



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

Distr.: General
24 February 2022

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 1867th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 17 February 2022, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Acosta Vargas

Contents

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

Eighth periodic report of the Dominican Republic

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Eighth periodic report of the Dominican Republic (CEDAW/C/DOM/8 and CEDAW/C/DOM/QPR/8)

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

2. **Mr. Alcántara** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that while his Government had made progress in terms of public policy and initiatives that benefited women, it continued to face challenges, not least those resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

3. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link and introducing her country's eighth periodic report (CEDAW/C/DOM/8), said that women and vulnerable groups had been hardest hit by the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had laid bare the inequalities and structural gaps affecting women and girls, as well as the need for redoubled efforts to address them. Her Government's response had included a range of social protection programmes, several of which had prioritized women in situations of vulnerability. The emergency telephone line and shelters for women victims of violence had remained operational throughout the pandemic.

4. Cognizant of the importance of robust statistics to inform public policy and assist in the monitoring of progress and gaps in the area of women's rights, the Government, through the national statistical system, was working to incorporate gender variables into data collection. The National Statistical Office had adopted a gender equality perspective in its Institutional Strategic Plan, leading to improvements in administrative records; the National Multipurpose Household Survey, which provided standardized and internationally comparable information on indicators relating to women and girls; and the tenth Population and Housing Census, which would be conducted in 2022 and would use gender-inclusive language. The Office took a gender-based approach in its annual update to the indicators used in the country's various information systems, one of which collected data on gender-based violence. The Experimental Survey of the Situation of Women had informed policies and programmes to combat violence against women. In 2020 the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development had begun to analyse gender with the aim of evaluating the differences in the impact of monetary poverty on women and men. The Superintendency of Banks had used disaggregated data in its first report on gender in the banking sector which had revealed persistent gender disparities in terms of credit and savings. Work was being done to increase the generation of data on public spending on gender-related public policies.

5. Women enjoyed special protection from discrimination under the Dominican Constitution, which established equality as a fundamental right, criminalized discriminatory acts and behaviour and provided for mechanisms and policies that ensured equality for women and girls. The comprehensive bill on violence against women was undergoing a technical review prior to its submission to the National Congress. It provided for sanctions for all forms of violence against women in the public and private spheres, a coordinated inter-agency response to the issue and reparation mechanisms.

6. The Government had made significant effort to improve women's access to justice, using an intersectional approach and prioritizing the most vulnerable. Victims of gender-based and domestic violence throughout the country received free psychological assistance and legal advice and representation through the local offices of the Ministry of Women. Some of the staff members who provided those services had received training in sign language, and the staff operating the hotline for women victims of violence had been trained in assisting women with disabilities. Interpreters had been employed to assist Haitian women and girls. Legal assistance was provided to older women who were victims of abuse, ill-treatment and rights violations, while women deprived of their liberty also received free legal services. The judiciary's Institutional Strategic Plan 2020–2024 included initiatives to remove architectural and other barriers to justice for women with disabilities. The Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre monitored court verdicts and decisions in order to provide guidance to the judiciary

and suggest legislative amendments considered necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the judiciary from a gender and human rights perspective. Together with the National Council on Disability, the judiciary had provided training on disability and on the Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People, as part of which 41 sign language interpreters had been certified to work in the court system. In 2020 and 2021 more than 9,000 police officers had received training on gender-based violence, femicide and positive masculinity.

7. A 2017 evaluation of the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2007–2017 had revealed the need to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation system and budget, promote women’s economic empowerment and effect cultural change to bring about equality. In response, a new plan had been drawn up for the period 2020–2030, the third of its kind, and its indicators were being incorporated into the system for monitoring public bodies and into the National Multi-Year Plan for the Public Sector 2021–2024. Staff from 115 bodies had attended workshops on using the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan in the formulation of institutional strategic plans, and a guide to the inclusion of the gender perspective in such strategic plans had also been drawn up. Forty-five public bodies had established gender equality units, which submitted quarterly reports on the implementation of the third National Gender Equality and Equity Plan in their areas of competence, and a guide to gender mainstreaming at all stages of the budgetary cycle had been developed. Furthermore, a regulation had been adopted in late 2021 that prevented changes to amounts earmarked for gender equality during the drafting of guidelines for budget amendments.

