



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 November 2019

English
Original: Spanish

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Ecuador*

1. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of Ecuador (E/C.12/ECU/4) at its 38th and 39th meetings (see E/C.12/2019/SR.38 and E/C.12/2019/SR.39), held on 3 and 4 October 2019, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 60th meeting, held on 18 October 2019.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's fourth periodic report and of the written replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/ECU/Q/4/Add.1). The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue held with the State party's delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ecuador to recognize equal civil marriage rights.

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction the high human development index of Ecuador in 2018 and the progressive increase in public spending in the areas of education and health in the last 10 years, up to 2018.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Austerity measures

5. The Committee is aware of the macroeconomic imbalances, in particular the fiscal deficit and the level of debt, in the State party. Nonetheless, it is concerned about the impact of the austerity measures under the Prosperity Plan 2018–2021 and the Extended Fund Facility of the International Monetary Fund on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2 (1)).

6. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the economic measures taken and under consideration and ensure transparency and dialogue in order to guarantee the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session (30 September–18 October 2019).



- (a) **Conduct a prior assessment of the impact that any measures to address the economic downturn may have on economic, social and cultural rights so as to ensure that they do not disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups;**
- (b) **Not reduce social spending in the areas of health and education from the levels achieved in 2018;**
- (c) **Maintain budget lines related to social investment in respect of the most disadvantaged groups and facilitate the effective and sustainable implementation of public policies;**
- (d) **Bear in mind that retrogressive measures are compatible with the Covenant only if they are necessary and proportionate, in the sense that the adoption of any other policy, or a failure to act, would be more detrimental to economic, social and cultural rights; the affected populations should be consulted with regard to such measures, which should be independently reviewed; the measures should remain in place only insofar as they remain necessary; they should not result in discrimination and they should mitigate inequalities that can grow in times of crisis, ensuring that the rights of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups are not disproportionately affected; and they should not affect the minimum core content of the rights protected under the Covenant (open letter dated 16 May 2012 addressed to States parties in relation to economic, social and cultural rights in the context of the economic and financial crisis). The Committee also draws the State party's attention to its 2016 statement on public debt, austerity measures and the Covenant (E/C.12/2016/1).**

Austerity measures, social protests and the state of emergency

7. The Committee is concerned about the modalities for the implementation of the state of emergency declared on 3 October 2019 in response to protests against the adoption of austerity measures, especially as it may result in the suspension of freedom of association. The Committee is also concerned about the situation of violence in the context of social protests against austerity measures, in some cases involving acts of vandalism, and the sometimes disproportionate use of force against demonstrators and human rights defenders, including by military personnel (art. 2 (1)).

8. **The Committee reminds the State party of the importance of ensuring that the affected populations are consulted with regard to austerity measures and that such measures are independently reviewed, and it recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Guarantee the right of association and peaceful demonstration in relation to policies relevant to economic, social and cultural rights;**
- (b) **Ensure that the declaration of a state of emergency and its implementation are consistent with the principles of proportionality, necessity and other principles established by international human rights standards;**
- (c) **Encourage consultation processes in respect of austerity measures, especially with vulnerable groups that might be particularly affected by such measures.**

Justiciability of the Covenant rights

9. The Committee takes note of the State party's constitutional provisions that ensure that the Covenant rights are fully justiciable and establish the pro persona principle. However, it notes the lack of information on cases in which the Covenant rights have been invoked by the highest courts, in particular the Constitutional Court.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary steps to promote the applicability of all the rights protected under the Covenant, for example by organizing training courses on the content of the Covenant rights, including the Committee's general comments, and their justiciability, especially among judges, lawyers and law enforcement personnel, as well as members of the National Assembly and other actors responsible for the implementation of the Covenant, and by**

conducting awareness-raising campaigns among rights holders. The Committee urges the State party to establish a mechanism for follow-up of the implementation of the specific and general recommendations contained in the Views adopted by the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant, and asks that it include in its next periodic report information on cases in which Covenant rights have been invoked by domestic courts.

