



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

Distr.: General  
17 March 2022  
English  
Original: French  
English, French and Spanish only

---

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Sixth periodic report submitted by the Central African  
Republic under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2018\***

[Date received: 28 September 2018]

---

\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



---

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction .....	3
I. Overview of the Central African Republic .....	4
II. Commitment of the Central African Republic to the defence of human rights .....	9
III. National legal framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic .....	10
IV. Institutional framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic .....	11
V. Policy measures for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic .....	12
VI. Various actions undertaken to implement the Convention .....	17
VII. Progress in implementing the recommendations made in response to the previous report .....	21
VIII. Challenges and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women .....	39
IX. Vision of the Central African Republic for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women .....	42
Conclusion .....	43

## Introduction

1. The Central African Republic has acceded to numerous international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2. Since ratifying the Convention on 12 July 1991, the Central African Republic has done its utmost to fully implement the Convention, as outlined in previous reports.

3. Recurrent political and military crises have adversely affected the country's economic and social development process. The most recent crisis, which erupted in December 2012, has plunged the country into an unprecedented spiral of extreme violence since 2013, marked by mass killings and the widespread destruction of movable and immovable property.

4. The occupation of two thirds of the national territory by armed groups has greatly undermined the Government's ability both to establish its authority throughout the country and to perform its sovereign duty to assist all vulnerable population groups in general and women and children in particular.

5. In addition, in spite of those constraints, the Government of the Central African Republic, with the support of its partners, has been able to carry out actions in areas to which it has access, to the extent possible, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to address adequately the de facto and de jure inequalities against women. The issue of the protection and promotion of the rights of women remains a major concern for the Government.

6. Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that "*States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:*

(a) *Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned;*

(b) *Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests;*

(c) *Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.*"

7. In that connection, the combined initial, second, third and fifth periodic report of the Central African Republic was considered by the Committee at its 1233rd and 1234th meetings on 11 July 2014.

8. With financial support from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), six national experts tasked with the preparation of this report conducted rounds of consultations at the national level, in accordance with the Committee's recommendation, contained in paragraph 55 of the concluding observations on the combined initial and second to fifth periodic reports of the Central African Republic (CEDAW/C/CAF/CO/1-5), requesting the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents.

9. This report was compiled and drafted in a participatory manner, involving actors interested in the promotion of human rights, development partners, government

agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious denominations and local authorities.

10. The results of this compilation and drafting process were considered at a validation workshop attended by technical and financial partners, members of the committee in charge of drafting reports on human rights in the Central African Republic, partners and representatives of other sectors (health, education and others).

11. This periodic report presents the progress made in advancing the interests of women by the Central African Republic in the implementation of the Convention. The report covers the period from 2014 to 2018 and contains responses to the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which considered the previous report on 11 July 2014. Difficulties and suggestions are also noted therein.

12. This report is organized around nine topics. Under each topic, the realities and particular situations that women face are addressed. Those topics are the general context of the Central African Republic, the development of the regulatory and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of women, the analysis of progress made in implementing the Convention for the period from 2014 to 2018, the Committee's recommendations on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and difficulties and prospects.

## **I. Overview of the Central African Republic**

13. The Central African Republic, formerly known as Ubangi-Shari, is a landlocked country located in the heart of Africa. It has several notable features.

### **A. Geography**

14. The Central African Republic is a continental territory bordered to the north by Chad, to the east by the Sudan and South Sudan, to the west by Cameroon, to the south-east by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the south-west by the Congo. It has an area of 623,000 square kilometres, of which 3.2 per cent is devoted to agriculture, 4.8 per cent to pasturage, 57.5 per cent consists of forest and 34.5 per cent is occupied by dwellings, etc.

15. The terrain of the Central African Republic is characterized by plains in the centre and south, plateaus in the west and two large massifs. Mount Ngaoui in the northwest, with a summit elevation of 1,420 m, is the highest peak of the mountain ranges.

16. The Central African landscape comprises a raised central section, the backbone of the Central African Republic, and two depressions: the Chad basin in the north and the Congo basin in the south. The two basins form the basis of the country's hydrological system.

17. Between them, the watercourses of these two basins supply the country in opposing directions. The Shari and its tributaries in the north and the Ubangi and its tributaries in the south have a very simple flow pattern: their waters rise during the rainy season. The Shari is navigable from Batangafo onwards and the Ubangi, the upper course of which has many rapids, is navigable from Bangui onwards.

### **B. Climate**

18. There are three types of climate:

- The Guinean forest or equatorial climate in the South
- The Sudano-Guinean or intertropical climate in the centre
- The Sudano-Sahelian or south-Sahelian climate in the north

Each climate type has sub-climates determined by the pattern of precipitation and the length of the rainy season. There are two main seasons in the Central African Republic: the rainy season, which runs from May to October, and the dry season, which lasts from November to April.

19. Average annual temperatures range from 23.4°C in the west (Bouar) to 26.5°C in the north-east (Birao). Most of the Central African Republic has more than 1,220 mm of rainfall per year. Only the sub-Sahelian region of Birao has less than one m of rainfall per year.

### C. Vegetation

20. With its high levels of rainfall, the Central African climate produces vegetation consisting of a wide variety of dense forests in the south and west of the country, wooded and grassy savannahs in the north, a patchwork of dry forests and savannahs, and steppe land in the far north-east of the country.

21. The varied vegetation, resulting in a varied climate, is home to a significant and very diverse range of fauna: mammals (gorillas, elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, giraffes, antelopes), reptiles (vipers, crocodiles and caimans) and all kinds of birds.

22. As for aquatic fauna, fish are found in abundance. With a view to managing and protecting fauna, the Central African Republic has two national parks, the two largest of which are Awakaba Park, in Bamingui-Bangoran in the northeast of the country, and Zangha-Sangha Park in the prefecture of Sangha Mbaéré in the south-west. The country's fauna, combined with its varied vegetation, hydrology and climate, makes the Central African Republic an outstanding tourist destination. However, this wealth also makes it a magnet for poachers, who are decimating its rare and protected species (elephants, rhinoceroses).

### D. Administrative divisions

23. The Central African Republic is divided into 7 regions, 16 prefectures, 76 sub-prefectures, 8 administrative control posts and 179 communes.

24. In addition to the Bangui/M'poko International Airport, the country has airfields in every prefecture. Two river ports, one in Bangui and the other at Salo in the prefecture of Sangha-Mbaéré, serve as hubs for river traffic. With a view to improving access to the outside world, particular attention is being paid to the development of telecommunications networks, which are gradually being installed in all provincial towns.

### E. Demographic composition

25. According to the most recent general census conducted in 2003, the Central African population is estimated at 3,895,139 inhabitants, distributed as follows:

- Women: 1,955,813 or 50.2 per cent
- Men: 1,939,326 or 49.79 per cent
- Youth under 18 years of age: 49.8 per cent

- Population in rural areas: 2,419,824 or 62.12 per cent
- Population in urban areas: 1,475,315 or 37.88 per cent. The population is made up of different ethnic groups, including:
  - The Gbaya in the west and north of the country, with the Ali, Gbaka-mandja, Mandja and Gbanou sub-groups in the centre of the country and the Boffi in the south-west
  - The Banda in the central east and north-east
  - The Nganzi: the Zandé, Yakoma and Nzakara in the east
  - The Sara: the Mboum, Kare, Kaba and Dagba in the north. In addition, there are pygmy minorities in Lobaye and Sangha-Mbaéré, the Ndri in the subprefecture of Boali, and the Fulani in stock-raising areas.

26. This mosaic of different populations communicates in Sango, the national language spoken and understood throughout the country. Although Sango is recognized as an official language, French is the sole language of instruction and the working language for administrative purposes.

## **F. Economic and social conditions**

### **1. Economic data**

- gross domestic product (GDP) (2015): \$1.584 billion
- GDP per capita (2015): \$335
- Growth: -36.7 per cent in 2013 / 1 per cent in 2014 / 4.8 per cent in 2015 / 4.5 per cent estimated for 2016 (International Monetary Fund Dec. 2016)
- Inflation: 6.6 per cent in 2013 / 11.6 per cent in 2014 / 4.5 per cent in 2015 / 5.1 per cent estimated for 2016 (International Monetary Fund Dec. 2016)
- Budget balance: \$24 million (estimated 2016, IMF)
- Trade balance: -\$335.9 million (estimated 2016, IMF)
- Major trading partners (2016): Belarus (\$32.8 million), Germany (\$14.9 million), France (\$13.9 million); Chad (\$12.9 million) (IMF)
- Top suppliers (2016): Egypt (\$119.5 million), France (\$74.5 million), China (\$27.2 million), Belgium (\$23 million), (IMF)
- GDP share of main industry sectors
- Agriculture (food crops, coffee, cotton, palm oil): 58 per cent of GDP in 2014
- Extractive industries (gold and diamonds) and process industries (beverages, sugar, cigarettes, sheet metal): 12 per cent of GDP
- Services (banks, shops, hotels, telecommunications): 29.8 per cent of GDP 2

27. Landlocked and dependent on the Ubangi-Congo river route and roads to Chad and Cameroon, the Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world. The crisis has significantly affected all economic sectors, especially in rural areas, where insecurity has brought all economic activities to a halt. These activities are resuming, albeit slowly, and GDP is a long way from returning to pre-crisis levels.

28. Food production is resuming, but the coffee, oil palm and cotton industries are struggling to recover.

29. Activity in the agribusiness, trade, and buildings and public works sectors is growing, thanks in particular to the presence of the international community. The partial lifting of the diamond embargo and the resumption of logging constitute genuine prospects.

30. Despite the decline in timber prices, log production increased by almost one third in 2015, owing to the restoration of security in the forest area.

31. Public finances are characterized by a structural cash deficit, meagre investment capacity, heavy dependence on external budget support owing to the collapse of customs and tax revenues from March 2013 onwards, and an inability to service debt.

32. The relative increase in budget revenues in 2015 has only just made it possible to pay salaries and cover arrears, while expenses are generally under control.

