



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
**Seventy-third session**

**Summary record of the 1697th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 5 July 2019, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Gbedemah

**Contents**

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

*Fourth periodic report of Côte d'Ivoire (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)*

*Fourth periodic report of Côte d'Ivoire (continued) (CCPR/C/CIV/4; CCPR/C/CIV/Q/4 and CCPR/C/CIV/Q/4/Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire took places at the Committee table.*

*Articles 10 to 14 (continued)*

2. **Ms. Ameline** said that Côte d'Ivoire was becoming an emerging, middle-income country, with high growth, but transformation was not taking place at the kind of levels the Government desired. There was still a clear and persistent gap between formal and informal employment among different hierarchical levels and economic sectors and between rural and urban areas. She wished to know how the Government would build an economic model around the Sustainable Development Goals, with women at the heart of the country's development. Noting that the State party had ratified or was ratifying several instruments, she wished to know the current status of ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2001, (No. 189) and Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Although the Government had strengthened its labour regulations in 2015, introducing equal pay, maternity leave and minimum working age requirements, there was a considerable gap between the Government's aims and reality. Placing professional equality at the heart of vocational training in the country's employment strategy could allow Côte d'Ivoire to make a breakthrough, and the World Bank had indicated that reducing discrimination against women would considerably improve the productivity and growth of Côte d'Ivoire. Women's empowerment in the workforce would lead to a clear upturn in the economy.

3. Noting that agriculture was a great asset for the country, she wished to know if there was a general plan to ensure that women had access to vocational training, new technologies and land so that they could drive production while earning decent salaries. New technologies would help make the necessary headway to build a modern economy, but women often did not have access to them. There were fresh initiatives, however, that allowed even illiterate, uneducated women to gain access to new technologies and create businesses. Côte d'Ivoire could set an example, creating a training plan specifically geared towards enabling women across the country and in all sectors to develop their knowledge of new technologies. She wished to know what results were expected from the Support Fund for the Women of Côte d'Ivoire and whether the National Social Protection Strategy also applied to the informal sector.

4. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire), regarding concrete measures to improve girls' education, said that parity had almost been reached in primary education thanks to compulsory schooling. She also said that there were more girls than boys in preschool and girls often outperformed boys in prizes for excellence. The challenge, however, was to tackle the low completion rate of around 52 per cent in secondary education and 30 per cent in higher education. The Government had already begun to see results thanks to its inclusive, holistic policies and work on the ground with communities. Several ministries worked through regional directorates.

5. The Government intended to build latrines at all schools because, at schools without such facilities, many girls missed school for an entire week due to menstruation. School canteens were also necessary to encourage school attendance, as were campaigns to raise awareness among parents and communities of the importance of education.

6. Community day-care centres were also important, since they provided childcare for children aged 2 to 5, allowing women to engage in revenue-generating activities. The Government had plans to build more such centres.

7. The most powerful weapon to combat early marriage was education. Taking into account local specificities and working with community leaders, the Government had been

running awareness campaigns, such as the “zero pregnancy in school” campaign, since 2009. As a result, adolescent pregnancies had fallen from 5,016 in 2013 to 3,690 in 2016. Although numbers had increased slightly in 2017, the Government was redoubling its efforts to reduce them.

8. Literacy programmes were being jointly implemented by the Ministry of National Education and Technical and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Women, Family and Children’s Affairs and non-governmental organizations. The Government was digitizing education and training centres, including the 121 centres for women and girls, which were already providing financial education and life skills and would soon provide training on sexual and reproductive health. Having reduced illiteracy rates from 51 per cent in 2014 to 42 per cent in 2017, the Government was working towards universal literacy by 2025.

9. The Committee was right to note that Côte d’Ivoire was an emerging economy. It had made undeniable economic and social progress, but not everyone had benefited. That was why the Government had launched an ambitious social programme to improve health, social protection, education, and basic services, such as water and electricity.

10. The ministerial department responsible for the advancement and employment of young people was creating youth-employment agencies at the municipal level to address unemployment in the regions. The above-mentioned social programme aimed to create 5,000 jobs, 40 per cent of which would be filled by women.