Climate change and extraterritorial obligations

11. The Committee takes note of the climate change mitigation and adaptation measures included in the State party's first nationally determined contribution. However, it is concerned that the increase in extractive activities announced under the Prosperity Plan runs counter to the State party's commitments under the Paris Agreement adopted in relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and would have a negative impact on global warming and on the enjoyment of economic and social rights by the world's population and future generations (arts. 1 (1) and 2 (1)).

12. The Committee recommends that the State party reconsider the increase in oil development and large-scale mining in the light of its commitments under the Paris Agreement. It also encourages the State party to promote alternative and renewable energy sources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set national targets with time-bound benchmarks. In this connection, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement of 8 October 2018 on climate change and the Covenant.

Human rights defenders

13. The Committee is concerned about the security conditions in which human rights defenders operate, particularly in defending economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and the rights to territory and natural resources (art. 2 (1)).

14. The Committee recommends that the State party develop and adopt a comprehensive policy to protect defenders of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights that includes measures to protect indigenous peoples, people of African descent and Montubio people and to prevent violations of their rights, particularly in the context of extractive activities. The Committee reminds the State party of its statement of 29 March 2017 on human rights defenders and economic, social and cultural rights (E/C.12/2016/2).

Mining and indigenous peoples

15. The Committee notes with concern the increase in mining concessions awarded in indigenous territories and the lack of protection of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples. It is also concerned about the relaxation of the rules governing extractive activities in the buffer zone of the Yasuní National Park protected area, which is home to the Tagaeri and Taromenane indigenous peoples, who live in voluntary isolation (art. 1 (2)).

16. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take measures to ensure indigenous peoples' legal security with regard to the land, territories and natural resources they have traditionally occupied and used, especially in Mirador, San Carlos Panantza, Río Blanco and blocks 79 and 83;**

(b) **Ensure adequate consultation and the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples on the establishment and management of protected areas and other protection measures in respect of their lands and territories;**

(c) **Take steps to ensure the integrity of the territories of the Tagaeri and Taromenane peoples;**

(d) **Prevent hydrocarbon activities in the Yasuní National Park protected area and its buffer zone.**

Right to be consulted and to free, prior and informed consent

17. The Committee is very concerned about the widespread failure to respect the right of indigenous peoples and communities of African descent to prior consultation on decisions that may affect them. The Committee is also concerned that Executive Decree No. 1247 of August 2012 remains in force and that free, prior and informed consent is not recognized (art. 1 (1) and (2)).

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

(a) **Update regulations by conducting consultations with indigenous peoples on the development of the legal, administrative and public policy framework necessary for the enjoyment of the right to be consulted and to free, prior and informed consent, in accordance with international human rights standards;**

(b) **Guarantee the prior consultation of people of African descent;**

(c) **Enforce the judgments of the provincial courts of Sucumbíos (judgment No. 21333201800266) and Pastaza (judgment No. 16171201900001) without delay;**

(d) **Establish, in consultation with indigenous peoples and with their free, prior and informed consent, a mechanism to follow up on the recommendations addressed to the State party by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (see A/HRC/42/37/Add.1).**

Northern border

19. The Committee is concerned about the high levels of poverty and violence at the northern border, which disproportionately affect communities of African descent, rural populations, indigenous peoples and, to an even greater extent, the population of La Merced de Buenos Aires (arts. 1 (1) and 2 (1)).

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the presence of State institutions in the northern border provinces, especially the public services necessary to ensure people's well-being and security and the full enjoyment of human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, with special attention paid to the most disadvantaged groups.**

Fiscal policy and inequality

21. The Committee notes with concern that levels of inequality remain high; tax receipts, as a proportion of gross domestic product, are lower than in countries with a similar level of development; and more than half of tax revenues are from indirect taxes (art. 2 (1) and (2)).

