



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-first session

### Summary record of the 1859th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 11 February 2022, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Acosta Vargas

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention  
(*continued*)

*Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Uganda (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention** *(continued)*

*Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Uganda (CEDAW/C/UGA/8-9; CEDAW/C/UGA/Q/8-9 and CEDAW/C/UGA/RQ/8-9) (continued)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Uganda joined the meeting.*

*Articles 10–14*

2. **Ms. Nadaraia**, commending the State party for its strategic plans that addressed women's intersecting health needs and promoted accessible health care across the country, said that she would like to know what progress had been made in ensuring universal access to affordable and acceptable contraception and to accurate information on contraception services and in removing barriers to contraceptive services, such as the need for third-party consent. She also wished to know what progress had been made in enacting a law on safe abortion and in addressing the stigma around abortion, particularly in circumstances where the practice was legal. She would welcome information on the measures adopted by the State to provide accessible, high-quality maternal health care, including emergency obstetric care and dignified maternal health care for women and girls with disabilities and those in refugee settlements. She asked what measures had been adopted to decriminalize consensual, non-exploitative and non-coercive sexual activity between adolescents; how women and girls' disproportionate risk of contracting HIV/AIDS could be reduced; and what action was envisaged to mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the health of women and adolescent girls.

3. **The Chair** invited the delegation to submit its responses to Ms. Nadaraia's questions in writing.

4. **Ms. Gbedemah** applauding the State party's major achievements in the area of education, said that lack of access to affordable sanitary towels contributed to school dropout among girls. She wondered when taxes on sanitary towels would be removed and interventions put in place to improve their affordability and accessibility, particularly in rural areas. She would be grateful if the delegation would provide statistics on the impact of the Reporting, Tracking, Referral and Response Guidelines on Violence against Children in Schools.

5. Girls' exposure to sexual exploitation had increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in an increase in teenage pregnancies. She wondered what measures had been adopted to provide safe and free or affordable contraception to adolescents and what measures were in place to prevent teenage pregnancy, sexual harassment and child marriage, reintegrate young mothers into the education system; and address girls' low transition rates at the lower secondary and university levels. Statistics and information on the budget allocated to addressing violence against girls in schools, and on the State party's domestic and extraterritorial compliance with the Safe Schools Declaration, would also be welcome. The State party might consider strengthening the comprehensive sex education offered at all levels of the education system and in local communities and addressing resistance to such education by providing scientifically accurate information that went beyond the abstinence-only approach.

6. The education of refugees in the State party was hindered by a number of challenges, including a lack of teachers and classrooms in host communities, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. She would like to hear how those challenges were being addressed and whether the approach involved temporary special measures. The refurbishment of education facilities provided for under the Persons with Disabilities Act had yet to be undertaken, and there was a need to strengthen teachers' capacities and awareness with regard to the needs of children with disabilities. Funding for special education represented a very low proportion of the total education budget, and there was low enrolment in special education facilities and a lack of data on them. It would be useful to know what systems were in place to ensure that special education received adequate funding and investment, to protect girls with disabilities and to fully implement the Persons with

Disabilities Act. The declining budgetary allocation granted to the education system, along with its privatization, were cause for concern. She wondered what interventions and monitoring existed to ensure that primary education was free and that secondary education became free.

7. **Ms. Mutuuzo** (Uganda), speaking via video link, said that the legal aid bill formed part of the Cabinet's legislative agenda and had been presented to the Tenth Parliament. The Third National Development Plan, under its outcome 3, sought to eliminate all forms of violence against women and provided a budget for implementation. The Plan provided for programmes for the development of human capital, community mobilization and mindset change. Budgeting was now programme-based, rather than sectoral, and a number of government agencies were involved in integrating measures to eliminate violence against women into the Government's programmes. Women's participation in community leadership was promoted through work by civil society, early civic education and a campaign that encouraged participation without discrimination. Civic education was also provided by women's organizations.

8. The protection of rights to family land provided under the Land Act, including compensation, applied to families, rather than individuals, and the sale of family land was subject to the consent of both spouses. Women and girls benefited from temporary special measures when enrolling in the Uganda Petroleum Institute, which provided training for jobs in the oil sector. The Uganda Human Rights Commission had opened regional offices, including in remote areas. At least 30 per cent of recruits to the Uganda People's Defence Forces must be women; indeed, they had represented around 40 per cent of the most recent intake, and dropout rates had been insignificant. Persons with disabilities were represented at the ministerial and parliamentary levels and in local, district and village government. Lobbying was under way to increase women's representation in ambassador posts and within intergovernmental organizations. Training for women was planned with a view to improving their media engagement and efforts were being made to reduce discriminatory practices and attitudes and stereotypes that influenced how women were able to engage with the media.

