



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### List of issues and questions in relation to the fourth periodic report of Mauritania\*

#### Withdrawal of reservations and ratification of the Optional Protocol

1. Please provide updated information on specific measures taken by the State party to withdraw its remaining reservations to articles 13 (a) and 16 of the Convention. Please indicate any progress made with regard to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

#### Visibility of the Convention and its Optional Protocol

2. Please provide updated information on measures taken to raise awareness among women, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women and women living in rural and remote areas, of their rights under the Convention. Please provide information on the specific courses in academic and professional training for lawyers, judges, prosecutors and other law enforcement officials on the application of the Convention in the national legal framework, how such training courses cover the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations and its jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol, and indicate the percentage of lawyers and judicial officers having received such training (CEDAW/C/MRT/4, para. 11).<sup>1</sup>

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

3. In line with the Committee's guidance note on the obligations of States parties to the Convention and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, issued on 22 April 2020, please indicate the measures implemented by Mauritania: to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men, and to give a new impetus to the implementation of gender equality by placing women at the centre of recovery as a strategic priority for sustainable change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; to meet the needs and uphold the rights of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and women in situations of

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\* Adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 5 March 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the fourth periodic report of the State party.



conflict or other humanitarian emergencies; and to ensure that, in the context of lockdown measures, whether partial or total, and in post-crisis recovery plans, women and girls are not relegated to stereotypical gender roles. Please indicate the measures in place to ensure that all COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts: effectively address and are aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls; guarantee the equal participation of women and girls in political and public life, decision-making, economic empowerment and service delivery, particularly in the design and implementation of recovery programmes; and are designed so that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care roles, that are aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Please explain how Mauritania is ensuring that measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as restrictions on freedom of movement or physical distancing, do not limit the access of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to justice, shelters, education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

#### **Legislative and institutional framework**

4. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3](#), para. 15), please advise on steps taken to review legislation and repeal all discriminatory provisions, particularly in the Nationality Code and the Personal Status Code. Please also provide information on any cases in which the Convention has been invoked by individuals or directly applied or referred to in court proceedings in Mauritania.

#### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

5. Please provide information on the scope of responsibilities of the national observatory on women's and girls' rights and on the human, technical and financial resources allocated to support its functioning. Please advise on the monitoring role of the national observatory in the implementation of relevant legislation adopted by Mauritania. Please describe the baselines, targets and impact of the implementation of the national mainstreaming strategy (para. 20) and indicate whether gender-responsive budgeting is mandatory for all government departments and whether specific budgetary benchmarks have been defined.

#### **Access to justice**

6. Please provide information on measures taken to raise women's awareness of their rights and ways to claim them, and encourage women to file a complaint rather than opting for mediation, in particular in rural and remote areas. Please also indicate the availability of free legal aid to women in Mauritania, the number of women beneficiaries of such aid and any factors impeding their access, including the stigmatization of women who pursue criminal complaints, particularly against a spouse or relative, especially in cases of gender-based violence.

#### **Temporary special measures**

7. Please indicate whether, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, Mauritania has adopted temporary special measures – beyond the quota system – to increase the political participation of women and the focus on the situation of women in the poverty reduction strategy with the aim of accelerating the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in all areas covered by the Convention, in particular employment, education and family matters, including with regard to disadvantaged groups of women. Please also provide information on any positive

actions taken to address the specific difficulties faced by the most disadvantaged groups of women.

### **Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices**

8. In its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3, para. 22), the Committee expressed its concerns at the persistence of deeply rooted stereotypes, in addition to harmful practices to women such as female genital mutilation, forced feeding, child and forced marriage and sexual harassment. Please inform the Committee about efforts to adopt a comprehensive strategy to raise awareness about, and eliminate, gender stereotypes and harmful practices against women, particularly in rural and remote areas. Please provide updated statistics and data on the prevalence of female genital mutilation in Mauritania, particularly in rural and remote areas, the number of prosecutions and convictions and the penalties imposed on perpetrators (paras. 26–28). With reference to joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, please inform the Committee about the following: measures to provide redress to girls who have been exposed to female genital mutilation and to those who have entered into child and forced marriage; rehabilitation and counselling services available for girls; and a mechanism to track cases of child and forced marriage. Please advise on measures to strengthen the ongoing dialogue with religious leaders.

### **Gender-based violence against women**

9. In the light of the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, please provide updates on: (a) efforts to accelerate the adoption by parliament of the bill on combating gender-based violence against women and the manner in which it addresses physical, psychological and sexual violence; (b) efforts to ensure that the definition of rape, including marital and acquaintance or date rape, is based on the lack of consent, takes into account all coercive circumstances and is in line with international human rights standards; (c) results achieved through the national strategy to combat violence against women (para. 38); (d) data regarding gender-based violence against women disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, type of violence and the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and data regarding the number of reported cases, investigations and prosecutions, and the sentences imposed on the perpetrators; and (e) measures taken to amend legislation to ensure that no women who are victims of rape are prosecuted for adultery.

### **Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

10. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, and in the light of the Committee's previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3, para. 29), please inform the Committee on measures taken to ensure the effective implementation of the law on trafficking and indicate the impact of the national action plan on combating trafficking in persons (para. 51). With regard to trafficking in persons, please provide data, disaggregated by age, geographic location and ethnicity, on the number of reported cases, prosecutions and convictions, and the sentences imposed on the perpetrators, since 2015. Please provide information on the findings of the study on trafficking and specify what actions Mauritania has taken to tackle the phenomenon (para. 50). Please advise on measures taken to address the root causes of sexual exploitation of women and girls and on rehabilitation and reintegration programmes targeting women and girls who are victims of trafficking and sexual

exploitation, particularly women and girls belonging to ethnic minorities, women living in rural areas, migrant women, asylum-seeking women and refugee women.

