



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Morocco*

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Morocco (CEDAW/C/MAR/5-6) at its 1892nd and 1894th meetings (CEDAW/C/SR.1892 and CEDAW/C/SR.1894), held on 21 and 22 June 2022. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/MAR/Q/5-6, and the responses of Morocco are contained in CEDAW/C/MAR/RQ/5-6.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports. However, it regrets the delay of six years in submitting the report. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.³ The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family, Aawatif Hayar, and included representatives of the Head of Government; the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports; the Ministry of Health and Social Protection; the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills; the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication; the Ministry of Economy and Finance; the Delegate-Ministry to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administration Reform; the Presidency of the Public Ministry; the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights; the High Commission for Planning; the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication; the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests; the Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social and Solidarity Economy; the General Directorate for National Security; the Royal Gendarmerie; the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration; and the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-second session (13 June–1 July 2022).



B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2008 of the State party's combined third and fourth periodic reports in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

- (a) A new Constitution, in July 2011;
- (b) Act No. 9-21, on social protection, in March 2021;
- (c) Act No. 19-20, modifying and completing Law No. 17-95 related to public limited companies and setting mandatory quotas for women on the boards of publicly traded companies, in July 2021;
- (d) Act No. 19-12, concerning the conditions of work and employment for female and male domestic workers, in August 2016;
- (e) Act No. 50-21, on reform of public establishments and enterprises, in July 2021;
- (f) Act No. 103-13, on combating violence against women, in March 2018;
- (g) Act No. 79-14, establishing the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority, in December 2017;
- (h) Act No. 27-14, on trafficking in persons, in August 2016, and Implementing Decree No. 2.17.740 for article 7 of Act No. 27-14, establishing the National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons, in July 2018;
- (i) Act No. 83-13, in August 2015, supplementing Act No. 77-03, on audiovisual communication, with the aim of promoting a culture of gender equality, combating gender-based discrimination and preventing gender stereotyping in advertising;
- (j) Act No. 88-13, on the press and publishing, in August 2016;
- (k) Organic Act No. 130-13, on finance, in June 2015;
- (l) Regulatory Acts Nos. 04-21, 05-21, 06-21 and 07-21, in April 2021, providing proportional lists and quotas for the political representation of women.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or establishment of the following:

- (a) The National Commission for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, in June 2022;
- (b) The 2030 national strategy to combat violence against women and girls;
- (c) The national integrated programme for the economic empowerment of women and girls "Maroc-Attamkine", aimed at increasing the employment rate for women to 30 per cent;
- (d) The Green Generation 2020–2030 agricultural strategy;
- (e) The national action plan on women and peace and security for implementing Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) for the period 2021–2024, in March 2022;
- (f) An advisory committee to coordinate measures to combat and prevent trafficking in persons, in 2019;

- (g) The national administrative reform plan for the period 2018–2021, which contains a strategy to institutionalize gender equality in public service in its management transformation component;
- (h) The national action plan for democracy and human rights for the period 2018–2022;
- (i) The government plan for equality for the period 2017–2021;
- (j) The 2025 Health Plan, aimed at improving access to health services, particularly by strengthening primary health systems in rural areas;
- (k) The Parity and Vigilance Committee, in 2017;
- (l) The strategic plan for the higher education sector and the sectoral action plan for the period 2017–2021, aimed at improving access to higher education to achieve parity and equal opportunity;
- (m) The national strategy for the institutionalization of gender equality in public service, in 2016;
- (n) The parity charter drafted in 2017 by the National Radio and Television Company, affirming respect for the principle of equality provided for in the Constitution;
- (o) The “Wadhiyati” (“My situation”) 2015–2017 programme aimed at improving the prospects for and employability of women entering the labour market;
- (p) The National Observatory for the Image of Women in the Media, in 2014;
- (q) The road map to combat illiteracy among women (2014–2020);
- (r) The Centre of Excellence for Gender-Responsive Budgeting, established in 2013;
- (s) The code of ethics drafted by the National Radio and Television Company in 2013, committing it to incorporating a gender perspective into its programmes and professional practices;
- (t) The 2011–2020 national reproductive health strategy, which provides greater access to family planning.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified, acceded to or accepted the following international and regional instruments:

- (a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, acceded to on 22 April 2022;
- (b) The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, acceded to on 22 April 2022;
- (c) The amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, accepted on 31 March 2010;
- (d) The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, acceded to on 25 April 2011;
- (e) The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), of the International Labour Organization, ratified on 13 April 2011.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

7. The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of Morocco and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.