33. In 2016, IMF approved a new three-year programme based on a gradual recovery of the economy.

## **2. International assistance and financial needs**

34. Over the past three years, significant progress has been made, but the country's situation remains fragile. It is essential to mobilize partners in order to meet the country's multiple challenges, namely:

- Disarmament and demobilization of armed groups
- Security sector reform
- The restoration of State authority
- Economic recovery and national reconciliation

35. As a result of the ongoing violence, 20 per cent of the population of the Central African Republic are either refugees in neighbouring countries or are internally displaced. Just over \$2.28 billion in pledges for the years 2017 to 2021 were raised to fund the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which was developed with the support of the international community and presented at the donors' conference held in Brussels on 17 November 2017.

36. The World Bank pledged \$500 million in funding, the European Union pledged 416 million euros and the African Development Bank pledged \$400 million.

## **3. Political information**

37. Ubangi-Shari, the predecessor of the Central African Republic, was an integral part of the French colonial empire under the Fourth Republic. It became a French overseas territory with the promulgation of the Constitution of 27 October 1946. The overseas territory was given a territorial assembly pursuant to the framework law of 23 June 1956, known as the Defferre Act. The assembly had deliberative powers.

38. The reform introduced a parliamentary system modelled on the political functioning of the institutions of metropolitan France. For the first time, universal suffrage was introduced in the colonies, including Ubangi-Shari. On 17 May 1957, the first Government Council began its work and on 23 March 1957, the Territorial Assembly was elected. With the promulgation of the French Constitution of 1958 under General de Gaulle, the colonial territories were given the chance to embark on the process that would eventually lead them to independence.

39. On 1 December 1958, the Ubangi-Shari Territorial Assembly proclaimed the establishment of the Central African Republic. On 8 December 1958, the Government Council became a provisional government headed by Barthélémy Boganda. That

Government drafted the first Constitution of the Central African Republic, which was promulgated on 16 February 1959.

40. Since independence, the trajectory of political actors of all stripes in running the country has, with few exceptions, amounted to a series of coups and rebellions, conceived as the standard manner of alternation and participation in the exercise of political power.

41. Thus, after the accidental death of President Barthélémy Boganda, David Dacko, who had become President at independence, was deposed by a coup d'état on 1 January 1966 by Jean-Bedel Bokassa, Chief of Staff of the Army. On 20 September 1979, a French squad overthrew Jean-Bedel Bokassa and restored David Dacko to power. Dacko was overthrown again on 1 September 1981, this time by André Kolingba, who was also Chief of Staff of the Army.

42. After this turbulent period, following the election on 22 August 1993 of Ange-Félix Patassé, the succession of coups d'état was interrupted. Observers both inside and outside the Central African Republic found that the voting process had been democratic. For the first time in the country's history, a president came to power through the ballot box.

43. However, the democratic interlude would be short-lived. On 15 March 2003, President Patassé was overthrown by François Bozizé, former Chief of Staff of the Army, with the support of "liberators" from neighbouring countries, mostly mercenaries of Chadian origin.

44. After wielding absolute power for a decade, President François Bozizé-Yangouvonda was himself overthrown on 24 March 2013 by Michel Djotodia Amnondroko following the offensive of the Seleka coalition, backed by Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries. The latter was, in turn, forced to resign on 10 January 2014 by his counterparts in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).

45. The transitional period that would follow spanned the two-week presidency of Alexandre-Ferdinand N'guendet and the election of Catherine Samba-Panza. Normal Constitutional processes were restored with the election on 4 February 2016 of the new President of the Republic, Faustin Archange Touadéra, from the National Assembly. In addition, the following new national institutions were established: the Constitutional Court, the High Council for Communication, the National Commission for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom, the Higher Authority for Good Governance, the Economic and Social Council, the High Court of Justice, the National Mediation Council, the National Electoral Authority and the ministerial departments, including the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection.

46. The successive coups attest to the country's extreme sociopolitical instability, which has, in turn, been the catalyst of every crisis that the country has experienced since independence.

47. This situation has sown mistrust of national political actors among the population. Against the backdrop of frequent intrusions by the army and armed rebels into domestic politics, many Central Africans regard recourse to armed violence as the only way to gain power and thereby to improve their lot.

48. This perception, according to which the use of force has been established as a way to gain power, helps explain the extent to which the country's political system has broken down. Nevertheless, the Central African Republic has had several constitutions and constitutional acts that enshrine the unconditional protection of human rights without exception.



## II. Commitment of the Central African Republic to the defence of human rights

49. The Central African Republic has demonstrated its commitment to the defence of human rights by acceding to and ratifying several international legal instruments. Those instruments include the following:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948)
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948
- Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted on 14 December 1960 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (16 December 1966), ratified on 8 May 1981
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (16 December 1966), ratified on 8 May 1981
- 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (16 December 1966), ratified on 8 May 1981
- International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (21 December 1969), ratified on 16 March 1971
- Charter of the Organization of African Unity (1973)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (6 June 1981), ratified on 26 April 1986
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, July 2016
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989), ratified on 23 April 1991
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified on 3 July 2002
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (17 July 1998), ratified on 3 October 2001
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted on 18 December 1979 and in force since 3 September 1981), ratified on 21 June 1991
- 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified in 1994
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ratified in 1994
- Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto
- International Labour Organization Conventions Nos. 2 to 182; 10
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, ratified on 5 January 2007
- International Criminal Court additional protocol constituting an agreement on the privileges and immunities of its members

- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, ratified on 20 June 2006
- United Nations Convention against Corruption, ratified on 3 July 2006 (Act No. 06.011 of 3 July 2007)
- African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, ratified on 3 July 2006 (Act No. 06.010 of 3 July 2007)
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, ratified on 3 July 2006
- Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, ratified in 2007
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, ratified on 20 December 2010
- African Youth Charter, ratified in 2011
- Convention on the Court of Justice of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community Court, ratified in 2010
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
- Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3), ratified on 9 June 1964
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), ratified and formally registered in 1964
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), ratified on 9 June 1964
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 18 June 1981
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), ratified on 30 August 2010
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2012)
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa
- Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 1989
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 18 December 1979
- Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, ratified on 6 June 2007
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, ratified on 20 December 2010

### **III. National legal framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic**

50. The legal framework for the protection of women has evolved since the last periodic report on the implementation of the Convention was submitted in 2014. Those developments include:

- Article 7 of the Constitution of 30 March 2016 provides that “the family constitutes the natural and moral basis of the human community”. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman in the bonds stipulated by law. The family and marriage are protected by the State. The State and the other public authorities have the shared duty to safeguard the physical and moral health of the family and to promote it socially through the appropriate institutions. The State and other public authorities have an obligation to protect women and children against violence and insecurity, exploitation and moral, intellectual and physical abandonment. This protection is guaranteed by appropriate measures and institutions of the State and other public authorities.
- Act No. 004 of 24 November 2016 introducing gender parity in public, semi-public and private-sector employment in both the informal and formal sectors
- Decree No. 15.007 of 8 January 2015 establishing the Joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence against women and girls
- Decree No. 16.382 of 11 November 2016 on the organization and functioning of the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation

#### **IV. Institutional framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic**

51. As part of the effort to uphold the right of women to protection, the following institutions have been established:

##### **State institutions**

- Through the General Directorate for Gender Advancement and its technical directorates, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection has the mandate to define, develop and implement policies, programmes and projects to assist women, children and other vulnerable groups.
- The Ministry of Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation is responsible for formulating and implementing policies, programmes and projects related to humanitarian support for displaced persons and refugees, including women and children.
- The mandate of the Ministry of Communication, which has a cross-cutting role, is to formulate the national communication policy and strategies and to carry out programmes to raise awareness of the fight against inequalities and violence against women.
- Such ministerial departments as public health, trade, rural development, justice, education and many others implement programmes and projects for the advancement of women within their respective mandates and contribute to combating gender inequality.

##### **Non-State institutions**

52. The implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is not strictly the province of State institutions. Non-State institutions also contribute to implementing the Convention. The non-State institutional framework is composed of the following institutions and bodies:

- The Association de Femmes Juristes Centrafricaines (Association of Central African Women Lawyers), which works to protect women’s rights

- The Réseaux des Organisations non Gouvernementales des défenseurs des droits de l'homme (Network of Non-Governmental Human Rights Organizations)
- The Conseil Inter ONG Centrafricain (Central African Inter-NGO Council), with a focus on economic issues and a section on income-generating activities
- Community-based organizations
- Religious denominations
- The Organisation des Femmes Centrafricaines (Central African Women's Organization), a national platform for the advancement of women
- The Comité International des Femmes Africaines pour le Développement (International Committee of African Women for Development)
- The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children
- The Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians of Chad, the Network for Women's Leadership in Central Africa, Women Parliamentarians, Women's Coalition, the Network of Journalists for Human Rights, G23, etc.

## V. Policy measures for the protection and promotion of the rights of women in the Central African Republic

53. The issue of inequality, highlighted in the reports on gender in the Central African Republic, has led to the adoption of general and specific policy measures that may contribute to the implementation of the Convention and improve the situation of women in the Central African Republic. A distinction can be made between general policy measures and sector-specific measures.

### General policy measures

54. The aims of the National Policy of the Central African Republic for the Promotion of Equality and Equity are to reduce inequalities of opportunity between men and women and to encourage women's participation in economic and social development, while ensuring their protection from all forms of violence. The policy informs the following measures:

- Coordination of the fight against impunity, through measures to ensure that the perpetrators of violence against women during conflicts are brought to justice
- The provisions of articles 567, 568 and 569 and subsequent articles of the family code are being revised, with the aim of eliminating discrimination between men and women in the marriage contract and restoring equity between spouses
- Decree No. 15.007 of 8 January 2015 establishing the joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence against women and girls
- Order No. 013/PM/2018 of 7 June 2018 modifying and supplementing the provisions of interministerial order No. 007 of 21 April, establishing the National Committee to Combat Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Gender-Based Violence including Child Marriage
- 2014–2016 Plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#)
- Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals

- Commemoration of International Women’s Day and the International Day of Rural Women, with a view to encouraging women’s economic participation, which can promote their empowerment and rights

### **Sector-specific policy measures**

55. These policy measures are reflected in the following documents:

- The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan is currently the guiding framework for the Central African Republic. The fight against gender-based violence is aligned with pillar 1 (*Supporting peace and security*). This framework makes the promotion of gender equality a cross-cutting objective, which is articulated as follows: “*Promote gender equality*”. It recognizes the feminization of poverty, discrimination against women in the economic and political spheres, and gender-based violence, which mostly affects women. As affirmed in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a cornerstone of peace and sustainable development that offers women the opportunity to work actively to prevent conflict and foster social cohesion at the community and national levels
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (2011–2015)
- United Nations Development Framework, in partnership with the Government of the Central African Republic (United Nations Development Assistance Framework + 2012–2016)
- 2014–2016 Emergency Programme for Sustainable Recovery
- 2015 Bangui Forum
- Preliminary draft of the national social protection policy

56. As part of their initiatives, sectoral departments take into account a number of measures that aim to uphold the interests of women and to provide women with services.

