



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the third periodic report**

Suriname



List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the third periodic report of Suriname on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Constitution, Laws and national machinery

1. In its concluding comments in 2002, the Committee recommended that the State party take steps to incorporate the Convention into domestic law and introduce procedures that would allow women to effectively enforce the prohibition of discrimination based on sex¹. Please indicate what follow-up action was taken pursuant to that recommendation and provide, as requested by the Committee, information on whether the Convention and the Constitution have been invoked by women before domestic courts.

To incorporate the Convention into domestic law the following actions have been taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs:

- Publication of the Convention
- Establishment of the Committee on Gender Legislation.

The main tasks of the Committee were:

- (a) Assessment the governments policy and developments in the society with respect to the women's rights convention;
- (b) Evaluation and where relevant, the adaptation of legislation with regard to the promotion of women's rights and gender mainstreaming;
- (c) The adjustment of legislation which can be regarded as discriminatory against women.

The Committee on Gender Legislation has presented draft legislation to the Ministry of Justice and Police such as:

- (a) The amendment of some articles in the Personnel Act;
- (b) The amendment of the Travel and Temporary Attachment Decree;
- (c) The amendment of articles of the Penal Code related to domestic violence and sexual offences;
- (d) The introduction of the law on stalking;
- (e) The establishment of the law on equal treatment of men and women and the installation of a complaint bureau;
- (f) The amendment of the law on Nationality and Residence, the State Decree with regard to the implementation of the Identity Act and the Election Act which rectifies the segregated provisions in the above-mentioned legislations.

Currently a number of aforementioned legislation is being reviewed and will be presented thereafter for approval by the Council of Ministers. The amendments under no. 2 and 6 (Election Act) are already approved.

The Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005 (IGAP) focused on the following areas:

- Creation of equal opportunities for women and men and elimination of discrimination against women in relation to men;
- Acknowledgement that women's rights are special human rights;
- Elimination of all forms of violence against women;
- Positive discrimination with regard to the numeric representation of women in executive positions.

Two of the main themes of the Integral Gender Action Plan are Human Rights of Women and Violence against Women.

The objectives were:

¹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh session, Supplement No. 38 (A/57/380), para. 40.

- (a) To promote and protect the human rights of women through full implementation all human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- (b) To ensure equality and non-discrimination in law and in practice.

The Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 also mentions the following objective under the theme human rights:

“To increase the perception of the human rights of women through the development of and the implementation of (adjusted) legislation, measures and institutions that are in conformity with the international human rights conventions”.

Up to the present date the Convention and the Constitution have not been invoked by any woman before domestic courts.

2. Please provide information on the status of the review and amendment of Laws that discriminate against women, including, but not limited to, amendments to the Penal Code, the Personnel Act, the Accident Regulation and to laws relating to marriage and to insurance.

Status of review and amendment of laws that discriminate against women:

(a) *The Penal Code:*

An Advisory Committee Draft Penal Code has been installed to review the Penal Code.

(b) *The Personnel Act:*

The Personnel Act was last amended by legislation State Act of 7th October 2003. This includes a more specific amendment of the exemption resolution of 1989, in order to determine criteria for pregnancy and maternity leave.

(c) *The Accident Regulation:*

A project for the complete revision of the Labor Act, including the Accidents Act of 1947 is currently being developed by the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment.

Besides the review of the legislation on outdated regulations, deficiencies and gaps in regulations, the labor legislation will also be reviewed on regulations that are discriminatory against women. In this process the fundamental standards of the International Labour Organization and the Caribbean Community on equality of treatment will be taken into account.

(d) *Laws relating to marriage:*

The revised Matrimonial Act of 10th September 1973 came into effect by resolution of 17th June 2003. The revision includes new rules regarding marriage and marriage annulment. As a consequence the Asian Matrimonial legislation was abolished.

