



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
22 January 2013
English
Original: Spanish

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Fifty-fifth session
8-26 July 2013

List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: Cuba

Addendum

Replies of Cuba to the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of its seventh and eighth periodic reports*

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

1. Family Code

1. The draft amendments to the Family Code were included in the Legislative Plan 2008-2012 with a view to their adoption by the People's National Assembly in 2012. However, the 2010 adoption of the country's Economic and Social Policy Guidelines, which will ensure Cuba's sustainability and development, made it essential to give priority to the adoption of economic legislation related to the Guidelines. Therefore, the draft amendments to the Family Code were moved to the Legislative Plan 2013-2017. Nonetheless, they are expected to be considered during the first stage of the Plan.

2. Perception of discrimination

2. In recent years, both the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Republic and the Supreme People's Court have taken steps to update their gender-disaggregated statistical databases in order to be able to conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses.

3. The Office of the Public Prosecutor, as the legislation-monitoring body, receives complaints and applications from citizens; those submitted by women are recorded separately. For example, during the first half of 2012, the Office dealt with 10,059 women and received 2,073 complaints and claims from women on labour,

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been edited.



criminal, administrative and civil matters, yet no complaints of discrimination against women have been received to date.

4. Intersectoral training programmes have been offered for officials, academics and media executives, among others, including on topics related to discrimination against women, the importance of addressing it and, specifically, the meaning of articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and of the Committee's general recommendation No. 28.

National machinery for the advancement of women

3. Strengthening of the Federation of Cuban Women

5. The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is the national mechanism for the advancement of women and the gender focal point responsible for promoting the Cuban Government's public policies on gender equality and the empowerment of women, although their implementation is the Government's responsibility.

6. The Federation promotes these public policies, as well as draft legislation and amendments; provides guidance on theory and methodology; and, together with the Government, ensures policy follow-up and assessment.

7. The Federation does not require any specific financial resources in order to conduct these activities. However, when it is involved in aspects of the implementation of sectoral policies that fall within the scope of a ministry or group of ministries, the Government funds its activities, without prejudice to the non-governmental nature of the Federation. The Government also supports the work of the FMC by, inter alia, providing transportation and the use of premises.

8. Joint activities, in which the Government provides financial resources and the FMC contributes its expertise in order to promote public policies and ensure that a gender perspective is duly incorporated into plans and programmes, are conducted. The FMC has highly qualified staff who make it possible for it to advise and evaluate and to address the problems of women in the country; it also provides support for the work of State bodies.

9. Implementation of the Convention is not directly related to the financial resources that the Federation needs in order to coordinate this work. Its role is to promote sectoral public policies designed to ensure that the Convention's provisions are implemented. To that end, national policies, work agreements and funding are provided by Government bodies, through budget lines, to ensure women's access to, for example, education, health care, employment and social security.

4 and 5. National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference

10. Although the National Action Plan of the Republic of Cuba for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women, adopted by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba in 1997, does not yet cover all 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, it includes 90 measures corresponding to the provisions of the Convention. These measures reflect the needs and interests of Cuban women, and the ministries and other administrative bodies of the central State administration are responsible for their implementation and systematic evaluation. Given the provisions of this Plan and of the country's numerous legal documents ensuring

implementation of the articles of the Convention and evaluation of compliance, there is no need for a specific monitoring plan for this international instrument.

11. With a view to improving education in, and understanding of, all relevant Cuban legal documents and to expanding instruction in the implementation and application of their provisions, a pamphlet setting out the principal elements of the Action Plan was recently issued and an official document concerning the Plan and an annotated text of the Convention were reissued. These materials are useful tools for Government bodies, civil society organizations and women.

12. Although the Third National Assessment Seminar was to have been held in December 2012, the situation in the country as a result of Hurricane Sandy, which caused extensive damage and seriously affected various provinces, forced the Government to postpone the event and to give priority to other activities, particularly cooperation in repairing the damage.

13. In any event, as proof of the Government's political will to conduct this Assessment, the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of the Economy and Planning and the FMC decided to conduct an assessment of implementation of the measures set out in the Plan by the central State administration and the provincial governments, each within its mandate, in November and December 2012. They also agreed to postpone the National Seminar until 2013 in order to hold it under better conditions.

14. The Action Plan has been reviewed twice at the national level by the central State administration and the provincial and municipal administration councils, ensuring follow-up to the measures contained therein. The Plan is fully in force and with a view to its implementation, courses, workshops and training have been offered to community leaders and State officials, who are included in the evaluation of the Plan.

15. With cooperation from abroad, a new edition of the Action Plan has been printed and the public have been provided with training in its structure, meaning and supervisory and implementing bodies. The importance of this annotated version is that it outlines the methodology for evaluation of the Plan by every Government body, from the municipal to the central level.

Stereotypes and cultural practices

6. Measures taken to ensure compliance with Decree-Law No. 234 (2003) on maternity of working women and to address sexist stereotypes

16. The incorporation of Cuban women into the country's development as both protagonists and beneficiaries is one of the country's greatest social achievements. Women have been able to enter the public sphere on an equal footing with men.

17. At the seventh regular session of the seventh legislature, the Committee for Children, Young People and Equal Rights for Women of the People's National Assembly encouraged executives from television and radio stations, the Ministry of Culture, record companies and other cultural institutions to promote gender equality while respecting differences.

18. The schools play a key role in the education of children and adults of both sexes by establishing equality and changing patriarchal attitudes, cultural patterns

and gender stereotypes. Efforts are made at all levels of the national education system and, in that connection, it has been necessary to improve the primary and secondary school and pre-university curriculums in order to address these issues.

19. Each level of the curriculum includes substantive elements designed to change attitudes and stereotypes and to recognize women's role in society. There are 17 themes common to all curriculums, such as gender, sex and human sexuality; sexuality as a component of the personality; aspects and qualities of sexuality (the personal, the partner, the family and society); men's and women's sexual and reproductive rights at the various stages and in the various situations and contexts of life; the family and sexuality (unity of the family); gender socialization; shared family responsibilities; gender equality versus forms of discrimination and violence; violence and its manifestations; and sexual and gender-, age-, race- and culture-based violence.

20. A sex education strategy for all types of education in Cuba has been developed through the new gender-based, rights-based sex education programme, established by Ministry of Education resolution 139/2011.