8. The budget for the Ministry of Women had increased significantly in recent years. In 2021 the Ministry had received extraordinary funding to provide financial compensation of 10,000 pesos per month to women victims of domestic violence and families fostering children orphaned by femicide. More than 370 victims and families currently received such compensation, which represented the most generous financial aid provided by the State. The Ministry had broadened its efforts to mainstream gender in public policies and expanded its gender equality seal scheme for public and private sector companies. The Office for Women, Girls and Adolescent Girls had been established to coordinate policies to prevent and eliminate violence against women and to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan for a Life Free from Violence, which aimed to reduce violence against women and girls, facilitate their access to protection and justice and address factors that normalized and perpetuated gender-based violence.

9. Stereotypes and cultural practices that led to inequality represented a significant challenge for the State. Efforts in that area included the development of books and other educational materials for children that aimed to dismantle gender stereotypes and the organization of workshops for young persons on gender-based violence, positive masculinity and human rights. A range of measures and policies had been adopted to address the country’s high rates of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, including the adoption of legislation to abolish legal provisions that had permitted children aged under 18 to marry; the establishment of the Office for Children and Adolescents to coordinate inter-agency policies intended to prevent early marriage and adolescent pregnancy; the implementation of a plan to that effect in the Valdesia region, where rates of early marriage were particularly high; and information and education programmes run by the Centre for the Promotion of Comprehensive Adolescent Health Care.

Articles 1–6

10. **Ms. Narain** said that the Committee would appreciate hearing about any measures taken by the State party to ensure that women’s and girls’ access to justice was not limited by measures taken to control the COVID-19 pandemic. It would also be grateful if the delegation would elaborate on the principle of gender equality as recently incorporated in the Constitution. In particular, did the definition of discrimination against women cover direct and indirect discrimination and discrimination in the public and private spheres by State and non-State actors, as provided for in article 1 of the Convention?

11. She would appreciate an update on the progress of the bill on equality and non-discrimination through Congress. She would also be interested to hear what was being done to bring the Ombudsman’s Office into compliance with the Paris Principles, and would like

to learn how many cases alleging violations of women's rights the Office had dealt with during the previous year.

12. She wondered whether the State party had taken any measures in response to the findings from the studies carried out by the Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre and the Directorate for Families, Children, Adolescents and Gender of the Judiciary. She would also appreciate information on measures taken to ensure that all women in the State party, including women of Haitian origin and women refugees and asylum seekers, were aware of their rights under the Convention and were able to invoke them. Had the Convention been invoked in any court cases of discrimination against women?

13. The National Public Defence Office, whose mandate was to ensure access to justice and respect for fundamental rights, appeared to focus solely on criminal cases. She would be interested to hear how many cases involving women defendants had been handled by that Office. Noting that the Ministry of Women had a large team of lawyers who provided free legal representation and advice, she asked whether legal aid was available when applying for *amparo*. Did the delegation have statistics on the number of complaints of gender discrimination handled by the Ministry and on the number of court cases where damages or other remedies had been sought on behalf of women victims?

14. She would like to know whether judges, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and lawyers received training on the Convention and whether the Convention had been published in local languages. She wondered how women, in particular vulnerable women, were made aware of their rights and the remedies available to them. She would welcome information on measures taken to advance the women and peace and security agenda of the United Nations Security Council. Lastly, she would like to know whether civil society had been consulted in the preparation of the State party's report and how the State party ensured that women activists and human rights defenders had the freedom and the resources to exercise their functions of upholding women's rights.

15. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that women, adolescents and girls had been the central focus of the policies put in place by the State in order to deal with the impact of the pandemic, whose main effects had been felt in sectors where women were in the majority, such as the service sector and the informal economy. Special funding programmes had been set up to support those sectors.

16. The country's legal and regulatory framework established non-discrimination as a constitutional principle and guaranteed equality in its broad sense as a fundamental right. As to measures to ensure that women were aware of their rights, the State had provided specific information on the action taken in its report.