(e) *Laws relating to insurance:*

There is no information readily available regarding insurance in the private sector. In general there is a Civil Servants Pension Act, Old Age Allowance Act and the State Accidents Regulation. In the coming period studies will be carried out to incorporate equal treatment within this legislation (IGAP activity).

3. The report states that the National Bureau for Gender Policy (NBG) will be strengthened and a network of gender coordination points within the different ministries will be set up. Please provide information on the status of this and whether, as recommended by the Committee in its 2002 concluding comments, the National Gender Bureau has been provided with adequate human, financial and material resources to give it visibility and effectiveness and to ensure effective implementation of governmental policies and programmes related to gender equality². In addition please provide information on the involvement and employment of indigenous and other minority women in the National Gender Bureau.

² Ibid. para. 46.

Strengthening of the National Gender Bureau

In the current Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 one of the main priorities is to strengthen the Institutional Mechanism: The process of strengthening the Institutional Mechanism is currently being implemented. A few actions in this regard are:

- (a) Institutional strengthening of the NBG;
- (b) Establishment of the Gender Management System;
- (c) Setting up a gender database system;
- (d) Auxiliary branches of NBG: A branch of the National Gender Bureau will be opened in October 2006 in the district of Nickerie.

Adequate human resources: From 1 November 2005 an Acting Head has been appointed for this bureau. Recruitment of expert staff is a high priority and the new staff formation report, which is based on a modified organization structure, is in the final phase. Recruitment of qualified persons remains a challenge within the Public Sector.

Material resources: NBG is equipped with computers and office furniture financed from the budget of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Suriname. A request for funding to set up the gender database system has been submitted to the UNDP.

NBG will consist of three main divisions:

- (a) research and planning;
- (b) monitoring and evaluation;
- (c) education and communication.

A strategic communication plan will soon be finalized.

Financial resources: The Ministry of Home Affairs has allocated in its budget special funding for implementation of the actions from the Gender Action Plan. A request will be submitted to regional and international organizations for additional support.

A network of gender focal points within the various ministries

Within the various ministries a network of gender focal points has already set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs. These Ministries are:

- Foreign Affairs;
- Justice and Police;
- Health;
- Planning and Development Cooperation;
- Labor, Technical Development and Environment;
- Natural Resources;
- Regional Development;
- Social Affairs and Housing;
- Education and Community Development;
- Defense;
- Transport, Communication and Tourism;
- Trade and Industry;
- Agriculture, Animal husbandry and Fishery.

To improve the system of the gender focal points the following strategies are mentioned in the Integral Gender Action Plan of 2006-2010:

- appointment of a coordinator responsible for gender issues at the executive level of each ministry;

- institutional strengthening of the gender focal points

Involvement and employment of indigenous people and other minority women

There is no policy or regulation that prohibits or discriminates against indigenous people or other minority women to work within this bureau.

The indigenous people are indirectly involved within the NBG through the cooperation with relevant Non Governmental Organizations and the Ministry of Regional Development.

4. Please provide further details on the implementation and outcome of the programmes under the Integrated Gender Plan of Action 2000-2005 and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan. Are the concerns of rural women and the racial minorities reflected in the Plan of Action?

Implementation and outcome under Integrated Gender Plan of Action and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan

The Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan of the Surinamese Government consists of 23 points of action. These were all incorporated in the Integral Gender Plan of Action 2000-2005. The Ministry of Home Affairs published a brochure on gender mainstreaming for the purpose of distribution to the ministries, their management and senior officials as well as Non-Governmental Organizations.

The Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005 was divided into seven priority areas:

- (i) Control, decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the improvement of the position of women;
- (ii) Human rights of women;
- (iii) Women and the media;
- (iv) Women, poverty and the economy;
- (v) Violence against women;
- (vi) Gender and education;
- (vii) Women and health.