### **Sector-specific policy measures in the area of health**

57. Health policy will be implemented through the adoption and implementation of the National Health Development Plan for 2006–2015. The plan was developed on the basis of the recommendations made in the evaluation of the first National Health Development Plan, which was carried out over the period 1994–1998:

- An operational plan to accelerate the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality has been adopted for the period 2004–2015.
- The National Programme to Prevent Parent-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS was put in place.
- The Document on the National Policy on Reproductive Health and a plan of action for its implementation were adopted.
- The 2015–2017 Transition Plan for the Health Sector, an interim policy document pending the formulation of the third national health development plan, was adopted and implemented. It is intended to be programmatic, strategic and operational.
- The 2014–2016 Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System is a document that reflects the mapping and availability of health care and health services and resources.

- A protocol for the prevention of rape and sexual violence, including female genital mutilation, and for the provision of integrated care to victims, was adopted. The protocol stipulates that survivors of gender-based violence are to receive health care free of charge.
- The 2017–2021 Strategic Plan on the Development of Human Resources for Health was formulated and implemented.
- The 2017–2027 Plan on the construction, rehabilitation and equipping of health-care facilities was formulated and implemented.
- The Strategic Document on the Health Management Information System was formulated.
- The Voluntary HIV/AIDS Workplace Testing Programme
- The National Policy on Food Security and Nutrition
- The National Policy on Reproductive Health
- The comprehensive multi-year Plan on the Immunization Programme in the Central African Republic for 2015–2017 (revised in August 2017)
- The 2016–2020 National Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS

58. UNFPA, through its support to the Ministry of Health, has expanded the provision of free, quality, emergency obstetric care in all areas of the country, whether affected by the crisis or not. A total of 37,272 simple deliveries were performed in health facilities, including 10,546 deliveries by adolescent mothers aged 10–24 years and 2,585 Caesarean sections during the same period (data, cf. UNFPA).

#### **Sector-specific policy measures in the area of education**

59. Between 2003 to 2013, the Central African Republic carried out various actions in the area of education and adopted an Education For All action plan developed in accordance with the recommendations of the Forum on Education and Training held in 1994.

60. The programme has seven overarching objectives:

- To develop and improve all aspects of early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable children
- To ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, including the poor, working children and children with special needs, complete a quality primary education
- To meet the educational needs of all young people by ensuring equitable access to appropriate programmes whose aim is to confer knowledge and life skills
- To provide equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults and reduce gender disparities by at least 90 per cent over the decade
- To eliminate disparities between girls and boys at the primary and secondary levels by 2015, seeking full equality within programmes, institutions and the educational system
- To improve the overall quality of education in order to achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy, writing, numeracy and life skills
- To ensure that education on citizenship, peace and the fight against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases is made available in both French and Sango, the national language

61. To develop a national education sector strategy for the period 2008–2020, structured in three phases:

- Emergency phase (2008–2011)
- Implementation phase (2012–2015)
- Consolidation or recovery phase (2016–2020)

62. The aims of the strategy are:

- To promote the establishment of preschools
- To improve enrolment rates through universal primary enrolment and expanded access to secondary education
  - To improve the internal and external efficiency of the education system by increasing the rate of completion of schooling and the promotion of technical and vocational education and training
- To professionalize higher education
- To ensure more efficient management of the education sector
- To adopt the 2014–2017 Transition Plan of the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Education

63. Following the country's return to constitutional legality, the new authorities have been working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Central African Republic fully endorses the following targets set forth in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

### **Sector-specific policies in the areas of labour, employment and vocational training**

64. We reiterate that the Central African Republic has undertaken international commitments in the areas of labour, employment and social protection. These include the following International Labour Organization conventions:

- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

65. These measures, having been incorporated into domestic law, are reflected in the following documents:

- i. Act No. 99.016 of 16 July 1999: the General Civil Service Regulation
- ii. Act No. 09.004 of 29 January 2009: the Labour Code of the Central African Republic, whose implementing decree is in the process of being adopted
  - Collective labour agreements
  - Accords collectifs d'établissement (collective agreements in specific businesses or establishments)
- iii. Act No. 06.035 of 28 December 2006: the Social Security Code
- iv. The National Document on Employment Policy, adopted on 4 November 2016. This policy covers four identified employment sectors, namely:
  - Mining
  - Forestry
  - Infrastructure
  - Agriculture

66. All these domestic legal instruments provide protections specific to women employees.

### **Sector-specific policy measures in the area of law reform**

67. In implementation of the programme to strengthen the rule of law, the Central African Republic has revised its penal code and code of penal procedure. New offences relating to gender-based violence (sexual harassment, abduction of minors in schools) have been added, and harsher penalties have been imposed for certain offences in order to deter perpetrators of gender-based violence.



68. Decree No. 15.007 of 8 January 2015 established the joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence against women and girls, whose mandate is to prevent and punish all forms of sexual violence committed against women and children regardless of the social context and the social or marital status of the person, including widows and orphans.

#### **Sector-specific policy measure in the area of trade and small enterprises**

69. The absence of measures that foster gender-based inequalities sets the trade sector apart. All traders, men and women, are treated equally, in accordance with the Commercial Code.

70. The Central African Republic has recently adopted a new commercial code. The implementing decree of the code, which was adopted on 14 December 2016, is currently being drafted.

71. The investment charter grants facilities to Central African investors of both sexes. The Ministry of Commerce has a dedicated focal point on gender.

72. The draft code on small and medium-sized enterprises that has just been adopted does not make distinctions between men and women.

#### **Social security**

73. The central objective of the National Social Protection Policy of the Central African Republic, adopted by the tripartite constituents in Bangui on 30 March 2012, is to provide effective social protection coverage that is more extensive and available to all Central Africans.

74. It has three priorities, namely, to:

- Strengthen, coordinate and extend existing social protection mechanisms
- Promote access to basic social services for all, especially poor and vulnerable groups
- Promote mechanisms to guarantee job security and a minimum income for the population

#### **Protection of the family**

75. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection is working on the policy document on the family in the Central African Republic, which will serve as the framework for all actions to protect the family.

## **VI. Various actions undertaken to implement the Convention**

76. Several actions have been taken to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

#### **Civil rights**

##### ***The right to non-discrimination (articles 1 to 6 of the Convention)***

77. Since the previous report was submitted, admirable strides have been made in the fight against discrimination in domestic law, informed by article 6 of the Convention, according to which: "All human beings are equal before the law without distinction as to race, ethnic origin, religion, sex, political affiliation or social status".

78. In an effort to combat discrimination, Act No. 16.004 establishing parity between men and women was adopted and enacted on 26 November 2016. Article 10 of the Act establishes a national observatory for parity. Under the Act, the 35-per-cent quota for women in functions filled by election or appointment covers a period of 10 years from the date of passage of the Act.

79. In addition, a women's lobbying group is fully involved in the process of revising the electoral code, some of whose provisions favour greater representation of women in the next elections.

#### ***Training courses on the Convention and gender***

80. With the support of several technical and financial partners, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection and civil society organizations have conducted numerous training sessions to promote a better understanding of the Convention. In addition, training modules on the rights of women and gender-based violence have been included in the curricula for judges and clerks at the National School of Administration and the Judiciary.

81. These capacity-building sessions increasingly involved judges, lawyers, judicial police officers, defence and security forces, customary authorities, religious leaders and political leaders at the grassroots level in 2014 and 2018.

82. The State has also taken steps to educate the general population about the Convention and its Protocol. The education campaign was carried out by civil society organizations and by the decentralized structures of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection during observances related to the rights of women and other relevant communications activities.

83. Moreover, focal points on gender have been set up in all ministries to monitor and collect data on the situation of women in all departments.

#### **Economic, social and cultural rights**

84. Gender differences affect the exercise by men and women of their equal rights.

85. Like civil and political rights, which are indivisible, economic, social and cultural rights must guarantee the equality of women and men in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What is the state of the economic, social and cultural rights of women in the Central African Republic?

86. The general population of the Central African Republic is estimated at 4,200,000, 62.8 per cent of whom live in rural areas.

87. Women account for 50.2 per cent of the population, and young people under 18 make up more than 50 per cent of the overall population. More than half of the Central African population lives in poverty, including 52 per cent of women, despite their considerable potential. The poverty of women as a demographic group is owed to a dearth of sector-specific policies and programmes that address the needs of women in such areas as health care, education, housing, agriculture, labour trade and land rights. Such deficiencies notwithstanding, progress has been made in such areas as:

- Empowerment of women:
  - In 2015, 1,220 vulnerable women received support through the Caisse de résilience approach.
- Women with disabilities:

88. In the Central African Republic, persons with disabilities fall under the purview of the National Organization of Associations of Persons with Disabilities. Under the

supervision of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, the organization's objectives are to promote the interests of the members of affiliated associations by developing various measures informed by citizen-led initiatives, and especially to support the Government in the implementation of national and international policies aimed at improving the living conditions of persons with disabilities.