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a progressive tax policy in order to reduce inequality and ensure greater enjoyment of the Covenant rights, using the maximum available resources.**

Corruption

23. The Committee takes note of the set of measures taken to combat corruption, such as the National Public Integrity and Anti-Corruption Plan 2019–2023. The Committee takes note of the legislative reform initiatives aimed at combating corruption and promoting transparency. However, it regrets the lack of data on the scale of corruption in Ecuador and its impact on the exercise of Covenant rights. The Committee is also particularly concerned about the practice of extortion and sexual abuse as forms of corruption (art. 2 (1)).

24. **The Committee encourages the State party to assess, within a reasonable time frame, the impact of corruption on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. It recommends that the State party take legislative and administrative measures to clarify the roles and the coordination mechanism of the institutions responsible for anti-corruption efforts and implement the recommendations of the Implementation Review Mechanism of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Lastly, the Committee encourages the State party to adopt a gender-sensitive approach, including the adoption of measures to prevent and punish the**

practice of extortion and sexual favours, as well as measures to provide redress for victims.

Non-discrimination

25. The Committee is concerned about the absence of a general law establishing a comprehensive list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. The Committee is also concerned about the inefficiency of the social expenditure classification system in gauging equality. Lastly, it is concerned about the persistence of de facto systemic discrimination and manifestations of violence against some population groups, in particular women, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, Montubio people, rural populations, migrants and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, among others (art. 2 (2)).

26. The Committee recommends that the State party promote the adoption of a general non-discrimination law that reflects all prohibited grounds of discrimination. The Committee encourages the State party to take measures to document formal and substantive discrimination in the State party and to report on the impact of measures taken. Lastly, the Committee encourages the State party to take the necessary steps to give effect to the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ecuador on equal civil marriage rights. The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 20 (1998) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.

Migrants

27. While the Committee appreciates the State party's efforts in hosting a large number of migrants, it is concerned about the exclusionary effect of administrative requirements, in particular the requirement that an applicant must have a passport in order to obtain a humanitarian visa, which disproportionately affects migrants in vulnerable situations. The Committee is also concerned at the obstacles to the enjoyment by migrants of the rights enshrined in the Covenant. Lastly, the Committee notes with concern that there have been expressions of xenophobia and violent attacks against migrants (art. 2 (2)).

28. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a simplified procedure to facilitate the regularization of migrants and relax the passport requirement for persons in vulnerable situations, especially unaccompanied minors. The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary measures to ensure that migrants, including migrants in an irregular situation, enjoy the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

Unemployment

29. While the Committee takes note of the affirmative action measures taken to reduce unemployment in specific sectors, it is concerned that the unemployment rate has not fallen since 2014 and that unemployment disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged groups. While the Committee observes that the gender gap has been narrowing since 2014, it is concerned to note that in 2018, the overall participation rate of women in the workplace was much lower than that of men. Over the past decade the national poverty rate has declined and the minimum wage has increased substantially (art. 3) (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

30. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take concrete measures to reduce unemployment while protecting existing jobs, with a special focus on women, young people, indigenous persons, people of African descent, Montubio people and migrants;**

(b) **Continue to evaluate the impact of structural adjustment measures on employment, especially among disadvantaged groups;**

(c) **Strengthen legislative provisions and public policies by assigning dedicated budgets aimed at achieving equality of rights between men and women in the labour force;**

(d) **Maintain the progressive increase in the minimum wage through a transparent and effective system of indexation and adjustment.**

Forced or compulsory labour

31. The Committee expresses its serious concern at the situation of forced labour in the Furukawa company case, which primarily involves people of African descent. The Committee is also concerned at the lack of adequate measures to provide protection and full reparation to the victims (arts. 6 and 7).

32. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt, as a matter of urgency, measures of protection and full reparation, including psychosocial assistance, for the victims and measures to punish those responsible. The Committee also recommends the adoption of measures to guarantee that the situation does not recur and that the population of African descent has access to work.**

Freedom of association

33. The Committee notes with concern the lack of data on the enjoyment of trade union freedoms, as well as allegations of intimidation and persecution of persons exercising trade union rights (art. 8).