The outcome of the programmes executed under the Integral Gender Action Plan are:

- (a) The Commission Gender Legislation drafted legislation on the reinforcement of the sentence in case of financial and psychological violence, stalking and trafficking in human beings in conformity with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Bélem do Para;
- (b) The enactment of the new marriage legislation per June 2003, in which durable disruption became the new ground for divorce and the Asian marriage Act, was repealed. Hereafter a training for civil servants, responsible for wedding ceremony, was conducted;
- (c) Steps were undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing to formulate legislation on childcare for children ages 0-8 within the framework of the Programme "Social Investment for Child Protection", with a link to the Programme "Early Childhood Development";
- (d) Major developments were made within the police force in the area of domestic violence, such as setting-up of a data surveillance system, special records, modules for training of the police force and the establishment of 4 victim chambers;
- (e) The Regional Health Services, a department within the Ministry of Health, is providing continuous education and has developed a medical protocol for doctors and chief nurses to identify and treat victims of domestic violence;
- (f) The Foundation Stop Violence against Women has trained assistant counselors in 4 districts with partial financial support from the Ministry of Home Affairs. In this regard they have commenced with training modules and training expertise in domestic violence for doctors, nurses and assistants in the applied social studies;
- (g) With regard to the issue of women in decision-making, the Women Parliament Forum, in particular carried out gender analysis to examine and promote the participation of women at decision-making levels in government with financial support of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This analysis reported the participation of women in executive positions in Government, in the National Assembly, the District Councils and Resort Councils;

- (h) Within the framework of poverty eradication and the economic empowerment of women the National Women's Movement and the Women's Business Group carried out activities among which entrepreneurs training, credit supply, and the promotion of the participation of women in trade exchange markets. Both organizations assisted female entrepreneurs to participate in the annual production exchange market and other events of the Chamber of Commerce and factories. The National Women's Movement organized the bi-annual 'Women in Bisnis Fair' with substantial financial support from the Ministry of Home Affairs;
- (i) The Ministry of Home Affairs supported the foundation Pro Health in the district of Brokopondo with the implementation of a training project for traditional midwives and key persons for the reduction of mother and child mortality rates;
- (j) Suriname ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Bélem do Para) in 2002;
- (k) The Ministry of Home Affairs presented the brochure: "What is gender mainstreaming?", as part of a project to formulate a Gender Mainstreaming Program;
- (l) Training for the gender focal points were organized, namely "Effective Personal Leadership" and "Gender analysis in policy and planning";
- (m) Elimination of the significant gender inequality in the judiciary by positive discrimination of women in the selection of judicial officers (RAIO course). In 2003 nine women and one man were selected for the RAIO course (judicial officer in training);
- (n) In 2003 the Ministry of Home Affairs supported the Foundation Stop Violence against Women with office facilities. These facilities could not be utilized by the Foundation due to organizational impediments. Now these office facilities are used as an auxiliary branch office of the NBG.

The concerns of rural women in racial minorities are not specifically mentioned in the Integral Gender Action Plan but they are considered as an equal part in the target groups for several programmes.

Political participation and decision-making

5. The report states that the "greatest impediment to removing gender inequality is still the influence of the political parties in the national political culture in the nomination and selection of candidates for politico-administrative organs, high organs of State, diplomatic service and senior management positions in civil service". What is the government doing to address this challenge?

6. The report states that "the participation of women in public and political life is still limited". Has the government considered introducing temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention to improve women's participation in political and public life, particularly at senior levels, including in the National Assembly, Government, diplomatic service and regional and local bodies? Do these measures extend to indigenous and other racial minority women?

Government actions

The Government Policy Statement 2000-2005 states that the participation of women in the development process will be integrated fully into the development policy and planning.

The Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005 identifies control, decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the improvement of the position of women, as a strategic area. In this regard the following has been realized by the Ministry of Home Affairs:

- (a) Eradication of the large gender inequality in the judiciary by positive discrimination of women in the selection of female judicial officers in training;
- (b) Gender training of politicians and members of Parliament by the Women Parliament Forum in cooperation with the "Projecta Foundation";
- (c) Encourage the elimination of gender inequality in the diplomatic service.