21. In addition, the National Sex Education and Sexual Health Programme (proNess), in which other institutions, such as the National Sex Education Centre (CENESEX), a Government body, are also involved, is being implemented. The Programme seeks to dismantle patriarchal constructs that hinder the advancement of women in society. Its activities range from the scientific to community efforts conducted through the CENESEX social networks (Men for Diversity, Trans Cuba, Oremi, Young People for Diversity and Jurists for Sexual Rights). It also conducts activities within the framework of Cuba's annual Day against Homophobia, World Sexual Health Day, International Human Rights Day, the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and others.

22. Efforts to eliminate sexist stereotypes have increased, both in the media and through, inter alia, training, public debates, panel discussions and the preparation of informational material. The following are some of the most recent efforts:

- The Government has addressed these issues systematically in television broadcasts, including *When a woman* (Cubavisión) and *Revelations* (Canal Habana).
- The FMC, the Music Institute, Cultural Dawn House and the Inter-American and African Masculinity Network cooperated on the "Women against the tide" project, hosted by a well-known Cuban singer (Rochy), which seeks to eliminate sexist images in print and negative images in songs. In 2012, this project conducted 16 visits to art teacher training schools and helped organize gender workshops in which over 3,400 music, theatre and art students participated.
- In 2012, the department of gender and communication in the José Martí International Journalism Institute organized the tenth Ibero-American Meeting on Gender and Communication; Cuba had previously hosted three of these regional meetings, which are held every two years.
- The department of gender and communication also offers a diploma course in gender and media studies, which, in over eight years, has graduated 200

students from Cuba and 11 from other Latin American and Caribbean countries and Spain.

- The FMC publisher, *Editorial de la Mujer*, organized a workshop on the theme “Creating gender-sensitive journalism” for community media professionals.
- On the 25th of each month, the Ibero-American and African Masculinity Network holds an Orange Day to End Violence against Women and Girls, with workshops in universities in various provinces and concerts for young people.
- Approval has been given to a joint project of the FMC and the Spanish foundation, MUNDUBAT, the National Gender Training Programme for Media Executives and/or Professionals in Cuba, in order to promote a conscious change in the media’s gender perspective by improving the professional conduct of journalists, particularly in the local media.

23. Publications have played an active and significant role in awareness-raising with a view to gradual elimination of the remaining social stereotypes and prejudices. The FMC publisher, *Editorial de la Mujer*, has published various books that reflect the ongoing debate on gender constructs in Cuban society, including Julio Cesar González Pagés’ *Macho, varón, masculino* (Macho, Manly, Masculine) with a print run of 16,000 copies; Norma Vasallo’s *Ecos distantes, voces cercanas: Miradas feministas* (Faraway Echos, Nearby Voices: Feminine Perspectives) with a print run of 3,000 copies; Lourdes Fernández’ *Género y Ciencia* (Gender and Science) with a print run of 1,000 copies; the University of Havana’s *Desde otra perspectiva: Memorias de la Cátedra de Género* (From Another Perspective: Memoirs of the Department of Gender Studies) with a print run of 1,000 copies; and Aloyma Ravelo’s *Sexo, amor y erotismo* (Sex, Love and Eroticism) with a print run of 20,000 copies. Many more journals and books have been published by other publishing houses.

24. The women’s and family counselling centres, the women’s affairs departments, the *Editorial de la Mujer* and the FMC endeavour to eliminate such stereotypes as part of their ongoing work programmes.

25. Decree-Law No. 234 (2003) on maternity of working women provides appropriate protection to women during pregnancy, antenatal and postnatal paid maternity leave, breastfeeding and childcare benefits for children under 1 year of age and unpaid childcare leave until the child reaches the age of 16, although much remains to be done to eliminate underlying cultural stereotypes.

26. The innovative modality of sharing this leave with the father constitutes significant progress in abandoning old models and ensuring that both parents share responsibility for their children’s care and education. Despite that progressive legislation, however, only 75 men exercised this right during the period 2009 to 2012. This low number was influenced by both objective and subjective factors, such as the persistence of prejudices and stereotypes and, in some cases, obstacles created by employers.

27. The Maternity Act covers not only working women in civil service jobs, but also self-employed women, a new development that protects women in all sectors.

28. Another relevant measure is the ongoing social protection programme for mothers of severely disabled children:

<i>Mothers of children with severe disabilities</i>		
2010	2011	2012
4 630	4 231	4 366

Violence against women

7. Campaigns for raising awareness of violence against women

29. The Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, the Supreme People's Court, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, CENESEX and the Centre for Women's Studies are working jointly to increase awareness of abuse of and violence against women.

30. The National Union of Jurists of Cuba, the FMC and the University of Havana Law Faculty have carried out significant joint initiatives specifically designed to raise awareness of these issues and provide relevant training to lawyers and law students.

31. For the past two years, a project aimed at increasing knowledge of and recourse to the Convention and other United Nations instruments for the advancement of women and gender equality in order to support and strengthen their implementation in Cuba has been conducted in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the non-governmental organization, Oxfam. The project has had a significant impact: hundreds of jurists have attended postgraduate courses on gender and rights; the degree programme in Mediation, Gender and the Family is being offered for the third time; communication tools have been developed; and an undergraduate elective course on the topic "Gender and the Law" is being offered to second-year students.

32. There has been significant promotion of and support for the participation of Cuban women, together with men, in the activities of the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2008 within the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women campaign.

33. In 2012, commemoration of the Day was unusual in that it continued until 10 December, International Human Rights Day, which ended with a national event organized by the Cuban chapter of the World March of Women as part of the international 24 Hours of Feminist Action. This was the culmination of over 70 activities, including workshops, marches, accounts by victims of terrorism and human rights violations, women's courts, cultural events and many other women's initiatives throughout Cuba.

34. The primary activities of this commemoration included a training workshop for journalists on media coverage of gender violence, a workshop on the total transformation of Havana, a National Symphony Orchestra concert dedicated to

women on World AIDS Day and a second such concert on the theme of gender violence within the framework of Italian Culture Day. In addition, the Ministry of Culture cooperated in and promoted the holding of activities as part of the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, which included major Cuban and foreign performers such as Raúl Torres and a Mexican, Julieta Venegas. Discussion workshops, scientific events, and training courses for officials, specialists and professionals, community leaders and activists, representatives of social bodies and organizations and FMC officials, inter alia, were held.

