marital rape and sex tourism and raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 for Muslim girls.

We are particularly pleased with Amendments to the Women's Charter, taking effect from 1st June 2011, which incorporate many of the recommendations made by the SCWO Taskforce on Improving the Enforcement of Maintenance Orders by streamlining processes and putting in place stronger deterrents to default accompanied by family counselling, to better enable separated family units in re-building their lives.

While we commend these achievements, we also have a responsibility to focus on national gender equality measures and identifying and assisting our marginalised women, with special emphasis on the elderly and infirm as Singapore faces an ageing population and women's life expectancy increases worldwide. Specific areas identified are health, education for reintegration and the narrowing of wage differentials to better equip women to be self-reliant, healthy and independent in their retirement years.

SCWO would like to encourage:

1. Greater gender diversity in high level positions in government and public and private Boards
2. The accelerated appointment of more women to ministerial posts

SCWO would like to recommend:

1. The elevation of the status of The Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports, to reflect better the importance of their work in gender mainstreaming
2. The allocation of the required resources to do it

CEDAW does not automatically confer rights on women. Its promise can only be delivered if we learn to use it effectively in practice to set goals, identify and evaluate needs, advocate for change, frame laws, policies and programmes, and be willing to examine, be examined and be held accountable at national and international levels. This is the purpose behind SCWO's National NGO CEDAW Shadow Report, aptly titled: **"Equal Space, Equal Voice, Equal Worth"**.

**For Media Enquiries:**

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Attached: SCWO's CEDAW Shadow Report

## **About SCWO**

The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations is the National Coordinating body of women's organisations in Singapore. Incorporated in March 1980, the SCWO serves to unite the various women's organisations, clubs, committees, groups and women leaders together, working in accordance with its various aims and objectives. The SCWO also serves to coordinate these associations into a national movement and to act on their behalf in matters for which it is authorised by its members.

The SCWO is represented on various Government and inter-ministry committees where we contribute our views in the areas of family, women, and children's issues. We are involved in government Feedback Sessions and other discussions on issues and policies

## **Our Services & Initiatives**

**Star Shelter**—A crisis centre that provides temporary refuge for women and children who are victims of family violence.

**New2U Thrift Shop**—sells pre-loved clothing, household items and furniture with proceeds going to Star Shelter.

**Maintenance Support Central** – A one-stop centre to assist claimants in the collection of maintenance payments from defaulters.

**IT Hub**—offers a non-threatening environment for women and their family members to become IT literate and for the re-training of retrenched workers.

**Bonny Hicks Education & Training Centre**—consists of six rooms for training courses and meetings, and are available for rent.

**F.A. Chua Library**— is an archival library of women's organisations — local and international.

**Women' Register**— a platform for networking, education and mentorship for women between 18 to 35 years of age.

**BoardAgender** – assists and facilitates the appointment of women to leadership positions in the public, private and non-profit sector.

**Wall of Fame** – dedicated to the women who made a difference in Singapore.

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9 June 2011