The Ministry of Home Affairs also facilitated the Women Parliament Forum to conduct a study on the possibility of introducing a quota system for a proportional representation of women and men in representative bodies and the government. VPF also carried out a study of female representation in policy- and decision-making positions within the government and semi-government institutions. Gender training for politicians and members of Parliament was also conducted by VPF.

In the new Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 various actions under the theme “Voice and decision-making”, will be carried out:

- (a) Increased participation of women in high bodies of State, executive positions within the government, administrative bodies, and in Project Management Units as well Committees which are installed for the implementation of the sector plans;
- (b) During the election process information and sex-disaggregated data;
- (c) Assistance to political parties to set up gender sensitive structures and to formulate gender sensitive party programmes;
- (d) Monitoring the continuation of gender training in political parties, in particular where extra impulse is required;
- (e) Discussions on women’s participation in political leadership and decision-making;
- (f) Continuation of activities to stimulate women to accept executive positions and monitoring progress;
- (g) Modification of the voting system to indicate the sex of the candidates on the candidate list and ballots.

There is already an initiative to eliminate gender inequality in the diplomatic service, namely by appointing more female ambassadors; one is already appointed at the Suriname Embassy in Guyana and others have been nominated for positions at Embassies in the Netherlands, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago and Indonesia.

Several female high level diplomats will also be appointed.

General elections took place on 25th May 2005.

Compared with the earlier elections (1996, 2000) there is a growth of female representatives at the national and regional level. Most of the political parties had nominated female candidates. There are 13 female parliament members (of 51 parliament members) in the National Assembly.

Table below shows the results of the elections regarding women representation:

	2000	2005	progress
Government (ministers)	15%	16.7%	+ 1.7%
Parliament	17.6%	25%	+ 7.4%
District council	18%	24.5%	+ 6.5%
Resort council	24.7%	30.6%	+ 5.9%
<i>Average</i>	<i>18.8%</i>	<i>24.2%</i>	<i>+ 4.3%</i>

Source: Research by H. Guicherit for Women’s Parliament Forum

Some of the female parliament members are from the rural areas. At this moment the Cabinet of Ministers has three female Ministers. One of these female ministers was nominated by a rural political party.

The measures taken by the Government also extend to indigenous people and other racial minority women.

Violence against women

7. The report refers to an assessment of four conventions that was published by the Ministry of Home Affairs and recommendations that were made in respect of violence against women “namely the Government should be involved more intensively with the problem of violence through regular public awareness activities, targeting young women and girls, and by setting up a database on domestic violence, so as to make an inventory of the phenomenon together with the actors

concerned, and make it possible to develop a proper approach". Please provide information on the implementation of those recommendations.

The Women's Rights Centre, in cooperation with the Suriname Police Force, Police Force Utrecht and the Caribbean Gender Equality Program has set up victims helpdesks at four police stations across the country: one in Paramaribo, two in Wanica and one in Nickerie, especially for women and children. These helpdesks are already operational in order to provide victims the necessary attention.

A training program to create awareness on domestic violence was presented by the Women's Rights Centre.

The Ministry of Justice and Police made an analysis regarding domestic violence and formulated a policy which is already being implemented. Two important projects will be implemented: a special unit for the protection of women and a nation wide hotline. The police also trained their personnel in counseling of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Data base system

The Suriname Police Force has already set up a data surveillance system. Sex, age, relationship victim/assailant, residential area and ethnicity are all taken into account. The information is sent periodically to the Chief of police.

The KPS participates in the National Network on Domestic Violence in which the government and non-governmental organizations, dealing with domestic violence, such as aid workers, investigation officers, health care, and shelter are represented.

There is also collaboration with the Foundation Stop Violence against Women through the exchange of information, assistance and awareness activities.