9. The shortage of teachers, which affected the entire education system, not just schools for refugees, was a consequence of an increase in school enrolment. The problem was being addressed holistically through partnerships between teachers and parents, including financial contributions by parents to employ private teachers in State-run schools. The Government had also granted funding to private teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many State-run schools were now outperforming private schools. Schools offering special education were concentrated in central and eastern Uganda, and their budget, like the budget of the education sector as a whole, had increased. A recent review of the curriculum had addressed several gaps in reproductive and sex education.

10. **Ms. Nakafeero** (Uganda), speaking via video link, said that taxes on disposable sanitary towels had been waived in the 2018/19 financial year, and students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were taught to make reusable sanitary towels. The Reporting, Tracking, Referral and Response Guidelines on Violence against Children in Schools had increased the reporting of incidents of violence in schools from around 39 per cent in 2013 to around 70 per cent currently, and rates of that form of violence had decreased significantly. Despite initial resistance, through the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda all religious institutions had endorsed sex education that was appropriate and reflective of Ugandan cultural and national values. Through the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda, more than 500 classrooms had been built and almost 1,000 teachers recruited, and existing education facilities had been improved.

11. **Ms. Toé-Bouda**, commending the State party on its efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship and facilitate their access to credit, asked how the Government had increased access to funding for women's enterprises and how women's land ownership and inheritance rights had been strengthened to enable them to provide the necessary guarantees to obtain credit. She wondered whether women, including women with disabilities, had free, easy access to basic social services such as water and quality health care. She would also like to know whether childcare services were provided to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic labour for women and girls; whether women received appropriate social protection; whether that protection extended to older and marginalized

women and those in rural areas; and whether women had access to leisure centres and could participate without hindrance in recreational activities, sport and all aspects of cultural life.

12. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would be interested to hear what mechanisms existed to monitor and assess whether the State party's programmes and projects for rural women were being implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. Despite the State party's efforts to increase women's access to land, women in Uganda reportedly continued to be dispossessed of it, either because they were forced to give consent to the sale of family land or were too poor to pursue legal remedies following its unlawful sale. It would be useful to hear what measures were in place to address the intersectional structures of gender, poverty and violence in rural communities that often prevented the full implementation of the State party's new land legislation. Noting that the Ugandan Constitution obliged the Government to provide prompt and adequate compensation to the owners of land before it was taken over, she asked what was being done to expedite the settlement of the court case relating to the violent expulsion of around 4,000 persons, including women heads of households, from their land in Mubende in 2001 and to provide compensation and alternative access to land to those involved.

13. The Committee had received reports of harsh and disrespectful treatment of women by uniformed army and law enforcement personnel, with no mechanisms for complaint or redress. During army operations and patrols to control illegal fishing, for example, fisherwomen had allegedly been beaten and abused. She would like to know whether the State party would consider suspending such operations and instead controlling illegal fishing through the existing local government structures, whether such incidents would be investigated and officials found guilty of gross violations of human rights would be held accountable, and whether clear gender-informed standards of care and interaction could be incorporated into the training programmes of all State personnel who interacted with the public, with mechanisms for monitoring and redress.

14. Recalling that women and girls were in the majority among Ugandans living with disabilities, she said that she would like to know what measures were in place to ensure the effective implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act, the Employment Act and the Equal Opportunities Act to ensure that women with disabilities had equal access to employment and to accessible education and transportation, on an equal basis with others. She also wondered whether women with disabilities had access to comprehensive and accurate information on health, including sexual and reproductive health, in accessible formats.

15. The Committee welcomed the annulment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, but was concerned at the assertion in the State party's report (CEDAW/C/UGA/8-9) that there were no data to indicate that women had suffered discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, since alternative sources reported continuing discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, as well as persecution, stigmatization, harassment and even arrest. The Committee would like to know whether the State party could ensure that the Uganda Police Force would investigate all violations and abuses against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons and hold those responsible accountable. Would the State party consider the introduction of hate speech legislation as a means of addressing public humiliation and verbal attacks on disadvantaged and excluded groups of women, including women accused of being witches?