D. Parliament

8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

9. The Committee notes with appreciation that measures were taken, including through the adaptation of the national integrated programme for the economic empowerment of women and girls ("Maroc-Attamkine"), to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on women, and that measures, such as awareness-raising initiatives and courses, were also taken to mitigate the impact of the virus on rural women and girls. It regrets, nevertheless, the lack of information on specific measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women in other areas, despite research carried out by the High Commission for Planning demonstrating that COVID-19 has exacerbated gender disparities in employment, domestic work, and access to health and education.

10. The Committee, in line with its guidance note on the obligations of States parties to the Convention in the context of COVID-19, issued on 22 April 2020, recommends that the State party:

(a) Implement institutional, legislative and policy measures to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men and to give renewed impetus to the achievement of gender equality by placing women at the centre of COVID-19 recovery strategies as a strategic priority for sustainable change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Promote and facilitate the equal participation of women and girls, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, in the State party's official national recovery programmes and strategies;

(c) Ensure that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care work, aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.

Reservations, declarations and the Optional Protocol to the Convention

11. The Committee welcomes the accession by the State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 22 April 2022. It further welcomes the withdrawal of the State party's reservations to articles 9 (2) and 16 on 8 April 2011. The Committee notes that the State party maintains its declarations to the Convention regarding article 2, on the principle of equality, and article 15 (4), but acknowledges the State party's explanation that these declarations no longer have an impact on the situation of women in Morocco, since national legislation has taken precedence.

12. The Committee encourages the State party to withdraw its declarations under articles 2 and 15 of the Convention in order to ensure clarity vis-à-vis their application.

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

13. The Committee takes note with appreciation of the State party's indication that the principle of equality between women and men has been integrated into its 2011 Constitution and that the Penal Code defines discrimination in conformity with article 1 of the Convention. It expresses concern, however, that contradictions between certain legislative provisions, particularly in the Penal Code and the Family Code, and the 2011 Constitution remain an obstacle to ensuring the practical realization of the principle of equality between men and women.

14. Recalling the links between articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, the Committee calls upon the State party to expeditiously carry out a comprehensive legislative review with a view to amending or repealing all laws that discriminate against women directly or indirectly.

Women's access to justice

15. The Committee notes with appreciation that Act No. 103-13, which entered into force in September 2018, has helped to ensure that women who are victims of violence enjoy a certain level of protection, including through the National Commission for the Care of Women Victims of Violence and regional and local committees that were established to give effect to section IV of the Act. However, the Committee also expresses concern about reports that police are not sensitized to human rights, including women's rights, and that, particularly in rural areas where the Amazigh language is spoken, women are not aware of their rights because information is not as available in their language. The Committee is further concerned about reports that the burden of proof is on the women who are victims in cases of gender-based violence.

16. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Build the capacity of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and police officers with regard to human rights, in particular women's rights, including by making training on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations a mandatory part of their professional training;

(b) Disseminate information in both Arabic and the Amazigh language, particularly to women and girls in rural areas, on the mechanisms and procedures available to women and girls for seeking redress for violations of their rights;

(c) Ensure that its national courts adopt international standards on the burden of proof in cases involving gender-based violence.

National machinery for the advancement of women

17. The Committee welcomes the efforts by the State party to integrate gender equality into sectoral policies through, inter alia, the integration of gender into the budgetary programming of ministerial departments. It notes with appreciation the adoption in 2017 of Act No. 79-14, establishing the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority, as well as the adoption of the government plan for equality for the period 2017–2021. The Committee remains concerned, however, about information indicating that the Directorate for Women’s Affairs, Equity and Gender, which is the national entity responsible for the promotion of gender equality, receives only 5.1 per cent of its ministry’s budget. The Committee is also concerned that, to date, the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority and the Advisory Council for Family and Children have not been established. It is further concerned about reports that civil society was not sufficiently involved in the development, monitoring and assessment processes for the government plan for equality for the period 2012–2016, and that civil society participation in the development of the plan for the period 2017–2021 was also insufficient.