17. **Ms. Villa Camacho** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that prosecutors and other members of the judiciary who worked directly with the women victims of violence attended in-service courses at the Public Prosecution Service training school, which included instruction on the Convention. Reference was also made to the Convention in the general guidelines on effective investigation and prosecution of cases, and the measures and court orders imposed on rapists and assailants under Act No. 24-97, on domestic violence, made reference to the Convention.

18. **Ms. Neyra Paulino** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that the question on the status of the Ombudsman's Office would be answered in writing.

19. **Ms. Beliar Sosa** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that the National Police provided positive masculinity training to male officers with a view to reducing discrimination against women. In addition, information on positive masculinity was widely disseminated at both the national and the local levels.

20. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that the bill on equality and non-discrimination would be reintroduced in Congress for consideration. The bill included a definition of discrimination that covered direct, indirect and multiple discrimination and classified discriminatory acts and behaviours.

21. **A representative of the Dominican Republic**, speaking via video link, said that the various programmes put in place to protect the most vulnerable groups at the height of the

pandemic had prioritized female-headed households, in particular those where there were children under the age of 5 or persons with disabilities. Those programmes had been a source of supplementary income and had been expanded following the most acute period of the pandemic. Like the more recent “Supérate” programme, they formed part of the established government policies for social protection.

22. **Ms. Santana** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that all refugees without distinction enjoyed the same rights as the country’s nationals in accordance with the Constitution and the relevant legislation, subject to the limitations established in the Constitution. The rights and responsibilities of refugees and asylum seekers were clearly explained as soon as an asylum application was received. The Directorate General of Migration had teams of interpreters for speakers of languages other than Spanish and if necessary interpreters could also be provided by the United Nations Development Programme. The Directorate-General was in the process of constructing a website, where all the necessary information would be published. Discussions were under way with the National Health Service and talks were scheduled to start in the near future with the Ministry of Education on joint policies for the benefit of refugees.

23. **Ms. Made Zabala** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that the Ministry of Defence had launched a plan for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Women had first been admitted to the armed forces in 1980 and to officer training from 2002, and now accounted for nearly 14,000 out of a total of around 64,000 members of the armed forces. Women occupied all ranks up to lieutenant-colonel and were involved in security missions in all areas, from the Office of the President to various ministries.

24. **Ms. Tatén Brache** (Dominican Republic) said that, as part of the process of preparing the State’s report, a series of seminars and workshops had been held to consult with and obtain input from civil society organizations and feminist and other women’s associations.

25. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that the State funded various civil society organizations. More detailed information would be provided in writing.

26. **Ms. Narain**, noting that, under the new constitutional provisions, any act of discrimination amounted to a criminal offence, asked how many prosecutions had been brought for such offences.

27. **Ms. Santana** (Dominican Republic) said that the Attorney-General had recorded no criminal cases of discrimination to date. A study would need to be made to determine the reasons underlying the lack of complaints. One explanation might be that the offence was poorly defined. It was for that reason that the Ministry of Women was pushing for the equality and non-discrimination bill to be adopted. It was important to note, however, that there were civil remedies, such as *amparo*, that were available to women victims of discrimination who wished to pursue a complaint.

28. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she was concerned that, despite the incorporation into the Constitution of specific provisions on equality and non-discrimination, the equality and non-discrimination bill had still not been adopted. She would be interested to know the reasons behind the failure to pass the bill.

29. Civil society organizations had voiced concerns at a possible administrative restructuring that could mean that gender-related matters might be subsumed under other areas, undermining the effectiveness of the Ministry of Women. She would be grateful if the delegation could provide clarification in that regard.

30. It would be useful to know how the advances made in women’s status in the State party were rolled out to all provinces, municipalities, districts and rural communities. In that connection, she wondered whether the proposals to set up equality and development offices in municipalities had been implemented and whether the Ministry had a presence in rural districts.