11. The AgriFed programme was very important, supporting 2,000 women in 5 agri-food value chains where women were predominant: cacao; shea; cassava; rice; and cashew nuts. The aim was to support 20,000 women by 2021. The President had set a target of transforming 50 per cent of cacao and cashew nuts harvested by 2020.

12. Her Government was concerned about creating fair conditions for domestic workers. The Government had almost doubled the minimum wage and would work with non-governmental organizations to ensure its enforcement. It also had women’s training centres and would look to learn from the experience of English-speaking countries like Ghana. Lastly, it had made digital technologies for the empowerment of women the theme for its International Women’s Day activities.

13. **Ms. Song** said that the Committee applauded the plan to end illiteracy by 2025. The State party’s report had said that teachers were punished for sexual abuse and harassment in schools, but she wished to know how they were punished and what assistance was provided to girls who were victims. Given that the State party had reported that around 30 per cent of students in tertiary education were female, she wished to know what measures it had taken to encourage more women to enrol, especially in non-traditional subjects for women.

14. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was perhaps necessary to start empowerment education at the primary level to raise awareness on rights and career options as soon as possible. More female students in science and technology were needed at the university level and too few women in the world were involved in innovation. Regarding the jobs market, she recommended introducing equality indicators and working with the private sector.

15. **Ms. Verges**, noting that the new code of conduct for school teachers punished those who sexually harassed pupils, said that she wished to know whether disciplinary measures were envisaged for harassment in general, not just sexual harassment. She also wished to know what progress had been achieved with the pension scheme for self-employed workers that the delegation had mentioned given that so many women worked in the informal sector. Also, noting that the State party had not ratified the ILO Convention No. 189, she wondered what measures the State party had taken to protect the women covered under it, since many domestic workers were young women who were exposed to violence and whose rights were violated.

16. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d’Ivoire) said that the sentences for sexual harassment and rape were determined by laws and were the same, regardless of whether the offences were committed at school or outside the classroom. When children reported being victims of violence, the Ministry of National Education had a legal services department that acted as the plaintiff for the victim, so it was important to encourage children to speak up.

Nevertheless, the delegation would take note of the Committee's recommendations on dealing with sexual harassment in all contexts.

17. A study had found that 30 per cent of science students in higher education were female, but in mathematics, the figure fell to 2 to 3 per cent. Two years previously, there was only one woman teacher and researcher in mathematics and computer science at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University. To encourage women to work in the sciences there were initiatives such as mathematics and science prizes in higher education for women, and there were quotas on scholarships and student rooms for women. Women were also encouraged to join major programmes like the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology programme, a scheme led by Côte d'Ivoire and four other African countries to develop science skills in Africa.

18. The Government boosted entrepreneurship among women through a women's entrepreneurship fund, which encouraged them to move out of the informal sector and become entrepreneurs, national and regional trade associations (for trades such as hairdressing and cooking) and the Ministry of Crafts and Trades.

19. Such was the commitment of Côte d'Ivoire to sustainable development that it had a Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. At its universities, the country hosted a major World Bank-financed regional programme on climate change to train specialists in Africa. Those specialists had told women farmers how to adapt their crop farming to climate change.

20. **Ms. Song** said that she wished to know what measures were being taken to implement Act No. 2014-131 of 24 March 2014 on the establishment of universal health coverage and what those measures had achieved, particularly in rural areas. She wondered what forms of free care were made available under the targeted free care policy launched in 2012, whether, under the budgeted 2015–2020 national plan for family planning, the relevant information and family planning services were made available to all sectors of the public and how the State party saw to it that such services were delivered in a timely manner to rural women. It would be interesting to learn what percentage of women, including rural women, had joined health insurance schemes and what support was provided to women who could not afford health-care services.

21. Noting that abortion was permitted only when there was a serious threat to the life and health of a pregnant woman, and that unlawful abortion was widely practised, she asked whether any plans were in place to broaden the grounds on which a woman could have an abortion. She wished to know what programmes were being implemented to reduce the high rate of unlawful abortion, what measures were being taken to promote sexual and reproductive health education and the use of contraception and whether accessible care was made available to all women who experienced complications following an unlawful abortion. The Committee would appreciate information on the current maternal mortality rate, the measures being taken to reduce that rate and the proportion of births that took place in hospitals. Lastly, she wished to know whether plans were in place to provide free nutrition packages to boys and girls living in families on low incomes.