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Establish, without delay, the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority and the Advisory Council for Family and Children, and provide adequate human, technical and financial resources for these bodies to carry out their work;**

(b) **Ensure the meaningful and full participation of civil society in the monitoring and evaluation processes for the government plan for equality for the periods 2012–2016 and 2017–2021, as well as in the development, monitoring and evaluation processes for any future government plan for equality.**

Temporary special measures

19. The Committee notes with appreciation that temporary special measures, including quotas, have been adopted for the political participation of women. However, the Committee remains concerned that there has been limited use of temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality between women and men in other areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as employment and health care.

20. **In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt and further strengthen relevant temporary special measures to promote the participation of women in all areas under the Convention where they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in political participation, education, employment and health care, with time-bound targets and benchmarks, accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance, to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men, especially in decision-making positions, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

21. The Committee welcomes the steps taken to project positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in society in school curricula and in the media. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, as well as stereotypical portrayals of women in the

media, and the continuing underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the media sector.

22. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 19), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including the stereotypical cultural patterns and norms that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives;**

(b) **Increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men at all levels of society with a view to changing stereotypical attitudes and negative cultural norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family and society, in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention;**

(c) **Continue raising awareness on women's rights and gender equality among journalists and media workers, and integrate education on women's rights into professional training for media workers.**

Gender-based violence against women

23. The Committee notes with appreciation that new provisions were introduced to Act No. 103-13, on combating violence against women, creating new offences relating to the violation of privacy and providing increased penalties if the violation was gender-based. It notes with interest that a draft criminal act strengthening legal protections for women and children, particularly against violence, is before Parliament. The Committee also notes the State party's indication that marital rape is covered under article 486 of the Penal Code. However, the Committee expresses its concern about reports that:

(a) Women may be reticent to make a complaint of sexual harassment or other sexual violence out of fear of being charged with a violation of article 490 of the Penal Code, which sanctions sexual relations outside of marriage;

(b) Article 489 of the Penal Code puts lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women at risk of penal sanctions, which could result in stigmatization and instances of violence;

(c) Child and forced marriages continue to take place in the form of "Al-Fatiha" marriages;

(d) Domestic violence has increased since 2009, and there is insufficient due diligence given to ensuring the privacy of victims and providing an adequate number of shelters.

24. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and in line with target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Take the necessary measures to repeal article 490 of the Penal Code, in particular to ensure that women who are victims of gender-based violence are no longer at risk of being charged under this article;**

(b) **Take the necessary steps to repeal article 489 of the Penal Code;**

(c) **Put in place policy measures to prohibit “Al-Fatiha” marriages involving minors;**

(d) **Strengthen support services for women victims of gender-based violence, including by ensuring sufficient availability and accessibility of shelters and psychological support for victims and survivors of violence, as well as by setting up treatment centres for aggressors, allocating sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the effective functioning of these services, and ensuring that the privacy of women who are victims of gender-based violence is respected at every stage of the process – from the lodging of the complaint to the provision of support services;**

(e) **Set up a system to allow civil society organizations to act as civil parties in cases of violence against women and girls.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

25. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts of the State party to raise awareness on combating trafficking, including through the dissemination of information on legal provisions for the protection of victims of trafficking in persons to legal officials, awareness-raising campaigns and training programmes for judges, judicial staff, the police, and staff of the General Directorate for National Security on identifying and assisting victims of trafficking. The Committee remains concerned, however, that there is insufficient protection for victims of trafficking, including the availability of specific shelters for victims of trafficking. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of information on the identification and registration of migrant victims, specifically women and girls, who have been trafficked from the sub-Saharan region.

26. **In line with its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Raise awareness to ensure the identification and registration of migrant women and girls who are victims of trafficking into the country from the sub-Saharan region;**

(b) **Ensure the provision of adequate protection and support to victims of trafficking, including shelters providing services that are specific to their needs, as well as medical treatment, psychosocial support and legal assistance.**

Equal participation in political and public life

27. The Committee welcomes the State party’s efforts to ensure equal political and public representation of women at the national and local levels, including through the adoption of legislative provisions establishing proportional lists and quotas for the representation of women in politics, the judiciary and public administration, the establishment of a system of incentives for political parties to add seats for their female candidates in legislative, regional and local elections, and the provision of financial assistance and technical support to support gender diversity in public service. The Committee also welcomes the information that the number of women serving in diplomatic and consular missions and in international organizations has increased. However, the Committee notes with concern that, despite these positive efforts, the representation of women in public office, particularly at the communal and regional levels, has not reached satisfactory levels. The Committee is further concerned over reports that the representation of women in senior public administration posts remains low.

28. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 25), and in line with its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen its efforts to increase the political and judicial representation of women at all levels, particularly at the communal, regional and international levels, including through the use of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention;**

(b) **Strengthen measures, including awareness-raising measures, childcare services and parental leave provisions to ensure gender parity in appointed public positions, including in public administration, particularly at the decision-making level.**

Nationality

29. The Committee welcomes the withdrawal by the State party of its reservations with respect to article 9 (2) of the Convention. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) A bill amending and supplementing article 10 of the Nationality Act was introduced in December 2017 with the objective of allowing Moroccan women to confer Moroccan citizenship on their foreign spouse in the same way as Moroccan men can for their foreign wives; however, to date, this bill has not been adopted;

(b) The State party has not acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 or the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the 2017 bill amending and supplementing article 10 of the Nationality Act;**

(b) **Consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.**

Education

31. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party’s indication that education for girls is prioritized in the State party’s programmes and plans to reform the education system. The Committee welcomes the increase in enrolment rates of girls in primary and secondary education and in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology. It also notes with interest the drafting of a roadmap to combat illiteracy among women (2014–2020). However, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Dropouts of girls persist, often because of pregnancy;

(b) Illiteracy, which primarily affects women, continues to be a problem;

(c) Although primary school textbooks have been revised to counter stereotypes and support gender equality, such revisions need to be carried out on educational materials at all levels.

32. **In line with its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education and target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure by 2030 that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality**

primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take targeted and comprehensive measures to prevent dropouts, especially of girls in rural areas, and to promote and facilitate the return of girls to school;**

(b) **Continue to strengthen its efforts, including through the work of the National Agency to Combat Illiteracy, to address illiteracy rates among women and girls, particularly in rural areas, and among women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups;**

(c) **Broaden its efforts to review school curricula and textbooks at all educational levels in order to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes, portray an equal balance of women and men and an even distribution of social roles, and promote a culture of gender equality.**

Employment and economic empowerment

33. The Committee notes with appreciation information provided by the State party that a financial package is offered to support the projects of associations working to promote women's right to work. The Committee also takes note of the State party's indication that a strategic study is being prepared on the economic empowerment of women to lay the groundwork for the development of a national integrated economic empowerment programme for women by 2030. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned that:

(a) Progress in the field of education for women and girls has not translated into progress in the area of employment, and the participation of women in economic activity remains low;

(b) Gender disparities persist in access to the labour market;

(c) Women in the formal and informal sectors in urban and rural areas alike have limited access to social protection in the form of a work contract, medical insurance or enrolment in a pension system.

34. **Recalling its previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4](#), para. 29), the Committee draws attention to target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve by 2030 full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value, and recommends that the State party take measures to:**

(a) **Promote access by women to the formal sector after completion of their education, including by increasing the availability of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and introducing flexible working arrangements to ensure balance between family and professional life;**

(b) **Eliminate horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market and promote access for women to the formal sector;**

(c) **Provide in its next report updated information on the outcome of the strategic study on the economic empowerment of women to lay the groundwork for the development of a national integrated economic empowerment programme for women by 2030;**

(d) **Take measures to prevent and monitor sexual harassment in the workplace, especially of young women, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(e) Provide in its next report updated data on women's access to social security and information on the efficiency of Decree No. 2.18.686, Decree No. 2.20.659 and Decree No. 2.20.658.