35. The 174 women's and family counselling centres throughout the country provide assistance and counselling to the victims that visit these institutions and to others who are identified in the community. A monitoring registry has been established to ensure proper follow-up and systematic assessment of the measures taken and to provide case-by-case progress assessments. Group and individual counselling sessions are provided by collaborators, social workers, guidance counsellors, sex therapists with a specialization in family medicine, Office of the Public Prosecutor citizens' rights units and specialists from mental health centres. FMC experts have provided useful evaluations of draft amendments to the Penal Code.

36. CENESEX offers legal guidance services, which provide treatment, guidance and, in some cases, institutional support for individuals who report various human rights violations. The information gathered provides data on the different forms of violence and the specific characteristics of each of them. Although these services cannot be considered an official mechanism, they have provided an opportunity to collect a significant number of reports of such cases.

37. Cuba's professional judges, for their part, receive ongoing training in identifying, preventing and eliminating any manifestation of violence or discrimination that occurs or might occur in the various types of judicial proceedings.

8. Care of victims of violence and their abusers

38. The primary obstacle to the prevention and treatment of domestic violence is the widespread persistence of stereotypes. For this reason, in addition to the policies and programmes that are implemented in Cuba, great importance is attached to awareness-raising and training for officials, specialists and the general public.

39. The victims of violence receive specialized medical and psychological care from the health centres to which they turn at the time of the assault, particularly the mental health centres located throughout the country and the women's and family counselling centres, which are staffed by many experts who volunteer their services. Abusers also receive care and treatment in both health centres and women's and family counselling centres, to which more and more men are turning for care and treatment. Municipal citizens' rights prosecutors work actively with those centres to provide legal guidance to those who turn to them.

40. CENESEX has two offices specializing in these areas: one for cases of violence against women and another for children and adolescents who were victims of child sexual abuse. There are also specialized offices in the Centres for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (CPNNA), which operate under the Department of Children's Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior.

41. Every facility for receiving and processing complaints of violence against women is in place in the National Revolutionary Police stations. Law enforcement officers and officials who receive such complaints are properly trained to handle them with the requisite professionalism. In addition, the Penal Code ensures that the offence of violence against women is punished accordingly and that victims are protected.

42. The FMC has carried out training activities aimed at women leaders, social workers and volunteer health care workers. Efforts are made to identify cases of domestic violence and provide information on rights, procedures for reporting crimes and counselling not only to individuals, but to groups and families with violent tendencies associated with complex social situations; in communities, places of work and study; and in rural areas where chauvinism is deeply rooted. The issue is also addressed in women's prisons. The Working Group for Prevention and Treatment of Violence in the Family has played a key role in prevention and treatment of the problem of domestic violence.

43. With regard to the outcome of the study on domestic violence and on measures taken to ensure that the legal system incorporates a preventive and educational approach, the existing legislation is being improved, particularly with regard to the preventive approach. However, the results of the studies have yet to show the feasibility of enacting specific legislation for that purpose.

44. In any case, from both the substantive and the procedural standpoint, it is clearly worthwhile to reflect the issue of violence in the drafting of new legislation; the legislative trend is moving in that direction. The plan is to incorporate this approach into the amendments to the Labour Code and the Penal Code and into the draft amendments to the Family Code. The proposed amendments are in line with the recommendations contained in general recommendation No. 19 and are subject to approval by the competent body.

45. It is also necessary to expand and strengthen training for the staff of educational, health, judicial and community institutions and to improve the treatment of victims by establishing specialized services with a multidisciplinary approach.

46. Of the actions carried out in recent years, particularly noteworthy is the implementation of Instruction 187 of December 2007 by the Governing Council of the Supreme People's Court. The Instruction established specialized chambers for hearing family cases, with specialist judges and support from multidisciplinary technical advisory teams coordinated by the FMC. This has had a positive impact on efforts to improve family justice and has made it possible to identify cases of violence and make referrals for special treatment through the Federation's women's and family counselling centres or, where necessary, to refer cases to the criminal justice system.

47. On 17 May 2012, the Cuban courts' experience in this field led to the approval of Instruction 216 of the Governing Council of the Supreme People's Court, an important step forward in ensuring high quality in the administration of family justice.

48. The Instruction's third "whereas clause" specifies and includes aspects relating to "court appearance required under article 42 of the Civil, Administrative, Labour and Economic Procedures Act; the point in proceedings at which third parties with a

legitimate interest are called; the procedure for hearing minors; the role of the Public Prosecution Service; and the procedures for the establishment and operation of the multidisciplinary team in each territory. It also calls for mechanisms to ensure compliance with obligations established by a final judicial decision through a specific precautionary system that includes informal court proceedings, applications by the concerned parties and the potential adoption of urgent custody measures in light of the nature of the interests to be protected and specific provisions for compulsory implementation of final decisions, which should be based on a holistic and harmonious view of the current system”.

49. Some of the precautionary measures which courts may adopt *ex officio* or at the request of the parties and which could help to contain situations of domestic violence identified during family court trials are: (1) returning a child in the event of custodial interference; (2) prohibiting or authorizing a change in a child’s habitual residence; (3) awarding provisional custody of a child to one parent, to grandparents or, in exceptional cases, to other guardians during the court proceedings; (4) mandatory participation in educational or therapeutic programmes or medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment for a child, a parent or another person; and (5) barring entry to the home, place of work or study and other places frequented by one member of a family in order to prevent conduct that might physically or psychologically harm any member of the family.

50. In criminal proceedings involving women or child victims of domestic violence, the judicial process has solutions to prevent double victimization.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

9. Measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls

51. Cuba applies a comprehensive policy for coordination among societal bodies that have or might have an impact on efforts to address the problem of trafficking in persons and exploitation of prostitution.

52. Article 41 of the Criminal Procedures Act stipulates that it is the inherent duty of all the country’s bodies, organizations and other entities, including in the private sector, to provide the courts, examining magistrates and police with any reports, data and background information that they require in order to investigate an offence, including trafficking in persons.

53. Furthermore, the General Directorate of the National Revolutionary Police and the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Operations, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, have investigation and criminal procedure units that deal with matters relating to sexual offences, including the corruption of minors, sexual affront, the sale and trafficking of minors, pimping and trafficking in persons.

54. The country also has specialized courts which are competent to prosecute, *inter alia*, trafficking in persons when necessary.

55. Cuba has a National Plan to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, which is being implemented throughout the country and involves various agencies of the central State administration. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Childcare, Youth and Equal Rights for Women in the People’s National Assembly deals with this and related issues.