34. **The Committee encourages the State party to take measures to prevent and punish discrimination and dismissal in retaliation for trade union activities, to establish a system for collecting data on trade union conflicts and guarantees, and to ensure the election of union representatives to the National Council on Labour and Wages.**

Informal sector of the economy

35. The Committee is concerned that the informal sector is growing in both urban and rural areas. The Committee notes with concern the lack of information on the effectiveness of measures to combat child labour, and the large proportion of older persons working in the informal sector (arts. 7 and 8).

36. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to progressively reduce the number of workers in the informal sector of the economy and to bring those workers into the formal sector. It also recommends that the State party ensure the effectiveness of measures to combat child labour and that it adopt measures to promote greater participation in the formal sector through public and private investment projects that generate formal employment.**

Social security

37. The Committee is concerned about the sustainability of the social security system, bearing in mind the increase in the number of persons affiliated to it; about the serious disparities in effective access for the most disadvantaged groups; and about the failure to implement the Committee's recommendations in *Trujillo Calero v. Ecuador* (art. 9).

38. **The Committee encourages the State party to:**

(a) **Implement the general recommendations made by the Committee in its Views in *Trujillo Calero v. Ecuador* (see E/C.12/63/D/10/2015);**

(b) **Implement social security schemes with a view to progressively expanding social security coverage, in particular for groups not currently covered;**

(c) **Take measures to include non-contributory pillars;**

(d) **Strengthen the social security system for self-employed persons;**

(e) **Improve coverage and services for persons exclusively engaged in unpaid domestic work;**

(f) **Promote a positive perception of the contribution of migrant workers to the social security system;**

(g) **Adopt relevant legislative and/or administrative measures to ensure the right of all affiliates to request, seek and receive information on their right to social security, including their retirement pension or future retirement pension.**

Protection of the family and children

39. While the Committee takes note of the 2018 Comprehensive Organic Act to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women, it is very concerned about violence against women, children and adolescents and about the high number of cases of femicide. The Committee is further concerned at the lack of data on violence against women. Lastly, the Committee is concerned about the situation of children and adolescents who have been orphaned as a result of femicide (art. 10).

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

(a) **Ensure the necessary financial and human resources for the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Organic Act to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women and the collection of data on violence against women and underlying patterns;**

(b) **Strengthen the national system for the prevention and eradication of violence against women, including by allocating sufficient financial and human resources and implementing prevention measures;**

(c) **Strengthen the programme of shelters, care centres and clinics providing initial care and support for victims of such violence, including by allocating the necessary financial resources;**

(d) **Ensure the creation of the National Observatory on Violence against Women and the single registry on violence against women;**

(e) **Implement measures to provide psychosocial support to relatives who are caring for children orphaned by femicide and expand the coverage of the cash transfer scheme for children and adolescents orphaned as a result of femicide.**

Poverty

41. While the Committee takes note of the reduction in poverty and extreme poverty in the State party, it is concerned about the continuing gap between rural and urban areas and the significant proportion of indigenous people, people of African descent and Montubio people who are living below the poverty line (art. 11).

42. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to reduce poverty, including by adopting a human rights approach and specific policies and measures to improve, in particular, the situation of the rural population, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and Montubio people.**

Malnutrition and access to land

43. The Committee is concerned about the lack of access to land and the forced sale of land in rural and indigenous areas, against a backdrop of lack of access to land ownership, high concentration of land ownership and expansion of extractive activities. The Committee is also concerned at the rates of malnutrition in the State party, a problem which disproportionately affects children and adolescents. Lastly, the Committee is also concerned about barriers faced by campesino and Montubio people in enjoying access to seeds (art. 11).