22. **Ms. Bethel** said that the Committee wished to learn whether women were given access to land titles and funding under the National Agricultural Investment Plan (2012–2015), whether women acted as decision makers in agricultural cooperatives and when measures would be taken to licence and regulate cooperatives. She would be interested to hear whether women working in the informal sector would be able to benefit from the pension scheme for self-employed persons, what the structure of that scheme was and what conditions were imposed on the contributions payable by self-employed women and those working in the informal sector. It would be interesting to learn whether a social register had been established to facilitate the implementation of the pension scheme and whether a gender-sensitive assessment of pension benefits would be conducted that would take into account unpaid work carried out by women. She wondered whether the National Social Protection Strategy (2013–2016) covered temporary disability caused by illness and how the universal health insurance system benefited women in the informal sector.

23. The Committee would be interested to hear whether the National Policy on Equal Opportunity, Equity and Gender (2014–2016) had been assessed and, if so, what the

outcome of that assessment had been. She wondered what criteria women had to meet in order to obtain access to the Support Fund for the Women of Côte d'Ivoire, how many young women had benefited from the Fund and in what fields those women worked. It would be interesting to hear what the State Party was doing to recognize unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women and to address the cultural norms that resulted in women bearing a disproportionate burden of such work. She wondered whether the State party would improve its infrastructure and social services, including care services and transportation, in order to reduce the share of unpaid work done by women. The delegation might provide information on any policies that would be implemented to improve labour market conditions, promote women's rights to own assets and enhance their access to decent work and credit. Would training in micro-business development and digital literacy be provided to women in order to promote their economic empowerment?

24. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, although abortion was generally prohibited in law, it was permitted in cases where the pregnancy posed a threat to the life of the pregnant woman. The proposed broadening of the legal definition of rape might make it possible for lawful abortions to be conducted in cases where a woman had been made pregnant by an act of incest or rape.

25. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that provisions on abortion were contained in articles 366 and 367 of the Criminal Code.

26. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that a significant number of new health centres had been built in order to increase access to health care and tackle maternal and infant mortality. The child mortality rate had fallen from 102 per 1,000 live births in 2012 to 96 per 1,000 live births in 2016. Over the same time period, the number of unwell children who had been treated by a qualified health professional had increased. A programme to promote the use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets had been conducted in order to tackle malaria and a national action plan on family planning had been launched to increase the proportion of women who had access to contraception. The Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs had implemented a programme to support children who had been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Under that programme, children received care and mothers received advice on nutrition and access to loans and other mechanisms aimed at promoting their financial autonomy.

27. In order to address malnutrition, a regional centre of excellence against hunger and malnutrition had recently been opened. The programme implemented through the centre would be coordinated by the Vice-President and would involve all the relevant ministries. The establishment of universal health coverage would significantly increase the number of people who had access to affordable health care. Following the completion of a successful pilot project, health cards were being distributed and health centres were being rehabilitated. Participation in the insurance scheme was mandatory for all citizens, who were required to contribute 1,000 CFA francs per month. The scheme would cover 90 per cent of the health-care costs for the majority of the population and 100 per cent of the costs for the poorest members of society. Steps were being taken to identify members of the latter group.

28. The targeted free care policy, launched in 2012, had been strengthened in order to provide vulnerable pregnant women with free prenatal care, further examinations and, where necessary, Caesarean sections. Under the policy, emergency treatment was provided to children within the first 48 hours of birth and children under the age of 5 years received free care, including surgical care, for the most common illnesses and complaints. The Government was launching an extended vaccination programme with a view to meeting the health indicators established for women and children. Under the programme, protection against 13 different illnesses was provided to children of 11 months of age and under and to all pregnant women.

29. Efforts were being made to bring all workers into the formal economy. To that end, a campaign was being conducted to inform persons in rural areas that they had a right to receive a pension and other State benefits. Some 200,000 women had benefited from a support fund aimed at providing assistance to vulnerable persons living in rural areas and poor urban areas. A different government fund, aimed solely at women, was narrower in

scope but had generated a significant number of jobs. In order to promote entrepreneurship among women, a targeted fund had been established and entrepreneurship skills were taught from primary school onward. In that connection, children acquired experience of working in certain approved jobs in order to improve their employment prospects.