About 30 per cent of the police officers are trained to recognize domestic violence and the necessity for an effective approach. All employees of the Youth Department of the police force and other operational services, at least one employee per precinct, received a training aimed at effective investigation of domestic violence. A training module, approach of domestic violence, is offered to the KPS and should be incorporated into the training curriculum of the police force. There are at least 8 trainers among police officers available. As part of the collaboration with the Dutch Police Force the Surinamese police officers were given an opportunity for an exchange visit to the Netherlands.

At least 112 assistant counselors in domestic violence were trained in 4 districts by the Foundation Stop Violence against Women in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 one of the actions under the theme "Domestic and sexual violence" is to increase public awareness by systematic publication of data and activities on domestic violence. In the policy plan of the Ministry of Justice and Police the theme of youth and morality and domestic violence is included. More specifically the following mechanisms are incorporated:

- (a) Steering group "Domestic violence" including an administrative project manager (Bureau for Women and Children);
- (b) Subproject Platform and Support "Domestic Violence";
- (c) Registration desk "Domestic Violence";
- (d) Action plan "Domestic Violence";
- (e) The Social Registration/allowance;
- (f) Registration desk for victims.

8. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee urged the State party to place high priority on measures to address violence against women in the family and in society in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation 19 and

the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women³. Please provide information on the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendation and please inform the Committee if the unique conditions that predispose rural, indigenous and other minority women to high levels of violence have been included in the Government's initiative.

Measures to prevent violence against women in the family and society

As most measures on violence against women are mentioned and prohibited in our Penal Code the Ministry of Justice and Police focuses on the institutional framework to address violence against women. The high priorities are action against domestic violence and measures against the trafficking of women and children.

In 2003 the Committee on Trafficking in Persons was established by the Ministry of Justice and Police with the task to formulate legislative measures, guidelines and procedures for police and other institutions. There is a prosecutor specialized in domestic violence cases and there is a proposal regarding the policy and measures in cases of domestic violence.

Furthermore the Ministry of Justice and Police established a Committee on sexual intimidation at work. The complaints office seriously examines all complaints and takes adequate measures to protect victims and punish perpetrators within the scope of the Personnel Act. The commitment of the Ministry to promote the protection of women and active intervention against any violation is the basic policy.

The government is also participating and facilitating the National Network in order to combat domestic violence.

9. Has the law on domestic violence been finalized? If so, please provide details about its contents.

There are two draft laws on Domestic Violence. One is integrated in the amendment of the Penal Code and the other is a Draft Law on Domestic Violence, which was prepared by the Women's Rights Center. These drafts have been presented to the Ministry of Justice and Police.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

10. The report states that a special committee will be formed to look into trafficking of people in general and that "this committee will recommend policy measures and legislative measures, as well as guidelines, procedures for police and institutions". Has the committee been formed and, if not, when will it be formed and when is it expected to begin its work? How will the Government ensure that rural and minority women have a say in the committee?

The "Working group Trafficking in Persons" was established in 2003 and commenced to work out a Plan of Action comprising of measures which have to be implemented at operational and governmental level. The working group is chaired by a woman who is a public prosecutor at the office of the Prosecutor General. She has already successfully prosecuted a case of trafficking in persons. Currently, two cases of trafficking in persons are pending in court, while another case is before the office of the Magistrate's Court. The working is implementing an information and awareness campaign on trafficking in persons. In this regard, posters and brochures were distributed. The police force has a special unit for investigating trafficking in persons. This unit has several telephone numbers where persons can provide important information on trafficking in persons. Recently a new law on countering trafficking in persons came into force. Furthermore the working group collaborates with the Foundation Maxi Linder in the area of counseling victims and providing shelter for them.

11. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee recommended the development of programmes of action for women forced into prostitution by poverty and the introduction of policies to ensure the prosecution of, and stronger penalties for, those who exploit prostitutes and of adults involved in the exploitation of child prostitutes⁴. The Committee also recommended that the state party provide in its next report comprehensive information on prostitution and on trafficking

³ Ibid. para. 52.

⁴ Ibid. para. 50.

of women and girls to allow the Committee to better understand the extent of the problem in Suriname⁵. Please provide information on the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendation and respond to its request.

Prostitution exists in Suriname. Although the exploitation of brothels is illegal in Suriname according to the penal code, a tolerance policy is used by the government regarding brothels. Irrespective of being a minor or an adult, in cases where women are being forced into prostitution, action is taken as soon as it is brought to the attention of the police. In this situation the testimony of the victim is essential. Cases where the victims were willing to cooperate with justice are now in court, while one case is at the office of the Magistrate's Court. Suriname had its first conviction on trafficking in 1996 and the second in 2005. It is expected that this year the judge will give a verdict in pending cases.

Stereotypes and education

12. The report refers to the Lobi Foundation, which "plays an important role in education programmes", including in respect of family planning information and sex education. The report states that "these activities are still in contravention of articles 533 and 534 of the Penal Code, which have not yet been amended". In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee recommended that the laws restricting family planning activities be repealed⁶. When is it anticipated that this will be done?

Amending this law or the law restricting family planning is programmed in the Health Sector Plan 2005-2009.

13. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee urged the state party to adopt the necessary legal or administrative measures to prohibit schools from barring young mothers and pregnant teenagers. Please provide information on the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendation. Please extend the scope of this information to rural and racial minority women.

All teenage mothers have the possibility to return to school. The department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education has the duty to register those who want to attend school. They further guide them with homework, how to handle their finances, how to take care of their children and give them courses in computer, sewing and other skills the young mother would like to learn to make them independent.

The inspection division of the Ministry of Education is responsible to find a school for these young mothers.

14. Please provide information on the status of the assessment of school curricula and whether fees are required from students for public education.

There is a national curriculum for all primary schools. All primary schools have the same schoolbooks and at the end of grade six there is a national exam for entering the secondary school.

Secondary and High schools do not have a national curriculum but they have a fixed program for all streams. There are national final exams at all levels.

Although education is free in Suriname small enrollment fees are required annually.

15. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee called upon the State party to take urgent measures aimed at changing stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including through awareness-raising and educational campaigns directed at both women and men and at the media⁷. Please indicate what follow-up action was taken pursuant to that recommendation.

According to the law both men and women are allowed to do all kind of jobs.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. para. 64.

⁷ Ibid. para. 48.

In the Integrated Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 programmes are mentioned to create more awareness for students about job opportunities (girls and boys).

Employment

16. Please provide updated data on the unemployment rates of women and men, and please include such data on women and men who live in the interior and in indigenous communities.

Updated data unemployment rates women and men

In general, there are two competent authorities who collect and analyze gender segregated data on unemployment of men and women, namely the General Bureau for Statistics and the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment. During the reporting period the Ministry of ATM was not able to collect and analyze data as mentioned. The Ministry of ATM has been depending heavily on data gathered by the ABS. Since the ABS has only data covering the first half of 1999, the Ministry of ATM has not produced any data going beyond the final half of 1999.

The number of unemployed persons in Paramaribo and Wanica is presented in table 1.

Data on women and men in the interior and in the indigenous communities covering the reporting period is available and included in the total data.

Table 1

Number of Economically Active, Employed and Unemployed Persons and Unemployment rate 1999-2002 (Paramaribo and Wanica)

year	Economically Active	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
1999	105.394	92747	12647	12
2000	110.600	95.374	15.226	14
2001	133.447	97.872	15.575	14
2002	116.368	105.129	11.239	10

Labor Force Participation rate by sex

Activity Status	Male	Female
Employed	101,919	54,768
Unemployed	7,708	8,717
Working Age Population	154,836	154,179
Participation Rate	70.8	41.2

Source: Census-7 of ABS 2005

17. The report states that since “women generally form part of the lower wage groups, (they) usually earn less than men”. What measures are being taken by the Government to address this?