89. While the level of care provided to persons with disabilities is low, limited actions continue to be taken, to the extent possible, to ensure their full empowerment, in accordance with the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010–2019):

- Participation in political and public life:
  - Successive Governments have spared no effort to gradually re-establish the equality of women and men before the law in the various sectors of political life and public affairs.
  - Two seats for persons with disabilities, one of them for a woman representative, were allocated in the 2013–2015 National Transitional Council.
  - As new institutions are established, two seats in the national Economic and Social Council have been allocated for persons with disabilities, including one for a woman.
- Institutional structure:
  - An observatory has been established as part of the strategic framework for poverty reduction, making it possible to collect the necessary data on persons with disabilities, a prerequisite for the formulation of a policy and strategies suited to monitoring and evaluating the relevant actions.
  - The National Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed on 20 December of each year.
  - The National Organization of Associations of Persons with Disabilities defends the interests of its members.
- Social services
  - Medical and functional rehabilitation centres have been established in the country's main hospitals, including in Bangui (medical rehabilitation services)
  - Establishment of associations (National Association of Rehabilitation and Equipment of Central Africa) in the dioceses (Centre of Rehabilitation for Persons with Motor Disabilities)
- Education
  - A public centre for education and vocational training was established for students with sensory disabilities (signing deaf and blind persons). The centre provides both general education and vocational training
- Vocational training and employment:
  - Vocational training in small trades (basket weaving, soap-making, sewing and painting) for persons with sensory impairments
  - Persons with disabilities who have received an education or completed a vocational training programme are entitled to the same conditions of recruitment and remuneration for public and private jobs as able-bodied persons when the position is compatible with the physical, mental or sensory capacities of the qualified person with a disability.

- A quota of 10 per cent of positions in the civil service workforce has been established for qualified persons with disabilities of both genders.
- From 2003 to 2015, 172 persons with disabilities, 12 of them women, were hired to fill positions in the public and private sectors.
- Health care:
  - Article 13 of the implementing decree of Act No. 00.007 of 20 December 2000 relating to special aid and benefits to be granted to persons with disabilities stipulates in its paragraph 2 that medical assistance granted to persons with disabilities who are recognized as indigent and who hold a disability card shall cover, in part or entirely, the cost of medical consultations, examinations and care, hospitalization, functional rehabilitation and medical evacuations, in line with the regulations in force. However, to date, the interministerial decree establishing the rates of exemption has not yet been issued, and persons with disabilities are subject to the same cost recovery system as able-bodied citizens.
- Sport:
  - There is a Paralympic committee in charge of developing and promoting sporting activities for persons with disabilities.

### **Indigenous women**

90. The Central African Republic is the first African country to have ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) of ILO in August 2010, demonstrating its political will to help indigenous populations defend their rights.

91. A December 2016 report by the NGO Maison de la Femme et de l'Enfant Pygmées (Home of the Pygmy Women and Child) traced the main technical aspects of the execution of the project to promote the cultural rights of indigenous peoples in the heart of the Congo Basin in Bayanga. As part of the project, a functional human rights centre was established, facilitating legal assistance and conflict resolution by local people, particularly for indigenous minority groups. Several cases of human rights violations have been investigated.

### **Advancement of women**

92. Awareness-raising campaigns on various topics are conducted in localities, focusing on legal problems that affect women, as well as on health, education and reproduction. Campaigns on the observance of international days of indigenous women are also conducted to educate women about the situation of human rights and the rights of women in the sub-prefecture of Bayanga and Dzanga-Sangha. In addition, campaigns are run to encourage women to participate in agricultural and income-generating activities and to operate small businesses and trade in food products themselves. Lastly, campaigns are conducted with the aim of raising women's own awareness of their rights.

93. In a noteworthy example that is illustrative of the actions taken to promote the advancement of women, an indigenous woman holds a seat on the economic and social council.

## VII. Progress in implementing the recommendations made in response to the previous report

94. At its meeting on 11 July 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women made a number of recommendations, to which the Central African Republic is required to respond when it submits its next periodic report.

95. Contained in the responses below are the outcomes of the actions completed or carried out in part, in implementation of the Convention.

### **Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 8 regarding the role of Parliament in implementing the Committee's recommendations**

96. The legislative branch of the Central African Republic is a two-chamber Parliament that consists of the National Assembly, which is already meeting, and the Senate, which is not yet operational.

97. The National Assembly is working to pass sector-specific laws in order to protect and promote the rights of women. For instance, Act No. 004 of 24 November 2016 establishes parity between men and women in all forms of employment.

98. A forum of women parliamentarians was established to support efforts to promote equality and equity through the regulatory framework. The forum receives various forms of assistance from United Nations agencies.

### **Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 12 on seeking an increase in support for the Central African Republic in order to meet the needs of the population in general, and those of women in particular**

#### **(a) *To fulfil the urgent humanitarian needs of the population, both in the Central African Republic and in neighbouring countries***

99. In order to mobilize financial resources, the Government participated in a donor round table in Brussels on 17 November 2016. The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan presented at the meeting enabled the Central African Republic to obtain \$2.28 billion in assistance pledged by donor countries.

100. The World Bank has pledged \$500 million in funding; the European Union has pledged 416 million euros, and the African Development Bank has pledged \$400 million.

101. The assistance pledged should enable the country to meet the needs of the population in general, and those of women in particular, in addition to those of neighbouring countries.

102. Initial disbursements have enabled the humanitarian community to provide assistance to people affected by the conflicts.

103. The partnership with Japan has made it possible to finance various programmes, including: (i) the 2015–2016 programme in support of the transition authorities, to which Japan contributed \$3 million. (ii) the 2016–2017 programme to support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

104. Emergency assistance was provided to the population in the form of agriculture kits and food and non-food items (tarpaulins, kitchen equipment). Rape evidence kits and reproductive health kits for crisis situations were provided by the United Nations Population Fund as part of its response to gender-based violence, totalling \$18,850,481 in assistance.

105. Part of that assistance was used to support post-conflict recovery efforts and to facilitate the social reintegration of affected populations. In that context, funds have been granted to community organizations (associations and groups) that are running income-generating microprojects.

106. In Bangui as well as in the provincial towns, many eligible women's groups were able to obtain this support.

**(b) *To support initiatives to achieve peace and security throughout the State party***

107. As part of the effort to establish peace, the Government, with the support of its partners, is developing a strategy to reduce community violence by having young people, who are the main perpetrators of acts of violence, participate in labour-intensive work projects.

108. Under the programme, many women and men from different communities are recruited to carry out these activities, which consist mostly of road and pipeline maintenance, building construction and rehabilitation, and so forth.

**(c) *To rebuild State institutions, including the national security forces and the judiciary***

109. The State has begun to provide decentralized local government services; to direct the internal security forces deployed on the ground to protect the population; and to make available judicial services in order to provide the entire population, especially women and girls, with protection, safety and access to justice in certain prefectures.

110. With the support of the international community, in particular, the European Union, France and certain friendly countries, a programme to retrain the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic has been established.

**(d) *To restore the capacity of the State party to generate domestic financial resources and to ensure the payment of salaries and financing of essential services for the population and, at the same time, to make an immediate request for financial support from States Members of the United Nations, international organizations and bilateral donors for such payment and financing***

111. With the technical support of international financial institutions (the International Monetary Fund), the Government is undertaking economic reforms with a view to increasing tax revenue so that it can take charge of its own spending and cover its sovereignty spending.

112. The Government has entered into agreements with those same partners, which have assumed responsibility for paying the salaries of civil servants and implementing certain projects. The World Bank and the African Development Bank have also committed to financing certain infrastructural projects, such as the rehabilitation of the Bangui-Bambari, Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé, Bouar-Baoro and Damara-Bogangolo-Bouca roads, as well as the construction of school and health facilities.

**(e) *To ensure that everyone, in particular women and girls, has access to essential food and basic services, such as education and health services***

113. Women and girls are not prevented from reaping the benefits of the projects that are being implemented by the Central African Republic to increase the overall rate of school enrolment, and, through the academic programme developed by the Ministry of Education, the enrolment rate of girls in particular. Capacity-building workshop series are organized. Women also receive health-care services provided by various

medical facilities, such as the care provided free of charge to women suffering from obstetric fistula and women victims of sexual violence.

114. Scholarships are awarded to young women attending the University of Bangui on the basis of merit and as an incentive. These measures are intended to encourage girls to complete their education.

115. Work is under way to rehabilitate some of the facilities that can accommodate girls from the hinterland, with the support of MINUSCA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

**Responses to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 14, 28 and 30 regarding the protection of women and girls from all forms of discrimination and violence, including trafficking in women and prostitution, and peacebuilding**

**14 (a) *To comply with its obligations under the Convention and international humanitarian, refugee and criminal law so as to ensure protection for women and girls from all forms of discrimination, including violence***

116. The Central African Republic has adopted all the legislative provisions necessary to strengthen certain penalties for cases of violence against women in the revised Penal Code of 2010 (arts. 67, 71 and 151).

117. The Parity Act adopted on 24 November 2016 shines a light on discrimination against women and protects them from violence.

118. The following data show that the situation has only worsened.

119. In the period from 2013 to 2017, there were more than 6,758 cases of violence in 2014, 7,000 in 2015, 11,110 in 2016 and more than 8,500 in 2017, and women and girls were the victims in more than 97 per cent of cases.

120. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, only 22 per cent of rape survivors in the Central African Republic seek medical, legal or psychosocial assistance.

121. In the Central African Republic, 68 per cent of girls and boys are either married or in a domestic partnership before the age of 18.

122. Female genital mutilation affects 24 per cent of women and girls aged between 15 and 49.

123. According to a survey on gender-based violence in the Central African Republic (Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Gender Promotion, Bangui, 2014), domestic violence against women is accepted by 80 per cent of women and 84 per cent of men.

124. To combat sexual and gender-based violence, the Central African Republic has focused its efforts, on the one hand, on raising awareness with the involvement of civil society actors and, on the other hand, on strengthening the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls with a view to achieving optimal functioning. In addition, the Central African Republic launched, in 2017, a package of essential care services for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence and adopted, in 2018, a national action plan for its implementation.

125. Within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations agencies intend to support the Government in its continued efforts to combat gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage.

126. With regard to protecting children from prostitution, the Government, through the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, is developing a strategy to combat this phenomenon.