30. **Ms. Song** said that the Committee would welcome information on any cases in which girls or women who had been raped had sought to have an abortion and, if so, what the outcome of those cases had been. Was the delegation aware of any cases in which a woman or girl's parents had forced her to marry a man who had made her pregnant through an act of rape?

31. **Ms. Bethel** said that it was still not clear when cooperatives would be regulated and licensed, what contributions women working in the informal sector were required to make in order to participate in the pension scheme and what was being done to address social norms relating to women and unpaid domestic work.

32. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, although the Government was committed to eliminating forced marriage and rape, including marital rape, it was not currently in a position to know how many women or girls had been forced to marry men who had raped them. Such situations were not monitored and were generally not reported to the authorities by the victims or their families. However, amendments recently made to a number of different laws would enable information on such cases to be collected on a court-by-court and region-by-region basis.

33. **Ms. Yoli-Bi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that every time an act of rape was reported to the authorities, legal action was taken against the offender in accordance with the Criminal Code. Perpetrators sometimes attempted to cover up the offence of rape precisely because it was treated as a criminal offence.

34. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, on a number of occasions, the authorities had successfully taken action to free girls from forced marriage. Education and awareness-raising measures were being carried out as part of the Government's efforts to eliminate forced marriage. Training and support provided to women working in the shea butter industry had enabled them to modernize their skills and triple their incomes. However, it was essential to ensure that money was ploughed back into the industry so that it could continue to grow. Women working in the informal sector were able to participate in the State pension scheme. The Government and non-governmental organizations were successfully tackling gender stereotypes through campaigns conducted in a number of different spheres, including in schools and the media.

35. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, whenever a woman submitted a complaint of gender-based violence or abuse to the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs, the Ministry immediately took steps to ensure that the complaint was investigated and that the victim benefited from protective measures. By way of example, the Ministry had recently been contacted by the father of a 12-year-old girl whose teacher had sexually assaulted her. In response, the Ministry had instructed the relevant agencies to send officers to the school, summon the head teacher, interview the girl and her parents and conduct a medical examination of the girl. In accordance with the protective measures taken, the teacher had been suspended from his post and was currently wanted by the gendarmerie.

36. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, when she had been working as a judge, she had seen for herself how the Ministry worked to prevent early marriages from taking place. Thanks to the actions of the Ministry, 17 such marriages had been prevented in 2017 alone. In some cases, girls who had been due to marry had returned to school and passed their baccalaureate examinations.

37. **Ms. Haidar** said that she wished to know, given the importance of access to land for reducing poverty among rural women, what percentage of the country's total area the 441 land certificates issued to women represented, how the Government planned to reduce the cost of and time required for obtaining such certificates and whether there were ongoing awareness-raising campaigns to facilitate women's access to land ownership. In view of the impact climate change had on the incomes of rural women in particular, she hoped to hear about any policies that the Government was implementing to prevent and adapt to it.

38. While she welcomed the fact that public services had support measures in place for some persons with disabilities, such as the provision of interpreters for signing deaf persons, it would be useful to hear how the Government was improving making civic buildings, such as courts, more accessible. What specific educational and training measures had been implemented to bring persons with disabilities into the workforce?

39. She wondered what steps the Government had taken in order to put article 9 of Act No. 2014-388 of 20 June 2014 on the protection of woman human rights defenders into effect. She would be interested to hear whether there were plans to establish, in 2019, an independent mechanism to monitor and implement that law.

*Articles 15 and 16*

40. **Ms. Bethel**, referring to the delegation's statement that persons who had entered into a traditional marriage had a year in which to register and legalize it, said that it would be interesting to know what percentage of traditional marriages were now legally registered. How were women's rights being protected and fulfilled in traditional marriages, irrespective of their legal status?

41. She wished to know when the bill standardizing the age of marriage at 18 years and abolishing minors' right to marry would be enacted. It was unclear when the amendment of the Criminal Code to prohibit levirate and sororate marriages would be enacted. She failed to see how the provision under the law on succession that women inherited from the spouse when the courts were involved in inheritance cases could be considered compatible with the principle of equal ownership of property acquired during marriage under the Convention.