56. The Ministry of the Interior maintains a policy of operational cooperation with its law enforcement counterparts and with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Secretariat and national central bureaus in order to ensure police monitoring of anyone in Cuba who is wanted or under surveillance by INTERPOL or by the police or judicial authorities of other countries because they are associated with trafficking in persons, pimping, the promotion of prostitution or other sexual offences.

57. The Penal Code (Act No. 62 of 1987, in effect since 30 April 1988) criminalizes the sale and trafficking not only of minors but of persons, including women. That criminalization was expanded by amending the Code through Decree-Laws Nos. 140 of 13 August 1993, 150 of 06 June 1994 and 175 of 17 June 1997 and Act No. 87 of 16 February 1999. This legislation protects all human rights under criminal law and, in accordance with these purposes and principles, covers crimes relating to human trafficking, such as pimping and trafficking in persons (title XI, chapter I, section 4, art. 302, para. 1). As mentioned previously, the Code also criminalizes trafficking in persons (title XV, chapter I, arts. 347, para. 1, and 348, para. 1) and minors (title XI, chapter III, section 3, art. 316).

58. The country's judicial system is being improved through a number of changes that meet the needs of Cuban society. Various pieces of legislation, including, inter alia, the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedures Act, the Penalty Enforcement Act, the Police Act, the Code of Violations and the Treatment of Child Offenders Act are being drafted or amended. In this connection, consideration is being given to further expanding the anti-trafficking legislation and making it more comprehensive.

59. Furthermore, various international human rights and related instruments are currently being reviewed, discussed and analysed by the concerned national bodies and institutions with a view to future accession or ratification. These instruments include the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

60. This is proof of the particular importance that Cuba attaches to combating human trafficking, which is an odious contemporary form of slavery that reduces persons to objects or commodities and violates their most fundamental rights.

61. Cuba signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000 and ratified it on 9 February 2007. It has also signed and ratified other international instruments with a bearing on the issue,¹ marking the State's political will to combat this scourge.²

62. Owing to its low incidence of human trafficking, Cuba is not regarded as a country of origin, transit, or destination; nevertheless, it has adopted a number of

¹ ILO Convention No. 105 on Abolition of Forced Labour; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1998; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1991; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 2000.

² The International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, 1904; the Slavery Convention, 1926; the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, 1949; and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, 1956.

legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures to protect women and children, including those designed to prevent and combat human trafficking. Such actions have made Cuba one of the countries in the region with the most advanced anti-human-trafficking legislation.

10 and 11. Prostitution

63. In Cuba, the structural causes of prostitution are non-existent, having been eradicated with the triumph of the Revolution. The social position afforded Cuban women by the protection system and by facilitation of their professional development and employment makes them unlikely to find themselves so vulnerable that they are forced to engage in prostitution as a means of subsistence. Therefore, prostitution is a personal choice made by women and men who see in it a means to acquire consumer goods that offer them a higher standard of living than the rest of the working class or, in some cases, an opportunity to emigrate.

64. Even during the economic crisis of the 1990s, no Cuban citizen was left behind. Social security and employment protection were maintained in order to ensure a decent standard of living and prevent prostitution. The problem has many causes, forms and *modi operandi*, making it a challenge to identify and address it and to take the necessary measures. Research has shown that the prostitution of some young women involves using sex as a means of satisfying material needs, not for survival. The findings of this research are consistent in identifying the most common psycho-social profiles of young women prostitutes and their families:

- They were raised in dysfunctional families, regardless of socioeconomic status, with a marked absence of a father figure. They endured adverse conditions, including domestic violence or sexual abuse, in their social and family micro-environments during the most important formative years of their lives. Consequently, they have low self-esteem and significant behavioural issues.
- They received an inadequate family education dominated by negative patterns of social coexistence that encourage and/or facilitate such practices.
- In many cases, their families are aware of the young girl's activity and defend it, cancelling out any positive influence against such behaviour.
- They have poorly developed values and lifestyle choices.
- As a rule, these girls are high school dropouts who withdrew from all socially useful activities at an early age. This does not mean that some young women with a high school or university education and working women do not resort to prostitution in order to meet certain economic needs.

65. Coordinated efforts to address the few existing cases of prostitution are under way; these include educational and preventive actions within the framework of the National Sex Education Programme, which is implemented through the national education system. The Programme is run by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with the FMC and youth organizations. It prepares teachers, students and parents by enhancing the pedagogical content of sex education in the national curriculum, complemented by extracurricular activities and family education schools.

66. As the Ministry of Tourism maintains a zero-tolerance policy, sex tourism is prohibited and there are strict and systematic monitoring measures in place. The Ministry's Department of Safety and Protection deals with this issue; it trains staff in tourist resorts, sets standards, ensures monitoring and supervision and coordinates with the Ministry of the Interior and the Government. In addition, foreign tour operators and travel agencies are contractually bound to refrain entirely from promoting Cuba as a destination for sex tourism.

67. The Cuban Government's policy is to promote family tourism; thus, children under the age of 14 stay free at resorts, which require them to be accompanied by their parents, relatives or adult guardians. Children under the age of 16 are banned from discotheques and night spots and official identification must be presented on entry.

68. Specific areas for prostitution or other humiliating acts related to the sex market, such as tolerance zones, centres for the legal sale of pornographic material and advertisements for pornography are not authorized in Cuba as, in one way or another, they promote such activities.

69. In answer to question 11 in the list of issues, the Government of Cuba wishes to state that it maintains its zero-tolerance position because, while prostitution is not illegal, it is a form of exploitation of and violence against women. Therefore, pimping is considered a crime and is severely punished.

70. The institutions responsible for eliminating the causes of and conditions conducive to prostitution also strive to offer prostitutes alternatives for re-education through a combination of guidance, persuasion, education and prevention aimed essentially at young women. State bodies and social organizations work together in this effort. The FMC, in particular, works with families and in the area of prevention through its network of social workers throughout the country.

71. Title XI, chapter I, article 73, paragraph 1 (2) of the Penal Code (on states of risk and security measures) concerns states of risk arising from antisocial behaviour. That title of the Penal Code, as well as title IV, chapters I and II, of the Criminal Procedures Act (Act No. 5), establish the criteria and procedures under which security measures are to be applied, with due process guarantees to ensure that they are applied with the requisite legality.

72. Prostitution is considered a reprehensible vice and, as such, the persons involved are given preventive treatment by both public and non-governmental bodies, organizations and institutions. In addition, the cooperation of families and close relatives in changing this conduct is sought.