127. The Government has also launched a programme to build the resilience of young people and adolescents to violence.

**14 (b) *To give priority to and implement without delay the Committee's recommendations contained in the present concluding observations relating to violence against women and impunity, internally displaced women, women and peace and security, education and health, giving due consideration to general recommendation No. 30***

128. To combat sexual and gender-based violence, the Central African Republic has focused its efforts, on the one hand, on raising awareness with the involvement of civil society actors and, on the other hand, on strengthening institutional frameworks through the creation of a joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls and the establishment of a special criminal court with a view to achieving optimal functioning.

129. A training course on supporting and taking care of victims of sexual and gender-based violence has been provided to leaders of civil society human rights organizations.

130. The objective was to strengthen the capacity of community leaders to support victims at care facilities and ensure their effective access to the services made available to them.

131. Important topics were presented and discussed during the training course, such as:

- Combating impunity for serious crimes and human rights violations;
- Addressing crimes and other forms of violence based on gender and sex;
- Ensuring collaboration and coordination between actors in combating impunity and protecting victims.

132. The actors have remained engaged to organize better assistance for victims of gender-based violence.

133. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through a project in partnership with the MINUSCA police component, has expanded and strengthened campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence, targeting the population and security forces in Bangui, in addition to providing training to women victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

134. Women victims of gender-based violence have also benefited from several training courses that have led to the establishment of an economic, social and legal interest group.

135. Teams continue to monitor and evaluate sexual and gender-based violence in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and associations on the ground.

136. The financial support provided by UNDP to certain national non-governmental organizations has made it possible to carry out activities to monitor sexual and gender-based violence. Investigators have been trained and deployed in the city of Bangui and its surroundings to investigate and monitor cases of sexual and gender-based violence.



**14 (c) *To ensure the implementation during the peacebuilding process of all other recommendations contained in the present concluding observations***

137. As part of efforts to achieve peace, the Government has encouraged women to form groups and associations.

138. These women's groups and associations, with the support of partners, are actively involved in negotiation and peacebuilding activities.

**28 *The Committee recommends that the State party take the following action as soon as the security and judicial authorities are restored***

139. To guarantee the security of civilians after the crisis, the Government, with the support of the international community, retrained the internal security forces (gendarmes and police officers). These forces were provided with logistical equipment (vehicles and communication and law enforcement equipment). They were then deployed to the major cities of the country. Together with the United Nations forces on the ground, they organize deterrent and protection patrols.

**28 (a) *Prosecute all acts of violence against women, whether upon complaint by the victim or ex officio, and adequately punish perpetrators***

140. The joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls is responsible for suppressing any act of violence against women. This service receives complaints from the victims themselves or third parties and reports of incidents of violence against women.

141. Investigations are immediately initiated, with the possibility of opening a judicial inquiry. The alleged culprits are referred to the competent courts. Sentences are duly imposed on these culprits.

142. Although statistics are not available, the courts duly impose, in accordance with articles 87, 88, and 117 of the Penal Code of the Central African Republic, prison sentences and fines on perpetrators of rape and sexual assault against women.

**28 (b) *Provide reparations, assistance and rehabilitation to victims of violence, including measures to provide them with free legal aid, medical treatment and psychological support, shelter, counselling and rehabilitation services***

143. According to the most recent annual data from the Gender-based Violence Information Management System (from 31 December 2017), there were 8,321 cases of gender-based violence in the Central African Republic following the crisis. Rape accounted for 13 per cent of cases and sexual assault for 3 per cent. Survivors of gender-based violence were as follows: 855 men and boys (10 per cent) and 7,466 women and girls (90 per cent). Of those, 7,125, or 86 per cent, were adults (women and men) and 1,126, or 14 per cent, were minors (girls and boys).

144. The main entry points for victims are psychosocial and legal counselling centres, which can be fixed or mobile. The latter can be found in legal clinics, hospitals, mobile clinics or camps for displaced persons.

145. The main services offered at these counselling centres are psychosocial counselling, social assistance and legal and judicial advice and support.

146. As part of the national strategy for combating gender-based violence, the Ministry of Public Health, with the support of humanitarian partners, offers free medical and psychological care to victims of rape and sexual assault.

147. Statistical data on gender-based violence collected by the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls since its creation to date

(2018) show that the cases of gender-based violence recorded consist primarily of: family abandonment, assault and battery, physical assault and abuse, rape followed by pregnancy, incest with several abusers, sexual assault and forced marriage (506 cases, including 35 cases of sexual violence related to conflicts); and violation of children's rights (388 cases, including assault and battery, physical assault and abuse).

**28 (c) *Resume, as soon as the political situation allows, awareness-raising and educational activities, targeting both women and men, in cooperation with civil society organizations, with a view to eliminating violence against women***

148. Strengthened awareness-raising campaigns on gender-based violence for local authorities and community and religious leaders are organized as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign. Campaigns on addressing gender-based violence, combating impunity and ensuring respect for human rights have also been organized jointly with the Ministry of Justice.

149. Local authorities, community and religious leaders and civil society organization leaders took part in an awareness-raising workshop on gender-based violence.

150. Participants were given posters with messages and T-shirts to increase the visibility of the activities.

151. Paralleling the provision of free medical treatment, measures to prevent sexual violence are organized through the training of actors involved in combating gender-based violence and mass awareness-raising campaigns on public and private radio. In collaboration with the Government, the gender-based violence subcluster coordinated by UNFPA, which brings together different international and national agencies and non-governmental organizations to coordinate efforts to prevent and ensure a multisectoral response to gender-based violence in areas affected by the crisis, has contributed to improved access for survivors of gender-based violence to care services through:

- The training of 44 health-care providers between 2017 and 2018 under the lead of the Ministry of Public Health.
- The development of national guidelines on holistic care for survivors of gender-based violence.
- Updated and strengthened referral channels.
- The 4040 free hotline operated by the Danish Refugee Council, which has enabled the referral of many survivors for care.

**30 (a) *Carry out a study on the prevalence of trafficking in women and girls and prostitution in the State party to inform the development of a strategy to combat trafficking and forced prostitution and to address the root causes, including poverty, in order to eliminate the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual exploitation and trafficking, and ensure the rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims***

152. Although slavery has been abolished, it manifests itself in various forms, such as trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the sale of children, pimping and prostitution. The Central African Republic is not immune to this phenomenon.

153. Steps will be taken to document the phenomenon in the Central African Republic.

**30 (b) *Seek the cooperation of States in the region to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls and their exploitation in prostitution***

154. With the support of these partners, the Government organized, in September 2016, a workshop to raise awareness among judicial police and law officers of the importance of ensuring community security through local security committees and of their roles and responsibilities with respect to trafficking in persons.

155. Progress is being made in establishing the local security committees, with greater understanding, acceptance and ownership of the strategy among stakeholders.

156. Relevant training and awareness-raising sessions have been organized by the Joint Youth Project in collaboration with other partners, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Civil Affairs Section of MINUSCA and the United Nations police.

**30 (c) *Consider ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols supplementing the Convention, in particular the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children***

157. Recognizing the danger of trafficking in persons and slavery, the Central African Republic ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on 3 July 2006.

158. The Constitution of 30 March 2016 guarantees the right to equality between men and women in all areas, as follows: “In the Central African Republic, there is no restriction or privilege connected with a person’s place of birth, identity or descent.” Article 151 of the Penal Code of 2010 provides for 5 to 10 years’ imprisonment for the intentional or attempted commission of acts of trafficking in persons and a period of hard labour for the commission of acts involving the exploitation of minors under 18 years of age.

**16 (a) *Take measures to prevent gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, by all actors in the conflict and ensure the protection of civilians, especially women***

159. To prevent gender-based violence, the Government developed standard operating procedures and adopted national strategies to combat child marriage and gender-based violence in 2017.

160. Among the robust measures taken to prevent gender-based violence and provide care for victims thereof during the conflict period was the communication of the free hotline number (4040) to all mobile phone users, with a call for all those with knowledge of any situation of violence against a woman to report, as soon as possible, to the medical and judicial services and human rights non-governmental organizations cases of assault or rape or any other act endangering the life of the woman.

**16 (b) *Develop a national strategy to combat impunity in order to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence during the conflict are brought to justice; investigate, prosecute and punish all cases of violence against women, especially by high-profile leaders who had command responsibility; restore and strengthen the justice system, rebuild the court and prison infrastructure and ensure the security of courts and places of detention, in addition to that of persons working in those institutions; provide sufficient means to the special investigation units; and cooperate with the international commission of inquiry***

161. The establishment of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls is the leading strategy used by the Central African Republic

to combat impunity. These preventive measures are coupled with awareness-raising to promote behavioural change.

**16 (c) *Following the preliminary assessment of the situation by the investigation team of the International Criminal Court, continue to urge the Court to open an investigation into crimes committed by all parties against women and girls, in the light of the inability of the national courts to carry out the necessary proceedings***

162. Through Act No. 15.003 of 3 March 2015, the Central African Republic established a special criminal court with an ambitious mandate to prosecute and convict the main perpetrators (troop leaders) of crimes and violence against girls and/or women. The advantage of this court is that it not only prosecutes and convicts the perpetrators of these crimes, but also deters potential aggressors.

163. All the steps necessary to make this court operational in the near future have already been taken. Investigations into all the offences under its jurisdiction will soon be opened; Act No. 18.010 of 2 July 2018 on rules governing proceedings and evidence at the special criminal court, which defines the strategies for the conduct of trials and the mechanisms for the protection of witnesses, has just been approved; and the assigned judicial police officers are ready to carry out their missions, prisons are ready to accommodate the accused, and the convicted are undergoing rehabilitation.

**16 (d) *Make every effort to protect women and girls who are victims of sexual and other violence who seek access to justice from reprisals and prevent their exclusion from their families and communities by raising awareness among the population***

164. In response to the increase in gender-based violence, the Government has developed a national communications strategy to combat gender-based violence. Under this strategy, mass awareness-raising campaigns involving radio messages or skits targeting communities are organized regularly with a view to preventing social exclusion of victims of gender-based violence.

**16 (e) *Establish a screening and vetting system under international guidance to exclude perpetrators of violations of human rights, including women's rights, from the national security and defence forces***

165. The Government has implemented a plan to reform the defence and security sector that allows for screening and excluding defence and security forces identified as perpetrators of abuses against women during conflicts.