Gender pay gap

Disparities in the field of employment between men and women are acknowledged by the Ministry of ATM and are officially mentioned in several policy declarations of the government and in the ministerial policy note (Ministry of ATM) in the last decades.

The following is stated in the policy note 2000-2005 of the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment (ATM):

“In order to create a positive remuneration environment a minimum wage will be introduced after adequate research. This should result in equal remuneration for work of equal value remuneration based on performance”.

Furthermore the Policy Note makes reference to the integration of gender concepts in every policy area of the Ministry of ATM, in order to promote gender equality on the Surinamese labor market. Every measure or activity shall include a gender analysis to assess the possible impact on men and women. With regard to unemployment and growth of small enterprises women are a target group.

The minimum wage has not been established in the period 2000-2005. The introduction of a minimum wage system has again been mentioned in the Annual Policy Statement 2006 of the President of Suriname and the Ministerial Policy Note of ATM. According to the Policy Note, the Minister of ATM established a tripartite commission to be advised on the establishment of a minimum wage system.

Health

18. The report states that “as far as access of women to medical services is concerned, the following observations are important; lack of routine screening for cancer (Pap smear, mammograms); complications of pregnancies indicate the need for improved prenatal care and a better management of high-risk pregnancies”. The report states that about one third of the population does not have medical insurance. What measures are being taken by the Government to address these problems?

Government actions:

- (a) Improving Maternal Health - Policy Developments. At the World Summit in September 2005, Suriname and the international community agreed that achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015 is critical for the attainment of gender equality and the other Millennium Development Goals.
- (b) Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Policy identifies Safe motherhood as a priority human right. A Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy has been drafted which identifies Safe Motherhood as a priority human right. This policy requires adoption by Parliament and translation into an implementation plan, which includes quality maternal care as a main component. This policy is incorporated in the Health Sector Plan.
- (c) Health Sector Plan and the Health Reform Project.

The Ministry of Health is currently examining the possibility of establishing a Logistics System for RH Commodities System, as well as implementing an MMR strategy. A National Health Information System is being designed, which will allow better identification and monitoring of health issues contributing to maternal mortality.

19. The report states that the number of HIV-positive women rose from 1998 to 2000 from 4.1 per cent to 6.35 per cent. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee urged the State party to address the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS and to ensure that women and girls have equal rights and access to health care and social services, and encouraged the State party to strengthen its efforts to raise awareness and educate women and girls on methods of self-protection⁸. Please provide information on the implementation of the Committee’s recommendation and include data on the spread of HIV/AIDS among minority women in the interior owing to mining activities.

HIV/AIDS – Policy developments and National Strategic Plan

Completion of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) and the availability of two Global Fund grants have significantly enhanced the national capacity to develop a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS. The NSP outlines the targets, strategies and activities for the period 2004-2008. Specific targets towards achievement of the MDG’s include 25 per cent reduction of new HIV infections in the age group 15-24 and 25 per cent reduction of the number of HIV+ pregnant women.

The recently completed Multi-Annual Development Plan (MOP) has integrated these targets into the national development strategy.

Measures currently being implemented towards achieving these targets include the expansion of the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme, and intensified prevention programmes based on the ABC strategy, which includes promotion and increased availability of condoms.

⁸ Ibid. para.62.

Data on the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst minority women in the interior due to mining activities will be gathered soon.

Poverty and rural women

20. The report states that poverty is highest among women, in particular single women who are heads of households. Please provide information on the impact on women, in particular rural and racial minority women, of the Multi-annual Development Plan 2001-2005.