42. She would appreciate an explanation of how article 20 of the Marriage Act expressly prohibited polygamy. In the light of general recommendations Nos. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations, and 16 (1991) on unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises, it would be useful to hear what measures the State party was taking to ensure the protection of the rights of women in existing polygamous marriages, in particular their economic rights. What measures was the Government taking to enforce the existing Act No. 98-756 of 23 December 1998 prohibiting child marriages of a customary or religious nature?

43. She wondered whether the State party planned to revise the Minority Act, in order to substitute parental authority for paternal authority in respect of all aspects of care for their children. She wished to know whether the Minority Act would have to be amended to align it with the provisions of Act No. 2013-33 of 13 January 2013 establishing joint management of the household.

44. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Act No. 64-375 of 7 October 1964 on marriage had allowed for a period of one year following its enactment in which the many couples whose marriage had been conducted in the traditional way could be legalized. Couples who lived together were only considered married in Ivorian law if they had also undergone a civil ceremony.

45. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that polygamous marriage had been illegal since 1964. What Ms. Bethel termed "traditional marriages" had no legal effect whatsoever. A civil marriage certificate must be presented before any religious marriage ceremony could be held.

46. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the amendments introduced to the Minority Act, adopted in June 2019, replaced the notion of paternal authority with parental authority in order to bring the Minority Act into line with the Marriage Act of 2013. The Marriage Act made both parents equally responsible for a child's person and property. Under the new Minority Act, where one spouse died, the surviving spouse divided the deceased's estate equally with the children from the marriage.

47. **Mr. Nevry** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, previously, the surviving spouse had only been able to inherit from the deceased if the latter had had no living relatives within 12 degrees of separation, which had made such inheritance impossible in practice. Women could now make use of the community of after-acquired property regime, whereas the only choice

previously available under the Marriage Act had been community of property or separation of assets.

48. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that law No. 2014-388 of 20 June 2014 had brought numerous advances in the protection of human rights defenders. Since it had passed into law, members of the Ivorian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders had not encountered problems.

49. **Ms. Binaté** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, since environmental issues were a major concern, particularly for women involved in farming and fisheries, Côte d'Ivoire had a National Climate Change Programme. In addition, the Ministry of Women, Family and Children's Affairs worked with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development to ensure that women's concerns were taken into account in relation to all of the preventive and adaptive measures forming part of its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

50. The Government was using the national agricultural investment plan to tackle poverty among rural women. The plan included programmes to help increase the productivity and, consequently, the incomes of women working in farming and fisheries by improving women's access to credit and markets, encouraging them to pool their efforts and bringing them out of the informal sector. The Government would no longer focus solely on the production subsector, but rather on the whole value chain, in order that women producers could be involved in processing foodstuffs and bringing them to market.

51. **Ms. Haidar** said that, in line with general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, she wished to encourage the State party to actively involve women in decision-making and strategy formulation in relation to climate change.

52. **Ms. Bethel** said that she was grateful to the delegation for the various clarifications provided. However, she still wished for information on the enactment of laws around sororate and levirate marriages, and the enforcement of Act No. 98-756 of 1998 prohibiting child marriages. The situation in relation to traditional marriages seemed to leave the rights of many women unprotected.

53. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that she wished to know whether Ivorian legislation allowed a man to repudiate his wife on ground of disability or imposed restrictions on whether persons with disabilities could marry, have custody of their children or vote.

54. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that levirate marriages were legally impossible. Marriage could only take place between one man and one woman, which implied the prohibition of homosexual marriage.

55. **Ms. Chaudron** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that levirate marriages did not exist. If a person with disabilities was brought before an investigating judge, there were experts available who could explain what that person was saying.

56. **Ms. Nanan** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that disability did not constitute a ground for divorce in Ivorian law. There were criminal penalties for forced marriage, particularly of minors. The civil penalty was annulment of the marriage, with the perpetrator also fined to compensate for harm done by the marriage.

57. **Ms. Bakayoko-Ly** (Côte d'Ivoire) said she wished to express her thanks to the Committee members for their interest in Côte d'Ivoire. The Government was aware that there remained much to be done to improve the human rights situation of women in the country. It would continue working alongside its bilateral and multilateral partners to overcome factors such as sociocultural constraints, lack of financial and human resources, and security concerns.

*The meeting rose at 5:10 p.m.*