73. If these individuals persist with such activities and if their conduct is demonstrated to be related to the commission of petty offences, pre-delinquent security measures (therapy, rehabilitation or supervision) may be imposed under article 78 of the Penal Code following an in-depth investigation and criminal background check. This is done through a fair trial in the presence of a defence counsel appointed by the offender or by a public defender, in accordance with the safeguards laid down in articles 404 to 416 of the Criminal Procedures Act.

74. The Ministry of the Interior has a system comprising several agencies which jointly investigate, prevent and combat pimping, trafficking in persons, corruption of minors, paedophilia and other offences associated with the prostitution of others;

it also works to combat organized prostitution of men and women. One pimping ring has been prosecuted.

75. The Ministry also provides State institutions with information on how and where prostitution is likely to arise, which helps in the planning of actions to prevent and publicly combat the phenomenon. It is also involved in the analysis of factors, causes and conditions that give rise to this activity.

76. The media play a key role in shaping values and disseminate messages that seek to prevent prostitution and to educate and train families and young people.

77. Children and adolescents who are victims of sexual offences receive specialized care in Ministry of the Interior centres for them and their families in order to prevent double victimization and offer mental health follow-up by psychologists, child psychologists, child and adolescent psychiatrists and other specialists who encourage social reintegration.

78. Young victims of other crimes are cared for in the aforementioned CPNNAs (as noted, there have been no reports of trafficking in children). The primary mission of these Centres is to reduce secondary victimization by conducting just one examination in cases involving sexual offences and not requiring children to appear in court. They also provide specialized services (psychological, psychiatric and counselling) to child victims and their relatives, carry out studies and research in the field and promote activities related to early prevention of sexual offences.

79. There are currently three such Centres in Cuba (in Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Villa Clara); alternative methods are used in the other provinces to ensure that child victims receive specialized care in accordance with established international practice and methods.

80. The women who receive treatment in rehabilitation centres are only a small percentage of the number of prostitutes in Cuba who have been identified and receive personalized social treatment from social workers. Those centres provide an opportunity for education, training and reflection.

81. Over the past year, many people, most of them women, have stopped working as prostitutes and re-entered the education system or the workforce. Many of them work with the FMC as welfare activists and have attended programmes offered by the women's and family counselling centres in order to receive training in various subjects and occupations.

82. The authorities cooperate with resorts, tourist spots and renters in order to identify and address prostitution by men and women, both of whom are treated in the same manner. Work with families is case-specific and provincial discussion workshops have been conducted in the areas where the problem is most prevalent.

Health

12. Incidence of abortion

83. In Cuba, the primary goal of family planning services is planned pregnancies based on a sense of responsibility shared by men and women. The services focus on ensuring that children are wanted and are born at the best and most opportune moment for the child, the mother and the family, and on providing sterile couples

with treatment so that they can achieve the goal of having wanted children. They respect the right to reproductive freedom and the right to make one's own reproductive choices freely, with the proper informed consent and necessary confidentiality; this includes the right to the prevention of reproductive risk and to the free exercise of gender equality and women's empowerment.

84. The right of Cuban women to make reproductive choices freely gives them the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy; this right was enshrined in Cuban law over 45 years ago, when abortion was introduced as an institutionalized, legal medical practice in accredited health centres with safety guarantees and procedures carried out by specialized and certified medical professionals.

85. In Cuba, abortion is not encouraged; rather, safe abortions are guaranteed as a reflection of women's human rights. There is also a comprehensive sex and contraception education programme that seeks to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies that would end in abortion.

Selected indicators on induced abortions (five-year periods), Cuba, 1970-2011

<i>Years</i>	<i>Induced abortions</i>			
	<i>Per 1,000 women aged 12-49</i>	<i>Per 100 births</i>	<i>Per 100 pregnant women</i>	<i>In women under 20 years of age (per 1,000 women aged 12-19)</i>
1995	25.6	56.6	36.0	33.6
2000	23.0	52.7	34.5	33.6
2005	19.1	51.5	33.8	31.7
2010	22.3	55.7	35.6	33.3
2011	26.7	63.0	38.4	39.6

86. The reliability of Cuba's data for all types of abortion, including miscarriages, is acknowledged by the relevant international bodies, especially since 1968; this means that trends and characteristics can be ascertained, as seen from the table above.

13. Family planning

87. In Cuba, the National Health System has family planning programmes and a high contraception coverage rate of 78 per cent has been reached as a result of sustained and stable access to a network of family planning services with universal coverage. Over 50 per cent of contraceptive users have intrauterine devices; the use of oral and injectable hormones is rare, a breakdown that is far from the desired quality of contraception.

88. The results of the 2011-2012 multiple indicator cluster survey show that 81.6 per cent of contraception needs are being met. However, there is a shortage of the high quality contraceptives needed in order to reduce intrauterine device use to below 30 per cent and increase the use of injectable and oral contraceptives to 14 and 30 per cent, respectively, targeting the young women and women over 30 who make up more than 60 per cent of the population of women of childbearing age. Those needs are qualitative, not quantitative, and are primarily the result of

economic constraints resulting from the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Percentage of contraceptive coverage, by method. Cuba, 2011

Intrauterine devices	51.3
Sterilization	19.2
Oral	10.2
Injectable	5.4
Condom	12.5
Other	1.5

Source: Anuario de Salud Pública (Public Health Yearbook) 2011.

Employment

14. Employment problems

89. The adjustments aimed at improving the economic model for justice and equity include efforts to improve women's access to employment, including the new modality of self-employment for women and men; both have equal access to credit, loans, services and social security programmes, without discrimination.

90. Steps are being taken with a view to increasing the number of women in non-traditional jobs. This may be seen in the new regulations on the granting of land in usufruct to individuals and in the expansion of the size of these grants pursuant to Decree-Law No. 300; thousands of woman have used this modality on equal terms with men.

91. The institutions of the Cuban State have a responsibility to educate all citizens, men and women, from the earliest age, in the principle of equality among human beings. In addition, article 295, paragraph 1, of chapter VIII of the Penal Code (on offences against the right to equality), establishes that "anyone who discriminates against another person or encourages or incites to discrimination, either by expressions and attitudes that are offensive to the person's sex, race, colour or national ancestry or by actions aimed at hindering or preventing them, on grounds of sex, race, colour or national ancestry, from exercising or enjoying the rights to equality established in the Constitution, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of six months to two years or a fine of 200 to 500 times the daily minimum wage or both".