166. A free care programme for women victims of violence is being implemented by the Ministry of Public Health and international non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Médecins sans frontières in certain local health-care centres (Castors maternity hospital, Begoa health-care centre and certain health-care facilities in provincial towns).

**16 (f) *Continue efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and strive to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons among armed groups and the wider population***

167. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of former combatants is one of the Government's priorities. To this end, a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme for former combatants was launched after the establishment of the new authorities. This programme has reached 7,000 former combatants (both men and women). A workshop on the strategy for combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has just been organized with the help of MINUSCA.

**16 (g) *Ensure access for victims of sexual violence to medical treatment and psychosocial support and provide them with adequate compensation***

168. Care for victims of gender-based violence is organized through legal clinics established by the Association des femmes juristes de Centrafrique, the American Bar Association and Avocats sans frontières.

169. These clinics provide psychosocial support to victims of gender-based violence and organize referrals to specialized medical care centres if necessary. In Bangui, the Ministry of Public Health, in partnership with certain international non-governmental organizations, has opened two referral and medical care centres for victims of gender-based violence.

**Recommendation contained in paragraph 18 regarding internally displaced and refugee women**

**(a) *To consider as a priority and take all measures to ensure the security of civilians, in particular women and girls, in their places of residence and to proceed to evacuation only as a measure of last resort, in full consultation with the people concerned and in accordance with international standards***

170. Statistical data provided by the project to support the return and reintegration of displaced persons estimate the number of internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic at 669,997, of whom 262,366 are at 77 sites across the country and 407,631 are with host families.

171. The Central African Republic, with the support of the international community, the MINUSCA force, the European Union military operation in the Central African Republic and the Sangaris force, has ensured the protection of civilians at internally displaced person camps by installing military bases near displaced person sites in conflict zones such as Bria, Bambari, Kaga Bandoro, Paoua, Bangassou and Bangui Mpoko airport.

172. IOM has organized evacuations of displaced persons and refugees in host cities and cities of origin as required.

**(b) *To guarantee to internally displaced persons and Central African refugees the right to return to their places of residence and to other benefits as nationals of the Central African Republic***

173. With the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government has implemented a programme to repatriate displaced persons and refugees. Many Central African Republic refugees in Cameroon, Chad, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been voluntarily repatriated. This programme has enabled 50,000 internally displaced persons in Bangui and Bambari to return to their places of residence.

**(c) *To take measures, including securing the places of origin of internally displaced persons, to ensure safe return***

174. The Government, with the help of the international community, in particular MINUSCA, has put in place measures to ensure the safety of returnees. Checkpoints have been put in place at the entrances and exits of city neighbourhoods with the most at-risk populations. These checkpoints are supposed to prevent any attacks against returnees.

**(d) *To provide internally displaced women with security and access to basic services and food, and ensure that accountability services are available for victims of sexual and other forms of violence***

175. Returnees have received support in the form of cash kits in the amount of 50,000 CFA francs per person, food stamps for women and shelter.

176. These funds support the basic needs of returnees during the first week of their return. These funds have been provided to 29,300 people in Bangui.

177. In the prefectures of Ouaka in Bambari, Nana-Grébizi in Kaga Bandoro and Ouaham in Batangafo, vulnerable conflict-affected people will soon receive monthly cash transfers for their food for a period of three months as part of the project to support affected and displaced communities launched by the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation with the help of the United Nations Office for Project Services. The beneficiary profiling study has already been completed in Bambari, and 4,800 five-person families have been selected, representing 24,000 indirect beneficiaries.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 20 regarding women and peace and security**

**(a) *To ensure the participation of women at all stages of the peace process in national reconciliation and all reconstruction initiatives, as well as in transitional justice processes, in particular at the decision-making level***

178. The involvement of women in conflict management and efforts to achieve peace is an indisputable reality in the Central African Republic in accordance with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). It should be recalled that, during the political meetings that took place in the Central African Republic (the national dialogue in 2003, the inclusive political dialogue in 2008 and the national forum in 2015), women leaders played an instrumental role through their participation. As a result, the following recommendations were made at the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation:

- Involve women in the peace process (resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#)).
- Provide financial assistance to women's organizations to enable them to engage in peace efforts, especially in conflict areas.
- Build the capacities of women in negotiations and conflict management.

**(b) *To ensure the participation of women in the implementation of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#)***

**(c) *To continue its efforts to establish a reconciliation commission and a permanent dialogue commission and to ensure that their mandates include women's rights and combating impunity in cases of sexual violence and that women are adequately represented***

179. The establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions has been announced as part efforts to achieve peace. Awareness-raising campaigns are carried out for all actors involved in efforts to achieve peace, including women's organizations. A grassroots consultation project is under way. As part of efforts to achieve peace, local mixed-gender peace, truth and reconciliation commissions have been established in the prefectures, sub-prefectures and districts of the Central African Republic.

180. The role of these committees is to prevent and manage conflicts that arise within their communities.

**(d) To support initiatives by women working together to achieve peace**

181. The Government, through the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, provides its unwavering support to women's associations working to achieve peace in accordance with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 22 regarding the legislative framework**

182. The Constitution of 30 March 2016 reaffirms the commitment of the Central African Republic to all human rights conventions in general and to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in particular, which was ratified on 12 July 1991.

183. Some provisions of the Convention have been integrated into various national laws, including the Penal Code, the Act on the special status of the civil service, the Labour Code, the Family Code, the Parity Act and the Forestry Code.

184. Training on respect for women's rights is provided to judges by partners (agencies of the United Nations system).

185. Steps are likely to be taken to include the gender dimension in the training curricula for judges.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 24 regarding the national machinery for the advancement of women****(a) Strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and the Family and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to lead efforts for the advancement of women during the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, ensure that it is effectively consulted on the formulation, design and implementation of public policies and strengthen its coordination and monitoring role at all levels of government**

186. Since the previous report, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection has been responsible for implementing the national gender and equity policy.

187. This department operates with a reduced staff and limited financial resources. The annual budgetary allocations from the State are very small and do not cover the needs of this department, making it entirely dependent on the support of partners.

188. Despite these difficulties, some efforts have been made under the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity, such as capacity-building for actors defending women's rights and awareness-raising campaigns on gender.

189. Ensure the effective implementation of the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan

**(b) Accelerate the adoption of the bill on parity and include therein the 35 per cent quota for nominations to decision-making positions in the public sector**

190. On 24 November 2016, the Central African Republic adopted Act No. 004 of 24 November 2016 on parity between men and women, establishing, in its article 7 (derived from article 80 of the Constitution of 30 March 2016), a quota of 35 per cent for female candidates for decision-making positions in all areas of employment.

- (c) ***Finalize, without delay, the bill establishing a national commission for human rights in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), ensuring that its mandate includes gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex/gender and other intersecting factors***

191. In compliance with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, the Central African Republic established a commission for human rights and fundamental freedoms by Act No. 17.015 of 20 April 2017. This commission is composed of 12 members, including 4 women.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 26 regarding stereotypes and harmful practices**

- (a) ***Ensure the effective implementation of the legal provisions criminalizing female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, levirate and sororate (paras. 112–116 of the Penal Code and art. 10 of Act No. 06.032 of 27 December 2006 on protecting women against violence)***

192. Sororate, levirate, widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and child and forced marriage used to be common customary practices in the country. The practice of levirate and sororate has somewhat decreased in the light of the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS. There is a real awareness in some circles of the danger of this practice, and offers are simply declined.

193. Taking into account the extent of the problem, the legislature of the Central African Republic set out penalties for levirate and sororate, widowhood rites and genital mutilation in articles 112 to 117 of the revised Penal Code of 2010.

194. Despite these legal provisions, widowhood rites, genital mutilation and child marriage continue to be practised according to the multiple indicator survey of 2010. Victims do not submit complaints to the judicial authorities for fear of rejection by the community, which still considers such practices to be of cultural importance.

- (b) ***Ensure the effective implementation of the national action plan addressing traditional practices harmful to women's health and gender-based violence***

195. National strategies for combating gender-based violence and child marriage were adopted in 2017. Steps to combat these phenomena are being taken by the Government with the help of partners.

- (c) ***Strengthen its activities to raise awareness, targeting women and girls and men and boys, in collaboration with civil society, of the adverse effects and consequences of harmful practices***

196. To bring about behavioural change, the Government, with the support of partners such as UNFPA, WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), must change its strategy by giving priority to activities to raise awareness through multiple channels and organizing capacity-building sessions for local authorities, community leaders, practitioners and communities.

- (d) ***Prevent violence against women perceived as witches, arrest, prosecute and punish perpetrators of such violence and repeal any discriminatory provisions criminalizing witchcraft***

197. Witchcraft is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to prove. Nevertheless, the revised Penal Code of 2010 retains the offence of witchcraft.



198. Given the difficulties of proving guilt, judges often acquit the accused or the defendant. Elderly women without family support are often accused of witchcraft and are the main victims of abuses by ill-intentioned people who favour mob or private justice.

199. Nevertheless, under the Penal Code of 2010, perpetrators of these offences are punished with prison sentences and/or fines in accordance with the gravity of the offence, that is, whether it constitutes a crime or a misdemeanour. Although data are lacking, local courts have already issued judgments condemning these types of situations.

200. Awareness-raising campaigns are also organized regularly on radio stations in the country with a view to preventing this scourge.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 32 regarding participation in political and public life**

**(b) *Establish a quota system for women that guarantees that women will account for, at a minimum, 30 per cent of parliamentarians and provide incentives for political parties to nominate women candidates***

201. With a view to combating discrimination, Act No. 16.004, which was adopted and entered into force on 26 November 2016, establishes a quota system for women in functions filled by election or appointment, setting the quota at 35 per cent, and providing for this quota to be increased over a period of 10 years from the date of entry into force.

202. On International Women's Day in 2018, civil society organizations submitted a proposal for an implementing decree for the Parity Act.

203. Significant gaps still exist in the political and public participation of women in the Central African Republic.

204. The quota for the participation of women in all the institutions referred to in the Parity Act (35 per cent) is not yet applied in all sectors of society.