Health

35. The Committee welcomes the decrease in infant and maternal mortality rates between 2010 and 2017. It also notes with appreciation the increase in mobile medical units to serve populations in remote areas and the national campaigns to motivate pregnant women to use health services to monitor pregnancy and childbirth. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) Access to health care is largely determined by social and geographical context;

(b) There is a lack of awareness and education among youth on sexual and reproductive health;

(c) Despite the amendment of article 453 of the Penal Code to allow abortion in specific cases, most abortions remain illegal, which may push women and girls to continue to seek out clandestine abortions, putting their health and life at risk;

(d) The consent of the husband, parents or guardian is still required for abortion in cases where the woman suffers from mental health problems;

(e) Information on the number of clandestine abortions taking place in the State party is lacking.

36. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 31) and in the light of its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Continue to further strengthen its efforts to ensure equitable and effective access to health care for all women and girls, including women and girls in rural areas and from disadvantaged groups;

(b) Take steps to ensure that sexual and reproductive health information is widely available to young people, including through adding comprehensive sexuality education to the school curricula;

(c) Consider amending article 453 of the Penal Code to decriminalize abortion when it is necessary to protect the woman's health, including her physical, mental and social well-being, in accordance with the World Health Organization's 1948 definition of health;

(d) Put in place measures to ensure access by women and girls, including rural women and girls, to safe abortion and post-abortion services without needing the consent of their husband, parents or guardian;

(e) Provide information in its next periodic report on the number of clandestine abortions being carried out in the State party.

Rural women and girls

37. The Committee welcomes initiatives put in place by the State party to improve the situation in rural areas and impact positively on women and girls in those areas, including the national programmes to improve access to water and electricity in rural areas and the expansion of the scope of social services of social welfare institutions, including through the provision of nutrition, shelter, support classes, summer camps, cultural and sports activities, and psychological support services, to promote access by girls in rural areas to education. The Committee is concerned, nevertheless, about

the high rate of illiteracy among women in rural areas, despite the focus of the State party's illiteracy programmes on rural women, and about the lack of health-care coverage for women and girls in rural areas.

38. In line with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 33), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Identify gaps in its literacy programmes for rural women and revise the programmes accordingly;**

(b) **Continue to strengthen measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention, to ensure that rural women and girls enjoy their political, social, economic and cultural rights without any discrimination, especially with regard to access to education and health care facilities.**

Marriage and women's property rights

39. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party is considering repealing article 20 of the Family Code in order to eliminate exceptions to the minimum age of marriage. The Committee also notes the State party's efforts to encourage the judiciary to make marriage under the age of 18 an exception, rather than the rule, and to raise awareness of the risks of early marriage. The Committee further notes the State party's indication that polygamous marriages represent only a small percentage of the total number of marriages in the State party and that it is possible for a wife to indicate in the marriage contract that she does not accept a polygamous marriage. With regard to property rights, the Committee notes that the national action plan on democracy and human rights envisages redrafting the section of the law concerning the division of property after divorce. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Under current legislation, there is no legal minimum age under which a marriage cannot be approved by a judicial authority;

(b) Polygamy has not been legally prohibited, and the principle of free and informed consent does not always apply to the termination of a marriage contract, since legislation provides for the automatic commencement of divorce proceedings on the grounds of discord if a wife does not accept her husband's decision to marry another woman;

(c) Unmarried mothers, when asserting their rights and the rights of their children, are at risk of being prosecuted for having sexual relations outside marriage;

(d) Certain discriminatory provisions remain in legislation, affecting women's equal rights in matters relating to property acquired during marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

40. In the light of its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations, and recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 39), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Repeal, without delay, article 20 of the Family Code so that exceptions to the minimum age of marriage are no longer allowed;**

(b) **Abolish polygamy and ensure that the principle of free and informed consent is applied also to the termination of marriage contracts;**

(c) Recognize the right of unmarried mothers to assert their rights and the rights of their children without fear of any form of prosecution and stigmatization;

(d) Enact legal provisions to ensure that, upon dissolution of marriage, women have equal rights to property acquired during marriage, in line with article 16 (1) (h) of the Convention;

(e) Amend, without delay, and in consultation with civil society, particularly women's organizations, all remaining discriminatory provisions, including provisions relating to divorce, child custody and inheritance.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

41. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in the context of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Declaration and Platform in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Dissemination

42. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the de facto official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

Technical assistance

43. The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

44. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 24 (e) and 40 (a), (c) and (d) above.

Preparation of the next report

45. The Committee invites the State party to submit its seventh periodic report, which is due in July 2026. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

46. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).