31. **Ms. Toe Bouda** said that, notwithstanding the many advances that had been made since the Committee’s consideration of the State party’s previous report, discrimination of various kinds persisted, not least based on skin colour and social class, a situation that was

not conducive to genuine inclusion of women, particularly women of colour, in economic, social and political life. In the context of political participation specifically, she noted that a 40 per cent quota for women had been introduced for political parties' lists of election candidates. It would be interesting to know what measures the State party had put in place to ensure that the parties and electoral judges were sufficiently aware of the quota to be able to apply or enforce it. Where a political party effectively applied the quota, did it receive financial help to assist with women candidates' campaigns?

32. She would like to know whether the State party planned to adopt temporary special measures to address the intersectional discrimination faced by disadvantaged groups of women such as migrants, Haitian women and women with disabilities. She would also be interested in learning how the State party ensured that the various laws and regulations adopted were in conformity with the Constitution and the Convention. Lastly, she wondered whether there had been any evaluation of the State party's campaigns to raise awareness of tolerance and equality and what complaints mechanisms and legal remedies were available to victims of discrimination.

33. **Ms. Hernández** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that, in the Dominican Republic, as elsewhere, women's participation in politics had fallen during the pandemic, as evidenced by the small number of women candidates who had participated in the 2020 elections. The Central Electoral Board had drafted two bills, one to amend Organic Act No. 15-19, on the electoral system, and another to amend Act No. 33-18, on political parties, groups and movements. Under the first bill, gender quotas would be replaced with a requirement for vertical and horizontal gender parity in lists of candidates and the preferential voting method used to elect deputies to the National Congress would be abandoned. That bill also provided for a mechanism for filling casual vacancies in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies and established sanctions for political violence. The second bill required political parties to have a dedicated budget line for the training and education of women candidates. Both bills had been submitted to civil society organizations and political parties for comment and would be submitted to the National Congress for consideration in March or April 2022. Efforts were also under way to strengthen the women's political round table, which played an important role in developing the skills and capacities of women in politics and in mainstreaming their needs and concerns.

34. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that the bill on equality and non-discrimination had still not been adopted by the National Congress for political and ideological reasons. However, the Government would continue pushing for its passage. There were currently no plans to reform the Ministry of Women's Affairs; on the contrary, the incumbent administration had taken steps to strengthen the Ministry since its establishment by increasing its budget and funding innovative programmes aimed at improving and expanding the services it provided.

35. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was present, and services it provided were available, in every province and municipality in the country, although the limited resources at its disposal sometimes prevented it from expanding certain services. Its local representatives worked closely with rural women. The Ministry had launched several campaigns to raise public awareness of its services, such as "Vivir sin Violencia, Es Posible" (A life free from violence is possible), which encouraged women victims of violence to report the violations they had suffered and directed them to support services. The country's emergency hotline service had recently been extended to cover border provinces.

36. **Ms. Tisheva** said that entrenched gender stereotypes appeared to be at the root of much of the discrimination and violence experienced by women in the Dominican Republic. She wished to know how the State party intended to ensure the monitoring and progressive elimination of gender stereotyping in all spheres of society, particularly the education system, and how the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2020–2030 could be harnessed to achieve that goal. She would also welcome more details on the bill on violence against women, including the timeline for its adoption, the different forms of gender-based violence it covered and the prevention measures it included.

37. The Committee was concerned by the high number of early marriages and the large number of underage girls who entered into de facto unions with older men, especially in rural

areas. She would appreciate information on the impact of the measures taken to prevent and address the causes and consequences of early marriage. The delegation might also clarify whether the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2020–2030 included such measures.

38. She would be interested in learning whether the Comprehensive Sex Education Programme covered gender-based violence. It would also be useful to know how the State party ensured the enforcement of the legal provisions criminalizing statutory rape, how many cases of statutory rape had been prosecuted and how many convictions had been secured between 2020 and 2021. The increasing prevalence of femicide in the State party, especially during the pandemic, was a major cause for concern. She would like to know how many cases of femicide had been recorded in 2021 and how the State party intended to counter that phenomenon and address its root causes.

39. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that the State party's legal framework to prevent and combat human trafficking remained inadequate, as Act No. 137-03, on the crimes of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, still required the conditions of force, fraud and coercion to be met in order for the sexual exploitation of minors to be classed as human trafficking. The Dominican Republic was a destination country for sex tourism and child sex trafficking. Most trafficked minors, who tended to be girls between 15 and 17 years of age, were either exploited in brothels or sold sex on the streets. She wished to know when the bill to amend Act No. 137-03 would be adopted and whether the amended law would make provision for child victims of trafficking. She would also appreciate an overview of the measures in place to protect and assist girls who had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, including girls who claimed they were engaging in prostitution willingly.

40. She wondered whether a new national action plan to combat human trafficking had been adopted to replace the previous one, which had expired in 2020, and, if so, whether it covered the new modus operandi of traffickers, many of whom now conducted their activities online, and addressed the complicity of police officers and other officials in trafficking offences. She would also like to learn what measures were in place to prevent Dominican women from being trafficked abroad for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The statistical data on trafficking victims provided by the State party made no mention of Dominican women who had been trafficked within the country. Might the delegation be able to provide updated statistics on trafficking victims, disaggregated by sex, nationality, country of origin and destination and form of exploitation?

41. **Ms. Tatén Brache** (Dominican Republic) said that multimedia learning resources incorporating a human rights and gender perspective were being rolled out to help develop the life skills of students between 5 and 18 years of age in the formal education system. Teachers and the technical staff of the Ministry of Education had received appropriate training on the development and use of those resources. The Ministry continued to engage with adolescents in and out of school through weekend art and audiovisual workshops on topics such as gender stereotypes, women's rights and discrimination. It also delivered training courses on subjects such as human rights, gender issues and diversity promotion, and organized online and in-person events on women's rights. A study on the impact of COVID-19 on women had also been carried out. Training courses on gathering and using gender statistics to measure the impact of policies and programmes were also being developed.

42. **Ms. Rivas Peña** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that, to assist efforts to monitor and evaluate the impact of public policies to promote women's rights, the National Statistical Office had started to produce gender statistics and, in March 2022, planned to launch a training course on mainstreaming a gender perspective in statistical production. For example, the statistical data collected from the national survey on economic activity had been disaggregated by sex, which had provided valuable insight into the number of businesses owned by women and into how such businesses had weathered the pandemic. The 2021 census had yielded useful information on the prevalence of unpaid domestic work.

43. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that the bill on violence against women, which had garnered consensus among government ministries and civil society, was currently being reviewed by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Executive Branch, which would then submit it to the relevant government institutions for comment. Once signed into law, the bill would have significant policy and budgetary implications for several institutions.

Following the completion of the consultation process, the President of the Republic would submit the bill to the National Congress for consideration.

44. **Ms. Zaiz** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that the bill on violence against women recognized, criminalized and punished different forms of violence against women, including economic, marital, emotional and psychological violence, and provided comprehensive reparation to victims. It also criminalized and punished femicide and offences related to femicide, including violence done to third parties, who were entitled to compensation.

45. **Ms. Jiménez** (Dominican Republic) said that the fight against human trafficking remained a priority for the Government, which, with the support of several partners, had recently opened a special shelter equipped to provide victims of trafficking with comprehensive support.

46. **Ms. Cruz** (Dominican Republic), speaking via video link, said that the implementation of the National Plan Of Action against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants for the period 2017–2020, which had been centred on preventing and prosecuting trafficking offences and protecting and assisting victims and witnesses, had been overseen by the Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, which coordinated efforts to combat those phenomena. Under the National Plan of Action, officials and public servants had received additional training on the laws and international instruments used to counter human trafficking. Guidelines on investigating smuggling and trafficking offences had been issued, and a protocol for inter-agency cooperation in investigative procedures had been put in place. The purpose of the bill to amend Act No. 137-03 was to address several shortcomings identified in that law. The bill had been studied by the Inter-Agency Committee and was awaiting adoption.

47. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons had been strengthened, and a prosecutor attached to the Office had been assigned to each judicial district in the country. Community committees composed of police and government representatives had been set up to further strengthen inter-institutional coordination in efforts to combat human trafficking. In 2019, a training programme on migrant smuggling and human trafficking had been implemented for prosecutors and investigators working in border provinces.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.