205. The following summary table shows the current situation with regard to the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

<i>Number</i>	<i>Entity or department</i>	<i>Total number of staff</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Government	34	29	5	14.7
2	Office of the President	22	20	2	0.2
3	Office of the Prime Minister	43	38	5	5.5
4	High Council for Communication	8	4	4	50
5	High Court of Justice	24	22	2	0.2
6	National Assembly	140	118	12	0.8
7	High Authority for Good Governance	19	11	8	36
8	Economic and Social Council	79	61	18	22.78
9	Constitutional Court	9	5	4	49
10	Mediation Council	5	3	2	40
11	National Electoral Authority	7	5	2	28.5
12	National Council for Human Rights	12	8	4	35
13	Government service	27 656	22 846	4 810	17.3
14	Diplomatic service	14	12	2	14.8
15	General State Inspectorate	25	20	5	20

<i>Number</i>	<i>Entity or department</i>	<i>Total number of staff</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
16	Prefect	16	14	2	12.5
17	Sub-prefect	73	67	6	8.2

206. Women remain substantially underrepresented in non-elected positions in, for example, the security, governance and economic and social development sectors.

207. At the height of the crisis, on 20 January 2014, a woman was elected by the National Transitional Council to be Head of State until the elections scheduled for 30 March 2016.

208. This period saw a significant increase in the participation of women, and a prize was awarded by the African Union in recognition of the efforts made during this period.

**(c) *Implement activities to raise awareness of the importance for society as a whole of the participation of women in decision-making, in particular as candidates and voters, with a view to eliminating patriarchal attitudes that deter women from such participation***

209. Notwithstanding the entry into force of Act No. 16.004, human rights activists and defenders have not faltered in their awareness-raising and advocacy efforts targeting decision-makers. They have been intensifying their efforts on all radio stations and in the print media.

210. Campaigns are conducted by non-governmental organizations and women's organizations to raise awareness among and change the position of leaders and the community with respect to the participation of women in decision-making.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 34 regarding nationality**

**(a) *Ensure that all children, including girls, born on the territory of the State party are registered at birth, paying particular attention to the registration of internally displaced girls and boys***

211. After the crisis, the Government, with support from UNICEF, launched an extensive birth registration programme in conflict areas encompassing:

- The restoration of civil registration services.
- The establishment of 176 civil registration centres across the country, although there is still a problem with the civil registers.
- Logistical, material and financial support from partners (UNICEF, UNDP and UNHCR).

212. The municipalities of these cities have been provided with a birth certificate register. Children born during the conflicts, without distinction as to gender, have been given their birth certificates.

213. These efforts have enabled the registration of a total of 35,480 children in the areas of Bangui, Bimbo and Begoa.

214. Subsequently, an awareness-raising campaign on birth registration conducted at health facilities in the same areas in August 2016 resulted in the registration of 8,199 children, comprising 4,212 girls and 3,987 boys.

215. Similar activities were carried out in three other provincial towns, with 1,951 children registered.

216. Radio campaigns on birth registration are being carried out with the support of UNICEF and will cover the whole of 2017.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 36 regarding education**

- (a) *Continue to coordinate all activities with stakeholders from the international humanitarian and development communities to secure funding for the restoration of the schools that were occupied and damaged during the conflict and ensure a comprehensive approach integrating a gender perspective in the provision of teaching materials and facilities such as sanitary conveniences*

217. The Government, with the help of the international community and its partners, has put in place a programme to restore and rehabilitate school infrastructure that was occupied by armed groups in Bangui and towns under their control.

218. To ensure the continuity of children's schooling, the Government, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations have joined efforts to provide 53,069 children (45 per cent of whom are girls) with access to education in 220 temporary learning spaces in Ouaka, Ouham, Nana-Grébizi, Ouham-Pendé, Mbomou, Haute-Kotto, Basse-Kotto and Ombella-Mpoko. To ensure the quality of this education, 500 parent-teachers (41 per cent of whom are women) in these spaces have been trained in basic teaching skills and psychosocial support, and 200 other teachers (32 per cent of whom are women) from Ouham-Pendé, Ouaka and Mbomou are providing psychosocial support to 17,000 children at 61 schools in the emergency zones.

219. Sanitation facilities in schools are gender responsive. Non-governmental organizations are responsible for the implementation of this programme.

220. In an effort to establish its authority across the country, the Government is also deploying defence forces in towns experiencing fragile relative calm following tensions (Bangassou and Paoua) in order to ensure the safety of the population in general and teachers in particular, with a view to enabling the education system to function properly.

- (b) *Ensure the safe return of teachers and pupils, including women and girls, to school*
- (c) *Develop plans to restore and strengthen access to education, including for internally displaced children, paying particular attention to the needs of girls, in all regions of the State party*

221. During the crisis, the Government, with support from UNICEF, developed a transition plan for the period 2017–2018 to restore and strengthen access to education for children through the creation of temporary childcare spaces in conflict zones.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 38 regarding employment and economic opportunities for women affected by the conflict**

*The Committee recommends that, in line with its general recommendation No. 30, the State party develop economic recovery and employment strategies that promote gender equality as a precondition for a sustainable post-conflict economy*

222. To translate its employment policy into action, the Government has placed particular emphasis on the creation of jobs for young people in the private and public sectors. A programme launched by the Government for the integration of young professionals into the civil service has just come to an end. About 1,000 young male and female graduates have been integrated into various ministerial departments.

223. In the private sector, a project has been developed for the creation 400,000 jobs to be shared among young people, with a fund of \$445 million to be raised by the Government.

224. The Central African Republic Agency for Vocational Training and Employment is developing a training programme on small trades and employment for young women and men who have dropped out of school. A total of 2,000 young people are involved in this programme.

225. In the above-mentioned instruments governing work and employment in the Central African Republic, no distinction is made between men and women in terms of conditions of access to work and salaries, because they are treated equally on the basis of their schooling or professional training.

### **Economic development**

226. With the help of its bilateral and multilateral partners, the Government is developing numerous projects to promote women, including the Bekou project, under which microcredit is granted for income-generating activities, and the Londo project, under which tontines are organized and community infrastructure (such as markets, drying areas and roads) is rehabilitated.

### **Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 40 regarding women's health**

**(a) *Ensure that women have access to health-care services by restoring the health system and ensuring adequate provision of health centres and hospitals, in addition to the security of all medical and health-care personnel***

227. In the field of public health, article 8 of the Constitution of 30 March 2016 stipulates that “the State ensures that everyone has the right of access to public health-care facilities and adequate medical treatment provided by trained professionals with the necessary equipment”.

228. In the Central African Republic, the budget allocated to health represents only 9 per cent of the overall budget instead of the 15 per cent normally allocated each year.

229. Nevertheless, free health care for pregnant and lactating women and for emergencies across the country is recommended in the new ministerial guidelines of 2013.

230. The Government therefore depends on external aid. Funding comes from donations and loans from bilateral and multilateral partners, while non-governmental organizations (Médecins sans frontières and Emergency) support hospitals with health supplies and services. Non-governmental organizations deal with sexual and reproductive health across the country. They provide care for women who are victims of rape during the conflict and offer access to medical and psychosocial services. In Bangui, the Castors hospital is the model for free preventive and curative care for women before, during and after childbirth.

**(b) *During such restoration, accord priority to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services in all areas of the State party, taking due account of the Committee's general recommendation No. 24 on women and health***

231. The deterioration of the sociopolitical environment has contributed to increased morbidity and mortality among people in the Central African Republic. Women and children are the most affected. The HIV epidemic, combined with other diseases, is a factor in the overall mortality rate, which has risen to 20.06 deaths per 1,000 people.

232. The country has seen a decrease in life expectancy, from 49 years in 1988 to 43 years since 2003.

233. To address the health problems of the population, the Government, through the Ministry of Public Health, has translated the political and strategic measures taken as part of its national health development plan (2006–2015) and the health sector transition plan (2015–2017) into several actions to support women, including:

- Providing free medical and psychosocial care to victims of gender-based violence with the support of WHO; 27,977 women and girls are in the care of the services.
- Reducing maternal mortality, and providing free emergency obstetric care.
- Providing free induced abortions.
- Providing free care to women living with HIV/AIDS.
- Providing free prenatal exams and HIV/AIDS testing for pregnant women.

**(c) *Ensure that women who are victims of rape, including rapes perpetrated during the conflict, have access to health-care and psychosocial services, including emergency contraception and safe abortion services***

234. The efforts of the Government in this regard have consisted of rehabilitating health facilities and providing them with equipment and reproductive health products.

235. These health facilities provide reproductive health-care services to people in conflict-affected areas.

236. Regarding the reproductive health of adolescents and young people, numerous awareness-raising sessions on adolescent health have been conducted in both Bangui and the conflict zones with a view to promoting behavioural change.

237. Women with obstetric fistula have been cured thanks to a partnership between the Government and other health actors.

**(d) *Coordinate all activities with stakeholders from the international humanitarian and development communities to secure financial resources for restoring and equipping health facilities and ensure a comprehensive approach integrating a gender perspective to their development and implementation***

238. The Ministry of Public Health, in partnership with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, has just launched coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 42 regarding rural women**

**(a) *To create the conditions for agricultural activity to recover***

239. Legal instruments have been adopted by the Government to promote the recovery of agricultural activities, including:

- The Seeds Act adopted in 2015, for which the implementing legislation is pending.
- The National Seeds Office established in 2017.
- The Agropastoral Land Code developed in 2017, which is pending adoption.
- The agricultural policy developed in 2018, which is pending approval.

240. Under the World Bank-funded project on community development and support for vulnerable groups, multifaceted platforms have been set up to empower vulnerable women. Unfortunately, it was not possible for this project to cover all rural areas, and the platforms that were established are no longer operational owing to a lack of financial support.

241. Pending the approval of development projects, humanitarian partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the European Union through the Bekou trust fund, the Agence française de développement and the non-governmental organization Deutsche Welthungerhilfe with the cooperation of Germany, all of which are supporting the Government within the strategic framework for recovery and peacebuilding, have made every effort to provide seeds and agricultural tools to rural populations during past agricultural seasons.