16. **Ms. Mutuuzo** (Uganda) said that, as part of efforts to improve women's income, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme had helped some 300,000 groups and 600,000 individual women to invest in businesses to enable them to earn a decent living and thereby educate their children, build a house and in some cases support their husbands. Under the Parish Development Model, four times as much financing would be available, of which 30 per cent would be allocated to women, 30 per cent to men, 10 per cent to persons with disabilities and 10 per cent to older persons. The aim was to bring everyone living below the poverty line up to the middle income bracket over the next five years. The Parish Development Model would also help fund community services, including the provision of universal access to water and sanitation. With regard to social protection for domestic workers, under a recent legislative amendment, anyone over the age of 45, male or female, could apply to the National Social Security Fund for an advance on their retirement pension.

17. The Ministry of Education had reinforced the right of everyone to take part in sports and recreation and both girls and boys had won sporting medals for Uganda. Structures were also in place to support women in recreation, culture and creative work such as music and entertainment. Women held 50 per cent of the seats in the National Cultural Forum, where they were able to raise the concerns of women in creative sectors.

18. The Rural Electrification Agency was working to bring electricity to women in rural areas, which would extend their working day, enable them to study and improve their security. It would also enhance their ability to generate income by enabling them to refrigerate the perishable foodstuffs many of them sold at the local markets.

19. The Government had supported the persons affected by the incidents in Mubende and ensured that they were able to move back into the area. All bona fide occupants of land were protected, even where the landowner wished to evict them. Additional information would be provided in writing.

20. Ugandan law did not discriminate on the basis of gender. Anyone found to have violated the law, whether a public official or a civilian, was treated equally before the law. Numerous cases had been documented and those concerned had been duly reprimanded.

21. **Ms. Reddock** said that, with regard to fisherwomen, the issue was not so much discrimination as the violent treatment meted out to them. That was why she wished to know whether clear guidelines and training existed to encourage officials to interact with individuals in ways that respected their humanity and dignity. The Committee was also concerned at reports that fisherwomen were often accused of being witches. It would be useful to know whether there were any mechanisms in place to protect women stigmatized in that way, any redress and compensation for damages and harm caused to them and any means of prosecuting their persecutors.

22. **Ms. Mutuuzo** (Uganda) said that the Ugandan authorities had received no reports of ill-treatment of the kind mentioned. Perhaps the Committee could forward the information it had received. There were reporting mechanisms and legal structures for dealing opportunely with any such incidents, including the courts of law and local mechanisms based on cultural systems. Practices related to witchcraft, sacrifices and the like were things of the past. Matters relating to traditional medicine were regulated under recently adopted legislation on complementary medicine.

#### *Articles 15 and 16*

23. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the State party was to be commended for its adoption in 2021 of the Succession (Amendment) Act, which had put an end to numerous discriminatory practices, traditions and customs, such as the registration of land purchased by a woman under her husband's name, discriminatory inheritance practices, control of women's movements and customary laws that permitted marriage below the constitutional marriageable age of 18. However, given that there were several different forms of marriage in Uganda, which had been practised by the various cultural and religious groups in different regions for many years, she would be interested to know how the Government intended to go about the enormous task of implementing the Act in practice and in everyday life. Would the provisions of the Act apply to all the different types of marriage, including Muslim marriages? How might the different communities react where the new legislation ran counter to their own traditional practices?

24. **Ms. Mutuuzo** (Uganda) said that, under the Act, the rules of inheritance applied equally to women and men. Women were able to own land in their own name. Four different types of marriage were recognized.

25. **Ms. Najjemba** (Uganda), speaking via video link, said that the amended law had been approved only a few days earlier and was awaiting presidential approval. In its amended version, the law would address the issues raised before the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal regarding the distribution of property where the deceased was intestate. Women now enjoyed greater protection under the law. For example, the matrimonial home could not be given away even where a will so specified. In general, the Constitution was clear that cultural

considerations were subordinate to constitutional provisions, including with regard to the age of marriage.

26. **Ms. Mutuuzo** (Uganda) said that there were no restrictions on women's movements. Freedom of movement was protected under the law.

27. She wished to thank the Committee for its interest in the matters raised during the dialogue and for its vigilance in following up on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. Her delegation appreciated the warm reception it had received.

28. **The Chair** said that the Committee was grateful to the delegation for the insight that it had provided into the situation of women in Uganda. She encouraged the State party to take the measures necessary to give effect to the recommendations that the Committee would make in its concluding observations and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

*The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.*