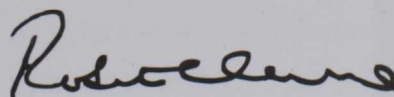


## Foreword

In 2013, significant normative development took place at the regional and national levels to advance gender equality, particularly on women's access to justice as a necessary foundation for gender equality. 'Under international human rights law, States have a legal obligation to ensure that all individuals are able to access competent and impartial judicial and adjudicatory mechanisms equally and without discrimination. Access to justice is not only a fundamental right in itself, but it is an essential pre-requisite for the protection and promotion of all other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. It is thus both a right in itself and the means of restoring the exercise of rights that have been disregarded or violated'.

UN Women is implementing the Regional Programme on Improving Women's Human Rights in Southeast Asia (CEDAW SEAP) supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Canada (DFATD), covering eight countries namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam under the CEDAW SEAP Programme. One of the key focus areas of the Programme is enhancing women's access to justice through awareness raising and capacity development of government (executive, legislative and judiciary) as well as of civil society organizations. While ensuring that women have access to justice is a key thread running through CEDAW, the judiciary is also an important mechanism for ensuring CEDAW implementation, as judges have the opportunity to interpret and apply the provisions of the Convention in domestic court decisions, and thus send a powerful message to society that discrimination against women cannot be tolerated.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the strong support of International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and the Office of the Judiciary of Thailand. The judicial colloquium organized by UN Women during September 2013 brought together senior judges from 8 Southeast Asia programme countries in which the judges agreed to encourage the establishment of a gender equality committee within judiciaries; and encourage the formation of a regional network of judges to promote continuing dialogue, knowledge and information sharing; while the regional exchange and learning among members of the judiciary in Southeast Asia were enhanced. It brought together judges from court levels – Supreme Court or High Court justices and lower court judges who have either rendered decisions applying CEDAW principles or whose mandate includes decision cases that have a direct impact on WHR. Judicial Declarations were developed following the conclusion of various Judicial Colloquiums. These include: the Bangalore Principles, the Victoria Falls, Pacific Islands Judges Declarations and the Caribbean Conclusions. In the spirit of forging common understanding and collaborative efforts among members of the judiciary in Southeast Asia, Concluding Recommendations were drafted by the participants of the Judicial Colloquium. The Concluding Recommendations serves to enhance and provide specific guidelines on the applicability of CEDAW and its principles to domestic judicial decision-making law, and as a source of definition in particular on concepts of equality and discrimination. It is with our deepest hope that this publication will enhance the accuracy of Southeast Asia and serve as a useful tool for judiciary, policy makers and development practitioners



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Bangkok, Thailand  
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1. General Discussion on Access to Justice for Women: Joint Statement by Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, CEDAW Committee, 54th Session (18 February 2013)