242. The new plans are:

- To strengthen the seed production and distribution system.
- To implement the new Seeds Act.

243. Three major development projects launched by the Government with funding from donors such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the African Development Bank and the World Bank are pending approval.

244. These projects, which are in line with the national plan for recovery and peacebuilding in the Central African Republic, are as follows:

- International Fund for Agricultural Development: project for reviving agropastoral production in the Savannah, which follows on from the project for reviving food crops and small livestock production in the Savannah.
- African Development Bank: project to support the development of agricultural value chains in the Savannah.
- World Bank: project to support the revival of agriculture and the development of agribusiness in the Central African Republic.

245. The overall objective of all these projects is to contribute to the sustained improvement of food and nutritional security and to increase the income of the target populations, including women.

246. In general, projects are identified on the basis of the real problems faced by the target populations. Project ideas are discussed and selected with the involvement of those affected. Projects are always implemented with the involvement of the beneficiaries.

**(b) *To ensure that rural women have access to seeds and farming tools, basic services, including education, health, clean water and sanitation services, and economic opportunities on an equal basis with men and with their urban counterparts***

247. The Government has taken steps to involve the rural population in all stages of gender-related projects by setting up regional committees to monitor their implementation. The Ministry of Rural Development, in partnership with FAO, has been consistently supporting the people in general and rural women in particular by providing agricultural kits with a view to reviving agriculture and diversifying their livelihoods. During the food-producing season this year, support was provided to 44,000 households, including 28,500 through direct distribution, 14,500 through trade fairs and 1,000 through cash transfers.

248. With the aim of strengthening the resilience and empowerment of women, FAO is implementing the resilience fund approach, its unique and innovative approach to building the technical, financial and social knowledge and capacities of beneficiaries, in collaboration with relevant technical government services and/or international and national non-governmental organizations for better sustainability.

249. A large part of the rural population, in particular women, are left out of information and communication processes. FAO has therefore established the Dimitra Clubs, which take a highly gender-sensitive approach to all their activities and aim to strengthen the visibility and decision-making power of women. This approach is focused not on women but on the relationship between men and women, thereby encouraging men to participate and both women and men to state their needs.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 46 regarding discrimination in marriage**

*The Committee recommends, in accordance with its general recommendation No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations and general recommendation No. 29 on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution*

250. Taking into account discrimination against women in marriage and with a view to addressing such inequalities, the Government, through the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, established a committee to review the Family Code. The committee has revised the discriminatory provisions, and its work is ongoing. An inventory of national instruments and discriminatory provisions therein was compiled with the support of UNFPA and UN-Women.

**Response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 48 regarding the optional protocol to the Beijing Declaration**

*The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention*

251. The Beijing Declaration, which calls for the empowerment of women, has been taken into account in the implementation of the Convention. Awareness-raising on the empowerment of women has been a part of all programmes and projects for the promotion of women in the Central African Republic.

252. Gender mainstreaming in all programmes and projects has been an imperative for some time in the Central African Republic, where integration remains a challenge.

## **VIII. Challenges and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

253. The challenges and constraints encountered by the Central African Republic in the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be analysed from various angles.

### **A. Analysis of challenges**

254. Since 2013, following the submission of the fifth periodic report, the Central African Republic has faced an unprecedented internal crisis that has had negative effects on the population in general and on the situation of women throughout the country more specifically.

**(a) Political challenges**

- Institutional instability and a lack of visibility in the implementation and management of the national policy on human rights in general and on women's rights in particular.
- A real lack of training for staff specializing in women's rights.
- Inadequate integration into programmes and the failure to effectively apply the declarations and programmes of action adopted at large international conferences, forums and symposiums for the promotion of women (such as those held in Beijing, Vienna and Durban) when developing sectoral policies.
- Insufficient budget allocated to activities for the promotion of women.
- Political support for the promotion of women limited exclusively to activities to mark International Women's Day and Mother's Day.
- The obsolescence of the directory of statistical data on women in the Central African Republic.
- Inadequate ownership by the political authorities of international, regional and subregional legal instruments for the promotion and protection of women (conventions, treaties, principles, rules and declarations).
- Inadequate awareness-raising on international, regional and subregional legal instruments for the promotion and protection of women (conventions, treaties, principles, rules and declarations) throughout the country.
- Inadequate dissemination of and awareness-raising on the reports submitted to depository bodies throughout the country to promote national ownership.
- Insufficient communication between the various institutions and actors working on women's rights in the Central African Republic.
- Slow adoption of implementing decrees for laws.

**(b) Social and cultural challenges**

- The high illiteracy rate among the population in general and women in particular (33 per cent of girls completed primary education, compared with 53 per cent of boys, before the crisis).
- Ignorance among the population of legal instruments and judicial mechanisms for the promotion and protection of women's rights.
- Lack of ownership by women themselves of instruments and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of women's rights.
- The absence of a compensation fund for victims of various incidents in the Central African Republic.
- Inter-ethnic, interreligious and intercommunal divisions and rifts.
- Cultural pressure.

**(c) Economic challenges**

- Poor governance in the implementation and management of projects, and misappropriation of public funds and corruption, which make it difficult for the State to meet its sovereign obligations to provide care for women.
- The collapse of the economy following the events since March 2013.



- The high rate of poverty, which could reach 80 per cent of the population, to be confirmed by the Central African Institute of Statistics, Economic and Social Studies.
- The systematic destruction and looting of administrations, businesses, companies and schools.

**(d) Educational challenges**

- The lack of a specialized human rights institution, which could help to promote and raise awareness of human rights values and principles.
- The failure to integrate the values of civic and moral education and a gender-sensitive approach into school programmes.

**(e) Legal challenges**

- The existence of certain legal provisions that are discriminatory against women, reflecting a failure to comply with international legal instruments (the Convention).
- The lack of conformity of some articles of the Family Code (arts. 231, 254 (1) and 255) with article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The absence of practical provisions relating to the ineffectiveness of proxy services (including judicial, police, medical and educational actors and local elected officials) for the enforcement of laws.
- An ambiguous piece of legislation requiring interpretation (certain provisions of Act No. 06.030 of 15 December 2006 concerning the protection of women from violence) that contains vague references to legislation in force.
- The delay in the adoption of regulations empowering social workers in the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence and the protection and care of victims thereof.
- The delay in the submission to Parliament of the draft model law on the protection of women and children from sexual violence proposed to all States for incorporation into national law in accordance with the Protocol of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children.
- The lack of precision in the practical arrangements for the organization and functioning of facilities for the care of victims of gender-based violence in certain laws (Act No. 06.030 of 15 December 2006).

**(f) Security challenges**

- Insecurity as an obstacle to the promotion of women's rights throughout the country in general and especially in the regions and prefectures controlled by irregular armed groups.
- The lack of State authority in the regions and prefectures controlled by irregular armed groups.
- The absence of the Defence and Security Forces and the Armed Forces in regions and prefectures to ensure the protection of women.

**B. Analysis of constraints****(a) Political constraints**

- The heavy dependence of the Central African Republic on external financing.

**(b) Social and cultural constraints**

- Social and cultural pressure and expectations and other stereotypes as obstacles to the empowerment and development of women.

**(c) Economic constraints**

- The landlocked nature of the country.
- The burden of external debt.

**(d) Security constraints**

- The remoteness and lack of access in some areas during rain.
- Armed groups, road blockers and the occupation of certain prefectures.

**(e) Educational constraints**

- Early pregnancy.
- Early marriage.
- Early sexuality.

**IX. Vision of the Central African Republic for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

255. This vision can be spread across three periods, namely, the short, the medium and the long term.

**A. Short-term vision**

- Restore order and security throughout the country.
- Disarm irregular armed groups.
- Implement gender-sensitive budgeting.

**B. Medium-term vision**

- Conduct a large-scale campaign to promote and raise awareness of all international, regional and subregional human rights instruments throughout the country.
- Organize outreach to political authorities, parliamentarians and all other institutional partners with a view to supporting policies and programmes aimed at promoting gender equality and the protection of women.
- Ensure good political and economic governance and the equitable distribution of resources with a view to fostering an atmosphere of calm among the population and avoiding any friction as a source of conflict.

- Integrate a gender-sensitive approach and the protection of women into educational programmes at primary, secondary, technical and professional schools and universities.
- Ensure training for staff specializing in the promotion of women's rights.
- Ensure that public figures, local authorities and civil society organizations receive training on women's rights.
- Establish a national observatory for the protection of women's rights.

### **C. Long-term vision**

- Consider the establishment of a university institute for the promotion of women in the Central African Republic.
- Develop a national strategy for safeguarding and protecting women's rights in the Central African Republic.
- Develop a national communications strategy for a participatory dialogue on women's rights issues in the Central African Republic.

## **Conclusion**

256. The effective application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women is one of the human rights obligations of the Central African Republic towards the international community. The objective is to progressively reduce all inequalities between men and women in all areas.

257. To achieve this, activities under legislative, social, cultural, economic, educational and health policies and programmes should be carried out in a sustained manner.

258. Having made the protection of women from all forms of violence a priority, the Government is resolutely committed to achieving the objectives that it has set for itself to improve gender equality throughout the country.

259. The results of the work carried out to eliminate such inequalities show that much remains to be done by the Central African Republic.

260. Despite some slight improvement in many areas, such as the reform of the legislative framework for the protection of women, their participation in political and public life and their promotion and empowerment, and for combating impunity for violations against them, inadequate progress has been made in certain areas in which such inequalities and violence should also be reduced and/or completely eliminated.

261. This has resulted in women becoming less and less resilient to sociocultural pressures, which hold them back and increase their dependence on men, and completely resigning themselves, sometimes blindly, to the dictates of men as the heads of the family.

262. Despite the Government's readiness to protect women in all their diversity, improvements in indicators of progress in the promotion and protection of women have been hindered by the persistence of insecurity marked by the presence of armed groups in many cities in the country, as well as economic and financial challenges.

263. Against this backdrop, the Government should redouble its efforts to reverse negative trends with a view to achieving its objectives as soon as possible and thereby ensure that women enjoy better living conditions that are equal to those of men.