92. Section 5, article 303, of the updated 1999 edition of the Penal Code criminalizes sexual harassment.

93. Chapter V (j) of Decree-Law No. 176 of 15 August 1997, which establishes the system of labour justice, defines insubordination in the workplace as "acts or conduct contrary to the rules of the workplace or committed while at work" and provides for application of the three harshest penalties. Any of these disciplinary measures is imposed without prejudice to criminal liability. Clearly, although sexual harassment is not mentioned literally or specifically in the labour laws, it is one of

the acts of insubordination that may constitute an offence and is subject to the harshest penalties.

15. Self-employment

94. Self-employment, an alternative form of employment, has increased significantly in recent years. More than 400,000 people, over 25 per cent of them women, are self employed in a variety of fields. The 66 per cent of women who are self-employed are, on average, between 31 and 60 years of age, and 17 per cent of them are below the age of 30. Most self-employed women work in such areas as housing rental, food services, production and sale of various articles, and contract work.

95. Many of the concerns of self-employed women have been addressed in Decree-Laws Nos. 278 (on the special social security scheme) and 289 (on loans and other banking services), as well as other resolutions supporting this form of non-State work.

96. Article 1 of Act No. 105 (on social security) of 27 December 2008 provides that the State shall guarantee adequate protection to workers, their families and the general public through the social security system, which includes a general social security scheme, a social assistance scheme and special schemes.

97. Article 5 provides that the special schemes shall protect persons carrying out activities which, owing to their nature or the type of their production processes or services, require the social security benefits to be adjusted to their circumstances. These special schemes are regulated through specific legislation for workers, including those who are self-employed.

98. Ministry of Labour and Social Security regulation 33 of 6 September 2011 amended resolution 32, mentioned in the question, and established the regulations governing self-employment. It stipulates, in article 14, that self-employed workers who are unable to work and have a medical certificate duly issued by the authority competent to grant up to six months' leave from work, or for military reasons, may request a temporary suspension of their activity, to be delivered in writing, from the Municipal Director of Labour. In the case of maternity leave, a temporary suspension is granted for a period covering prenatal and post-natal leave, which may be extended, at the worker's request, until the child's first birthday.

99. Article 23 of Ministry of Finance and Prices resolution 298 of 6 September 2011 establishes that natural persons whose authorization to engage in self-employment is temporarily suspended by the competent authority, as established in the relevant special legislation, shall not be obliged to pay the monthly instalments of personal income tax that they would have had to pay, provided that the suspension is authenticated.

100. Resolution No. 298 also stipulates, in article 43, paragraph 2, that persons whose authorization to engage in self-employment is temporarily suspended by the competent authority, as set out in the relevant special legislation, shall not be obliged to pay the social security contribution that they would have had to pay, provided that the suspension is certified by the National Office of Tax Administration in the taxpayer's tax domicile within 10 calendar days of its approval.

16. Labour discrimination

101. It should be pointed out that these are two different questions that nonetheless share the same goal. The women's employment committees, which are chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and include representatives of the Confederation of Cuban Workers and the FMC, were set up in the 1980s within a specific historical and national context. However, they ceased to function owing to the results achieved, as reflected in the percentage of women employed in the country.

102. On the other hand, women's committees have been set up in some sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and culture, to address the specific content of women's activities as one of the measures taken in implementation of the National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

103. The norms and principles adopted are designed to address cases of discrimination in both the public and private sectors, including self-employment.

104. The following tables show the number of women in the workforce.

Civil service Employment, selected indicators 2011

Figures: thousands of workers

	2010	2011
Total employed	4 984.5	5 010.2
Women	1 900.3	1 876.4
Percentages	38.1	37.5
Men	3 084.2	3 133.8
Percentages	61.9	62.5

Distribution of the labour force by occupational category and by sex

Figures: thousands of workers

Women	2009	2010	2011
Total	1 934.1	1 900.3	1 876.4
Blue-collar	296.2	323.5	305.3
Technical	880.1	875.5	888.1
Administrative	166.2	150.0	192.7
Services	468.1	435.4	404.8
Managerial	123.5	115.9	85.5

105. In Cuba, 9 ministers, 12 members of the Council of State, 1 of the Vice-Presidents and 265 members (45.22 per cent) of the People's National Assembly, the highest legislative organ of the country, are women, as are the Vice-Chair and Secretary of the People's National Assembly and 9 (over 50 per cent) of the chairs of the Provincial Assemblies.

106. Cuban women belong to the Confederation of Cuban Workers, which includes all Cuban workers; its 18 trade unions have over 1,500,000 members — 45 per cent of their total membership — including those with new forms of employment in the non-State sector, such as the self-employed.

107. The new draft labour code will be considered in 2013. It will undoubtedly reaffirm the constitutional principle of gender equality and expand the recognition of women's equality in the labour market, thereby protecting them from any form of discrimination. The State and the Cuban trade union movement have also expressed the political will to defend this principle.

108. Article 63 of the Constitution stipulates that every citizen has the right to file complaints and petitions with the authorities and to have them acted upon or replied to within a reasonable time in accordance with the law. Governmental bodies, as well as political and grass-roots organizations, have set up their own systems for meeting citizens' needs.

109. Article 127 of the Constitution of the Republic states that the Office of the Public Prosecutor is the body responsible for overseeing and preserving due process by ensuring that State agencies, economic and social entities and citizens comply strictly with the Constitution, laws and other legal provisions. It also promotes and initiates criminal proceedings on behalf of the Government. Under Act No. 83 (on the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Republic), that Office handles citizens' complaints regarding alleged violations of their constitutional rights and established guarantees.

110. In the first half of 2012, the Office handled the cases of 10,059 women and received 2,073 complaints and claims from them on labour, criminal, administrative and civil matters. However, it received no complaints of discrimination against women, nor did the Public Services Office in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security receive any complaints of discrimination in employment in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Women with disabilities

17. Care of women and girls with disabilities

111. Cuba has 31 medical and psychological treatment centres that provide medical, psychological and social services to persons with physical and mental disabilities. These centres treat adults and children over five years of age of both sexes. Their operations are governed by regulations drawn up by the Ministry of Public Health. They offer part- and full-time residential treatment and admission requires the consent of the family.

112. To date, three National Action Plans for the Care of Persons with Disabilities have been implemented. The Plan is a set of strategies, activities, proposals and programmes whose primary goal is to ensure the social integration of such persons and to improve their quality of life. The Action Plan has been improved and extended for the period 2013 to 2018. Women with disabilities benefit from general laws and measures that the Government has decreed with a view to the empowerment of Cuban women.