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

(a) **Take measures to prevent forced evictions and acts of violence against campesino and indigenous peoples related to access to and use of land, and to punish those responsible;**

(b) **Take steps to ensure the redistribution of land in favour of the most disadvantaged groups;**

(c) **Ensure the recognition and protection of different forms of land tenure, including collective and/or customary systems, as in the case of the Asociación de Montubios Autónomos de Colimes;**

(d) **Recognize the situation of malnutrition as a national priority and adopt a comprehensive policy to address malnutrition, with sufficient human and financial resources;**

(e) **Ensure the implementation of the policy of mother- and baby-friendly health facilities throughout the country;**

(f) **Ensure sufficient budgetary allocations to guarantee universal immunization coverage and to supply nutrients and minerals to all children and adolescents, especially in schools;**

(g) **Adopt measures to protect the intellectual property rights of campesino people and indigenous peoples to native and campesino seeds, including their rights to save, use, exchange and sell their seeds.**

Disparities in access to health

45. The Committee takes note of the significant investment in the health system. However, it is concerned about inequalities in access to health among different socioeconomic groups and about the unequal distribution of human resources across the country (art. 12).

46. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure the necessary financial and human resources to maintain levels of access to health services and to remedy the imbalances that affect the most disadvantaged groups. The Committee also encourages the State party to ensure that the draft Health Code is consistent with the rights enshrined in the Covenant.**

Drug policy and persons deprived of liberty

47. The Committee is concerned that there continues to be a predominantly punitive approach to addressing the problem of abuse of psychoactive substances, affecting women in particular, which has contributed to the disproportionate increase in the size of the population deprived of liberty in overcrowded prisons and in poor conditions. The Committee is concerned at the weakness of prevention and harm reduction policies targeting psychoactive substance abuse (art. 12).

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

(a) **Strengthen prevention and harm reduction policies in relation to psychoactive substance abuse;**

(b) **Use alternatives to imprisonment for minor drug offences;**

(c) **Make every effort to eliminate prison overcrowding and to ensure adequate living conditions for persons deprived of liberty;**

(d) **Ensure that the enjoyment of Covenant rights in prisons is monitored by civil society organizations.**

Mental health

49. The Committee is concerned about suicide among children and adolescents, which is the primary cause of mortality among this group, and the high suicide rate among indigenous peoples (art. 12).

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

(a) **Improve the availability and quality of data on mental health;**

(b) **Enhance specialized mental health services in hospitals;**

(c) **Effectively implement, with an appropriate budget, the Intersectoral Suicide Prevention Plan, with special measures for the groups most at risk;**

(d) **Reinforce mental health-care measures in emergency situations and in contexts of human mobility.**

Sexual and reproductive health

51. The Committee is concerned at the persistence of underage marriage, pregnancy in minors, negative prejudices about contraception, and the criminalization of abortion, even in cases where pregnancy is the result of rape (art. 12).

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

(a) **Ensure effective coordination and sufficient financial and human resources for the effective implementation of the Intersectoral Policy to Prevent Pregnancy in Girls and Adolescents 2018–2025;**

(b) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy for raising awareness in society and among children about the minimum legal age for marriage, set at 18 years, and about the negative effects and risks of underage marriage, such as early pregnancy, gender-based violence and poverty, among others;**

(c) **Pursue its policy of investing in contraceptives and take action to eliminate prejudice, particularly among health-care providers;**

(d) **Ensure that pregnant girls can continue their studies;**

(e) **Continue to strengthen measures to deal with teenage pregnancies by promoting access to reproductive health services for all, including sexual and reproductive health education, as well as counselling services and health care adapted to young people;**

(f) **Take all necessary measures to ensure that regulations on the termination of pregnancy are consistent with women's integrity and autonomy, in particular by decriminalizing abortion in cases of rape;**

(g) **Provide age-appropriate, scientifically accurate and evidence-based sexual and reproductive health information and education to all children and adolescents in all educational institutions, and to the general public;**

(h) **Bear in mind the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health.**

Mining and the environment

53. The Committee notes the Mining Act and expresses its serious concern at the environmental impact of large-scale mining and other extractive activities. The Committee is also concerned at the lack of information on measures to ensure the right to water, especially in the context of the spraying and extractive activities at the northern border (arts. 11 and 12).

54. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures in favour of the communities most affected by the degradation of the environment, such as rural, Afro-descendent and indigenous communities in Esmeraldas, to guarantee their enjoyment of the Covenant rights.**

Access to and quality of education

55. While the Committee takes note of the increased access to and quality of education as a result of the progressive increase in investment and of multi-year education policies, it is concerned at the stalled increase in preschool education coverage, the persistence of disparities between rural and urban areas and the higher dropout rate among low-income groups, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and Montubio people (art. 14).

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

(a) **Increase social spending on education in order to ensure universal and equal access to quality early, primary and secondary education;**

(b) **Ensure that human rights education is imparted in schools at all levels and in universities, and that it includes economic, social and cultural rights;**

(c) **Strengthen policies to prevent students from dropping out of school, including measures such as an education grant programme and a system of online monitoring and services for students, among others;**

(d) **Provide the necessary resources to ensure the education of persons who did not complete their schooling, in particular to ensure literacy.**

Education of migrants and indigenous peoples

57. The Committee is concerned about the access of migrants to the education system and notes with concern the continued obstacles to access to bilingual intercultural education, such as the absence of services in all indigenous languages and the lack of resources (arts. 13 and 14).

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

(a) **Strengthen the inclusive education policy by allocating adequate human and financial resources;**

(b) **Guarantee access to education, retention and completion of the school curriculum for migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children and adolescents;**

(c) **Strengthen and implement a policy of bilingual intercultural education in all indigenous communities, adapted to their languages and cultures.**

Indigenous languages

59. The Committee is concerned about the preservation of indigenous languages in the State party, in particular the Sápara and Shiwiar languages, which are at risk of extinction, as this directly and irreversibly affects the exercise of cultural rights by indigenous peoples, given the limited use of most indigenous languages in the public sphere (art. 15).

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

(a) **Increase, as a matter of urgency, measures for the protection of the Sápara language, among others, through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund, and resume work with Peru in this area;**

(b) **Ensure the promotion of the use of all indigenous languages in the public sphere.**

Territories and cultural identity

61. The Committee is concerned about the impact of extractive activities on the access of indigenous peoples and people of African descent to their territories, as a means of sustaining decent living conditions, and to cultural rights (art. 15).

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

(a) **Strengthen the protection of the territories of indigenous peoples, in particular the Sápara and Shiwiar peoples, and people of African descent, and discontinue extractive activities in their territories;**

(b) **Enforce the judicial decision that prohibits the exploitation of block 22 and fields 83, 86 and 87;**

(c) **Take measures to strengthen family economy initiatives based on traditional knowledge and artisanal production.**

Digital divide

63. While the Committee takes note of the progress made in overcoming the digital divide, it is concerned about the persistence of this gap, which disproportionately affects indigenous peoples, people of African descent and Montubio people (art. 15).

64. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the effective implementation of the measures set out in the National Development Plan on new communication technologies and in the “Ecuador Digital” action plan of the Ministry of Telecommunications;

(b) Take appropriate measures to narrow the digital divide for the benefit of the rural population, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and Montubio people.

D. Other recommendations

65. The Committee recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, with international assistance and cooperation when needed. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party’s attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind (E/C.12/2019/1).

66. The Committee recommends that the State party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State party to, *inter alia*, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see HRI/MC/2008/3).

67. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, provincial and municipal levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee encourages the State party to engage with the Ombudsman’s Office, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

68. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations, information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 6 (b) and (d) (austerity measures), 18 (a) (right to be consulted and to free, prior and informed consent) and 40 (a) (protection of the family and children).

69. The State party is invited to submit its fifth periodic report by 31 October 2024. In addition, the Committee invites the State party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).