### **Participation in political and public life**

11. Please provide data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability and geographic location in rural or urban area, on the participation of women in the legislative and municipal elections held in 2018. Please inform the Committee on measures taken to increase and accelerate the equal participation of women, particularly women living in rural areas, at all levels of government, including the Cabinet and the judiciary, academia and the foreign service.

### **Nationality**

12. In light of the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3, para. 33), please provide information on measures taken to amend the Nationality Code and to enable Mauritanian women to transmit their nationality to their children and foreign spouse on an equal basis with Mauritanian men.

### **Education**

13. Please provide data on school dropout rates, disaggregated by sex, age, socioeconomic status and geographic location (urban or rural). Please indicate measures taken to assess and review the national education strategy to ensure retention and prevent that girls drop out of school, particularly in rural areas, and to combat sexual harassment in schools (para. 65). Please inform the Committee on steps taken to enhance the support and economic assistance available for girls in rural and remote areas to facilitate their access to schools. Please indicate the measures taken to introduce comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of the education system in Mauritania. Please inform the Committee on measures taken to strengthen adult literacy programmes, particularly for women belonging to ethnic minorities and women living in rural areas. Please provide detailed information on the steps taken to eliminate traditional stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls and women from choosing traditionally male-dominated fields of study. Please provide information on measures taken to ensure access to inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities.

### **Employment**

14. Please provide information on the results achieved under the national employment strategy and indicate any measures taken to promote access for women to formal employment and eliminate horizontal and vertical segregation, gender discrimination and traditional views that prevent women from gaining access to career development and professional training opportunities (para. 70). Please inform the Committee on the outcomes of the study to extend labour and social protection and indicate any measures taken to extend social protection coverage to women working in the informal economy and self-employment, particularly to women living in rural and remote areas (para. 72).

15. Please inform the Committee about the prevalence of sexual harassment of women in the workplace and any systems that are in place to monitor and prevent such harassment and encourage victims to file complaints against the perpetrators (para. 73). In line with the Committee's previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3, para. 37), please provide the Committee with an update on measures taken to dismantle the caste-based system of enslaving women in domestic work and to ensure that women domestic workers have access to effective complaint

procedures and redress. Please indicate the steps taken to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization. Please provide information on the number, nature and results of the labour inspections conducted, including in the area of domestic work (para. 74).

### **Health**

16. Please inform the Committee on measures taken to effectively implement the Reproductive Health Act and the national reproductive health strategy, and on measures taken to improve the availability and quality of sexual and reproductive health counselling services for women and girls, particularly in rural and remote areas. Please provide information on the incidence of unsafe abortions and their impact on women's health, including maternal mortality. Please also indicate measures taken to legalize abortion, at least in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe fetal impairment, and to decriminalize it in all other cases. Please describe mental health services and support systems available for women and girls and elaborate on the accessibility of health services for women and girls with disabilities.

### **Economic empowerment of women**

17. Please inform the Committee on measures taken to address and mainstream the gender dimension of poverty into public policies, in particular national development plans or strategies to combat poverty and economic empowerment programmes. Please provide data on the number of women who have participated in the economic and microfinance programmes disaggregated by loan amount, age, ethnicity and geographic location (urban or rural). Please report on strategies to develop and sustain social protection schemes for women on an equal basis with men.

### **Rural women**

18. In line with the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3](#), para. 43), please inform the Committee on measures taken to amend any discriminatory provisions and to address any cultural barriers that limit the ownership, control and usage of land by women. With reference to the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, please indicate measures taken to improve access by rural women and girls to basic services, including health-care and family planning services, water, education, formal employment, social protection, land and credit. Please describe measures in place or planned to provide entrepreneurship programmes for women in rural areas, including women belonging to ethnic minorities, and expand job opportunities for them in the non-agricultural sector.

### **Disadvantaged groups of women**

19. Please provide updated information on how gender perspective is integrated into measures taken to effectively implement Act No. 2015-031, the road map for the eradication of the consequences of slavery and modern forms of slavery, and the action plan for its implementation (para. 92–95). Please inform the Committee on measures taken to provide programmes aimed at providing income for Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women who are former slaves and a special social security scheme to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

20. Alternative resources indicate that women and girls belonging to ethnic minorities as well as asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women face barriers to accessing basic services, particularly education and the official examination system, owing to the national civil registration process and the lack of identity documents.

Please provide information on specific measures taken to ensure that disadvantaged groups of women and girls, such as women belonging to ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women, in particular undocumented migrant women, have access to the following: education; health care, including sexual and reproductive health care; basic services; housing; food; employment; and identity cards.

**Climate change and natural disasters**

21. Please provide information about the measures taken to integrate disaster risk reduction into development processes and to counter the adverse impact of climate change. Please indicate whether Mauritania plans to incorporate a gender perspective and include women in national strategies on disaster management, and relief and recovery, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

**Marriage and family relations**

22. Please inform the Committee on the measures taken to eradicate the practices of child and forced marriage and to raise awareness of the harmful effects on women and girls of child and forced marriage, in line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices. Please provide information on the measures taken to amend the Personal Status Code by repealing its discriminatory provisions relating to marriage, divorce, custody and legal guardianship of children, polygamy, division of property and inheritance.

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