113. These measures that benefit women with disabilities include the aforementioned Decree-Law No. 234 on maternity of working women, as well as measures that give their children priority in admission to day-care centres and part-time residential schools, allow them to use a sign-language interpreter whenever necessary and ensure that they have priority access to geneticists throughout the country.

114. Cuba has three associations of persons with disabilities: the Cuban Association of Persons with Motor and Physical Disabilities (ACLIFIM), the National Association of Deaf and Hearing-impaired Persons (ANSOC) and the National Association of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons (ANCI); their membership includes both women and men, regardless of race, religion or sex. At the national level, these organizations include a total of 54,240 women with disabilities: 30,173 members of ACLIFIM, 10,626 members of ANSOC and 13,441 members of ANCI. Women hold leadership positions in these associations and the national head of ACLIFIM is a woman.

115. The associations of persons with disabilities, in coordination with the FMC, have carried out various types of activities for women and girls with disabilities in order to ensure equality of opportunity for men and women.

116. One of the initiatives specifically targeting women was the establishment of gender equity groups, with a woman as national coordinator, within ANCI, which organizes workshops at the municipal and provincial levels with the participation of specialists in genetics, ophthalmology, the law and other fields in order to provide advice and guidance, particularly to women.

117. Women with disabilities who work in various specialized workshops receive assistance provided jointly by employers and the FMC; 1,917 women have been given real job opportunities. The FMC has participated in the core events of the Science and Technology Forum and the annual meetings of the Women's Handicrafts Movement, in which women with disabilities are included.

118. Efforts are also being made to expand access to education for special needs students through human resource training in new technologies. During the 2010-2011 academic year, 39,618 students under 21 years of age — 13,715 female students and 25,903 male students — were enrolled in special education courses for students in need of highly specialized care. The regular schools employ teachers assist students with disabilities in the areas of movement and mobility, communication, independence, meals, health care and emotional support. A total of 3,582 children, adolescents and young people with special educational needs are enrolled in the public schools.

119. In 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security implemented resolution 14, which established regulations governing the hiring of persons with disabilities, as an update to the legislation on the types of work available to special education graduates, including women.

Rural women

18. Training for rural women

120. Projects in rural areas, and particularly the women who live there, are a priority for Cuba's Government and administration. Partnerships are being developed and the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry for the Sugar Industry, the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) and other institutions, together with the FMC, have joint plans and programmes to promote the advancement of rural women.

121. Women account for 20 per cent (173,378) of Cuba's 889,310 farmers and hold 24.9 per cent (2,950) of managerial positions; in addition, 3 women hold top decision-making positions in the farming sector.

122. The implementation of Decree-Law No. 259, which provides for the granting of land in usufruct at no cost, increased the number of women in the cooperative agricultural and farming sector. Furthermore, Decree-Law No. 300, which also provides for the granting of land in usufruct to individuals and expands the size of these grants, has benefited thousands of women and men on an equal basis.

123. In addition, various bodies, the relevant ministries, rural organizations and professional organizations offer training courses. Their community-level technical and training schools provide specialized training in agriculture. Local family counselling centres in rural areas support the different training initiatives, helping more women to take part in various economic activities.

124. Cuba's education system has technical schools, including trade schools, polytechnics and universities (engineering) in rural areas. A continuing goal is to include more women, especially young women who, for various reasons, have left the regular school system, in these alternative training programmes.

125. In October 2011, a Knowledge and Experience Day for rural women was organized by the Cuban Association for Animal Husbandry (APCA) in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Experts (ACTAF), ANAP and the FMC. The purpose of this event was for women to exchange experience gained from their work in the areas of food security and food sovereignty and from their social role in gender relations.

126. Another important initiative was the Food Sovereignty and Local Development Project, which targeted vulnerable groups affected by natural disasters in Caribbean countries and concluded in December 2012. The three-year Project was implemented in eight towns in the provinces of Guantánamo, Granma and Havana; its primary goal was to build the capacities of local stakeholders to manage their own development by sustainably strengthening production capacity, access to basic services, community development management, economic recovery, jobs for women and decision-making at various levels.

127. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of women in the agriculture sector and of women members of cooperatives; more cooperatives have encouraged women to become members; there is a greater awareness of women's strategic interests; and there are more women heads of cooperatives and more gender focal points in rural institutions in the targeted areas.

128. Training for women has been strengthened; some 10,000 women have benefited from the various training programmes offered. Of the 150 new jobs created, 46 per cent are held by women. Work-related perceptions and knowledge have improved in these areas, as have working conditions in production units.

129. ANAP has established the National Gender Commission, as well as provincial and municipal gender commissions. The gender strategy, which steps up work for rural women and encourages them to join ANAP and become members of cooperatives, was developed by these commissions. The activities implemented under the strategy include, inter alia, the adoption with the FMC of a joint plan of action to ensure that each local ANAP branch includes at least 23 women members; the adoption of an ANAP plan of action designed to give women a greater decision-making role in the farming and cooperative farming sector; the provision of training at all levels; and periodic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of implementation of the strategy.

130. Specific ANAP activities include an annual gender balance process that conducts an assessment on this important issue in each of the country's cooperatives at the municipal, provincial and national levels. Last year, this entailed the participation of 51,717 associates, 66 per cent of them women. During this process, 1,285 papers on implementation of the gender strategy were submitted and an evaluation of progress achieved and areas in which further efforts were needed was conducted.

131. There is also an activists' movement that has 3,628 members, who received training through the first distance learning course organized by the ANAP national training centre. The ANAP technical manual, "Gender, Participation and Power", in which the forms and methods of organizing and implementing exchanges based on the characteristics of each cooperative are set out in a practical, flexible form, has been developed and distributed and 3,695 gender-awareness-raising workshops have been held: 1,120 in agricultural production cooperatives, 2,575 in credit and services cooperatives and 402 in municipalities and provinces. Of the 105,984 associates and members of their families who attended, 36 per cent were women.

132. The number of women who hold decision-making positions in local branches of ANAP has increased. There are more women in every area of management; they now account for 37 per cent of ANAP officials. In addition, rural women now play a greater role in production both as owners and by carrying out various activities. More women are employed in growing vegetables in gardens and greenhouses, in small animal husbandry, in worm-raising centres for the production of worm manure, in commercial flower gardens, in food production centres and in bamboo handicraft production. Women have also been encouraged to train as agronomy, veterinary science and plant health technicians and as economists and administrators.