As part of the policy on poverty eradication and increased prosperity and well-being for all citizens, in particular for women, the following will be implemented:

Increased economic and physical independence of women, who in all communities function as catalysts for development, as a basis for an effective improvement of their disadvantaged position and an increased contribution to social development. (Multi Annual Development Plan 2006-2011)

21. Please indicate how the national development plans or poverty reduction strategies that may be in place in the country, including those aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, integrate a gender perspective and contribute to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. Please ensure that data that speak to poverty reduction in the interior and among racial and ethnic minorities are included in the response.

Gender-specific poverty eradication requires a multidimensional approach. The government commits itself to the conclusions of the Beijing Platform for Action in relation to the economic independence of women, namely that the most effective way to reduce poverty is to provide women with opportunities to acquire their own income by providing them access to facilities, resources, employment, markets and trade. In the fight against poverty, addressing all forms of violence against women and children, providing support for civil society organizations, and improving access to reproductive health facilities are high priorities.

22. The report refers to a number of problems rural women face (see, in particular pp. 49, 63, 65, 68, 69, 71 and 72 of CEDAW/C/SUR/3). In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee urged the State party to give full attention to the needs of rural women, including older women, particularly Amerindian and maroon women, to ensure that they benefit from policies and programmes in all areas, in particular access to health, education, social services and decision-making⁹. Please provide details on what follow up action was taken pursuant to the Committee's recommendation.

The social welfare policy on behalf of vulnerable women

The target groups of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing are the vulnerable groups and socially weak in the society. These are: the elderly, children, and people with a disability, poor households among which also single vulnerable women with family responsibility. The intention of the ministry is to achieve prosperity and to promote the well-being among the socially weak in the society, in order to provide them with material and immaterial needs. A specific poverty eradication programme has not been developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing. This Ministry has a social supply scheme, which includes material and immaterial supplies where both men and women can apply.

Social provisions programme:

Through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, a special provisions program is in place with the main focus to support needy households to maintain a decent standard of living. The provisions include:

- Healthcare cards to ensure medical care;
- Financial support for needy households and people with a disability;
- Child allowance;
- Old age allowance;
- Subsidies are provided to institutions taking care of the elderly, children and people with a disability;
- Family counseling and community work;

⁹ Ibid. para. 66.

Marriage legislation

23. In its 2002 concluding comments, the Committee expressed concern at the very low age of marriage for some communities and urged the State party to review the law on marriage in line with articles 15 and 16 of the Convention¹⁰. The Human Rights Committee, in its concluding observations in 2004, also stated that the State party should take steps to change the current marriage legislation and to bring it into conformity with the Covenant¹¹. Please indicate what follow-up action was taken pursuant to those recommendations.

By resolution of June 17th, 2003 no. 4190/03, marriages can only take place in conformity with article 82 of the Civil Code. The minimum age for a man is 18 and for a woman is 15 years.

24. Please indicate any progress made towards ratification of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention or acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

Progress towards ratification of accession to the Optional Protocol:

With funding of United Nations Development Fund for Women, the NGO Women's Rights Centre is executing a project Promoting CEDAW and the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention to increase awareness and better understanding of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, in particular the importance of state accountability regarding gender equality and non-discrimination.

In March 2006 the WRC organized a public campaign and training on CEDAW and the Optional Protocol. A five-day inter-active training with the objective to turn participants into advocates for women's rights in general, and for the Optional Protocol in particular was attended by a selection of participants from relevant government institutions, non-governmental organizations, the judicial sector, the university and the media. Participants are now in the process of executing their Plan of Action, which indicates important priorities on the policy level. In this regard, a weekly radio program "Genderoptiek" is aired on Radio Apintie, and in the near future articles will be published in daily newspapers and public debates will be held. WRC intends to collaborate with UNIFEM's Advocacy Tour and complete this project with a strong lobby for signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol by the Surinamese Government.

¹⁰ Ibid. paras. 67 and 68.

¹¹ CCPR/CO/80/SUR.