133. ANAP also has a department of gender studies at the Niceto Pérez National Training School, which offers courses to rural leaders and focuses on gender mainstreaming in the implementation of plans and programmes targeting rural women.

134. The Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians (ACTAF) is implementing an institutional programme aimed at incorporating a gender perspective into all of its activities and projects. It has achieved women's

participation in training courses, provided gender training to all its officials, promoted partnerships with organizations working on the issue and held workshops involving all its affiliates.

135. The Cuban Livestock Production Association (ACPA) has sponsored projects to promote women's empowerment and a gender perspective and has achieved significant results, such as, inter alia, providing capacity-building and information on gender issues; developing a joint programme with the Ministry of Agriculture and the FMC and action plans to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in the farming cooperative sector; adding a section on women to the ANAP magazine; instituting the Rural Women's Award and the Rural Women's Innovation Prize; publishing a book with accounts by 50 rural women leaders, as well as pamphlets on the topic; establishing children's circles, kindergartens, day-care centres and basic support services for mothers; developing a network of support bodies and institutions for rural Cuban women; and drawing attention to women working at jobs traditionally held by men.

19. Strategies for addressing violence against women in rural areas

136. Many of the forms of violence against women that are found in other countries do not exist in Cuba. Practices such as female genital mutilation, trafficking in women, female infanticide, differences in access to food, and coercive State or individual control of reproduction, for example, have no place in Cuban culture, while others have been eliminated or mitigated through transformation of women's social status since 1959. This is true in both rural and urban areas.

137. The available statistics and research demonstrate that the primary forms of violence in the country are domestic (primarily psychological and emotional) violence and, to a lesser degree, non-marital rape. Without a doubt, the policy of embargo and aggression implemented by the Government of the United States of America against Cuba for more than 50 years is the manifestation of violence that has most affected Cuban women; those policies also constitute the primary obstacle to the nation's economic development.

138. Other forms of violence, such as sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace, at academic institutions or elsewhere and forced prostitution, appear to be less prevalent than domestic violence; however, more research and systematic study are needed in order to better understand their specific nature and bring about change more efficiently.

139. The profound social transformations achieved in Cuba have mitigated the conditions that have traditionally had the most harmful effects on people around the world and reduced the higher level of vulnerability experienced by women in rural areas.

140. The issue of gender violence was addressed in the ANAP training course offered in 2008-2009 for all women's advocates from the agricultural production cooperatives and the credit and service cooperatives. Studies and statistics indicate that gender violence is not specific to any one country in the region; it is a widespread problem.

141. The department of gender and communication holds workshops on gender-sensitive interactive assessments, in which activists learn to identify the issues affecting their peers and carry out activities within their grass-roots organizations

and communities in order to eradicate the scourge of gender violence. Recently, the tenth ANAP Conference stressed the importance of strengthening training for families — the basic building block of society — in order to foster decent, patriotic and collaborative attitudes and of requiring them to assume primary responsibility for the care, education and raising of children.

142. As part of the annual Let's Say No to Violence events (12 to 25 November), there are plans to show films and hold video discussions on issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, invisible violence and gender violence in rural Cuba.

Natural disasters

20. Measures taken to involve women in disaster preparedness and in post-disaster management

143. Cuba has strengthened the role of the civil defence system in addressing various disaster scenarios during the four stages of the country's disaster reduction system (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery). Women's participation has been a key part of this process.

144. In Cuba, the elected presidents of the nation's People's Councils (local level), municipalities and provinces also act as civil defence leaders in their respective territories. In the legislative elections held in late 2012, eight women were elected to presidential posts at the provincial level. More than half of the country's 15 provinces are governed by women, including on all matters relating to civil defence. The situation is similar at the local level, where women hold most of the disaster risk reduction management positions.

145. The women who hold these positions are responsible for reducing vulnerability and preventing risks in the construction of homes and in health and community centres; strengthening early warning systems and disaster risk management centres; and overseeing disaster reduction plans.

146. In addition, the woman Minister of Science, Technology and Environment plays a critical role in the risk reduction process. The Environmental Agency is currently headed by a woman and over 70 per cent of the members of her team are women. The team conducts studies on threats, vulnerability and risks throughout the country, laying the essential groundwork needed to plan, carry out and sustain disaster risk reduction at the management level.

147. The Director of the National Institute of Water Resources is a woman; her primary responsibility is to implement State policy on use of the country's water resources and works. Over 500 women who are directly responsible for managing risk reduction in a range of companies, agencies and organizations throughout the country; this includes protecting residents and the resources under their authority from various risks.

148. About 2,600 women scientists are directly or indirectly involved in civil defence; over 2,000 of them are teachers at the country's various levels of education who are sharing their knowledge of risk reduction. Some 100 women are civil defence specialists at various levels of government, including at National Civil Defence Headquarters.

149. In addition, 76 women chair defence councils, 3 of them at the provincial level. They are the highest response and recovery authority for any threat to Cuban territory.

150. In 2008, Cuba was hit by three major hurricanes and two tropical storms, which caused some \$10 million worth of damage. During these events, it was women who led the response and recovery efforts in the provinces of Pinar del Río, Las Tunas and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud. After the storm, they continued their efforts and managed sustainable development activities in order to build communities with greater resilience in the face of disasters and climate threats.

151. In late 2012, the eastern provinces of the country, particularly those of Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo and Holguín, were affected by Hurricane Sandy. In those provinces, 30 women served as chairs and vice-chairs of the evacuation committees, chairs of the local and municipal defence councils and vice-chairs of the provincial ones.

152. Women learn civil defence preparedness within the national education system. They also receive training at student and employment centres in accordance with their level of responsibility and the type of activity they will be carrying out. At the local level, women, like all other members of the Cuban family, receive instruction in handling each type of disaster from the civil defence authorities. At the community level, many women are trained as volunteer health care workers and do commendable work in various situations.

153. In addition, Cuban women serve as architects and work on reconstruction projects. Women also form brigades that handcraft construction materials in order to facilitate the rebuilding of homes and educational and social centres in affected areas.

154. Establishing facilities for women within evacuation centres is also a national priority. The specific needs of women and girls are taken into account in all cases and they are given priority in admission to evacuation centres that offer hygiene, health, medical and food assistance. In addition, in order to guarantee their wellbeing during their stay, they often have access to women general practitioners, paediatricians, nurses, teachers and volunteer health-care workers.