



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

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

**Eighth periodic report submitted by Costa Rica under
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2021****

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



I. Introduction

1. Costa Rica ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by Act No. 6968 of 2 October 1984, which was published in *La Gaceta*, the country's official gazette, on 11 January 1985. The instrument was deposited with the United Nations Secretariat on 4 April 1986. Pursuant to the obligation contained in article 18 of the Convention, Costa Rica is now submitting its eighth periodic report, covering the period from July 2017 to July 2020.

2. In accordance with the guidelines on the form and content of periodic reports, the present report describes the efforts made to address the recommendations made by the Committee upon its consideration of the seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/CRI/7) during its sixty-seventh session, held in July 2017. The report sets out the progress made and difficulties encountered in complying with the provisions of the Convention, as well as other actions taken by Costa Rica that go beyond the Committee's recommendations and that are producing results in the area of substantive gender equality.

3. To begin with, the Government of Costa Rica acknowledges that significant cultural, social and economic obstacles remain that have prevented it from making decisive progress in complying with some of the Committee's recommendations and, consequently, with its obligations under the Convention. Costa Rica has therefore decided to embark on a process of reflection, collective development and coordination, with a view to dismantling the structural causes that perpetuate discrimination against women and prevent full respect for their rights. The Government views the reporting process, in particular the drafting of the report itself and subsequent engagement with the Committee, as a tool for assessing progress and challenges in a critical and action-oriented manner, with a view to honouring its international obligations and redoubling its efforts to move towards substantive equality.

4. The Government acknowledges that, during the reporting period, Costa Rican society faced repeated attempts to undermine gains made in the area of women's human rights. The backlash against advances in women's human rights even had a considerable effect on the electoral dynamics in 2018. This, coupled with the global crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, has resulted in a social and economic environment that has made it difficult for the country to make much progress towards the goals it set itself for the period 2017–2021 (see annex 1). Nevertheless, the State has made considerable efforts to uphold the rights already secured by women in Costa Rica and make progress towards extending such rights to all, raising awareness of the geographical, socioeconomic and cultural diversity of women, systematically eliminating gender stereotypes in all areas, and mainstreaming and strengthening a gender perspective in areas of institutional work that had not been addressed previously.

II. Methodology

5. The present report is an opportunity to continue the process of interinstitutional coordination in relation to the obligations assumed by Costa Rica when it ratified the Convention. The report is complemented by the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030 and the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women 2017–2032, and other interinstitutional programmes, projects and strategies aimed at improving capacity-building and accountability in the area of women's human rights.

6. In 2011, an interinstitutional platform was created, coordinated by the National Institute for Women. A total of 37 State institutions that have direct obligations under the Convention are actively involved in the work of the platform (see annex 2). The present report contains contributions from 33 public institutions, demonstrating the State's commitment to implementing international instruments, the Convention and the Committee's general and specific recommendations.

7. The National Institute for Women, as the entity responsible for coordinating the reporting process, engaged in dialogue with representatives of the women's organizations and movements that monitor the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. That included conducting joint activities aimed at raising awareness of the Convention, analysing gender monitoring and setbacks in the area of gender, and ensuring accountability on specific issues. In March 2021, a preliminary outline of the present report was presented to those organizations, with a view to making the reporting process broader, richer and more transparent. Relevant observations and comments were incorporated into the report, thereby contributing to the reflection on areas that need further attention in Costa Rica, in order to improve the conditions of access and the exercise of the human rights of women in their diversity.

III. Implementation of the provisions of the Convention

8. The main advances in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention during the reporting period are the result of the development and implementation of State actions in the legal sphere that also promote cultural change towards substantive equality between women and men. The Convention, as a binding international legal instrument, has become an important reference for the protection and promotion of women's human rights in Costa Rica. This is evidenced by the fact that the Convention has been used in the substantive argumentation of technical criteria, proposals and bills, and when defending and enforcing women's rights. The Convention has led to favourable results in Constitutional Court interpretations, both in individual cases and in those with wider implications, in court judgments, in electoral and administrative decisions, in the enactment of reforms and new laws, executive decrees and regulations, and in the adoption of public policies for equality and corresponding action plans.

Articles 1 and 2: Discrimination and equality

9. A number of Costa Rican institutions, including the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, the National Council for Older Persons, the Joint Institute for Social Aid and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, participated in the development and implementation of initiatives aimed at raising awareness, disseminating information and providing training to a large proportion of the civil service on the scope of the Convention and the Committee's recommendations regarding the implementation of public policies aimed at ensuring effective gender equality and women's human rights.

10. Strengthened dialogue among national institutions, international organizations and civil society facilitated meetings between the entities responsible for implementing the Committee's country-specific recommendations and the public, in its role of monitoring the State's obligations. Such meetings led, for example, to joint activities with the United Nations system, the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention and the civil society organization Asociación Ciudadana

ACCEDER, as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign and Human Rights Day, held in December 2020.

11. The judiciary included in its institutional strategic plan 2019–2024 the implementation of the thematic pillars of the Convention, with a view to ensuring that all judicial offices included actions aimed at ensuring compliance with the Convention in their strategic plans. There are 13 judicial offices, which work with the other internal bodies of the judiciary, including the Technical Secretariat for Gender Issues and Access to Justice, the Department of Press and Organizational Communication, the Public Prosecution Service and the Public Defence Service.

12. With regard to the Committee’s recommendation that Costa Rica strengthen coordination between the institutions of the interinstitutional platform (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 11 (d)), as discussed above, in recent years the National Institute for Women has made significant progress in improving coordination with the institutions of the interinstitutional platform, through the provision of technical support and advice for the preparation of reports and improved integration of the principles and commitments of the Convention into the work plans of the institutions. Since 2017, meetings have been held thrice yearly with the institutions; in addition, bilateral meetings are held at the request of individual institutions.

13. Significant efforts have been made to expand legislation that is consistent with the principle of equality and non-discrimination between women and men. Between 2017 and 2020, 40 laws were passed on the protection of rights in relation to human trafficking, violence, sexual harassment in the street, employment, vulnerable populations, family relations, international conventions, the sharing of family responsibilities, statutory limitations on criminal prosecution for sexual offences, and equal pay, among others. In addition, Costa Rica has issued regulations and executive decrees establishing the right of foreign nationals to have their sexual and gender identity recognized on the DIMEX, the identity card for foreign residents, as well as migration rights for same-sex couples (see annex 3).

14. In 2019 and 2020, the Cassation Chambers, the Courts of Appeal and the Disciplinary Court of the Judicial Inspectorate issued a number of judgments based on the principles of the Convention in cases relating to agriculture, access to justice for indigenous women, the right to breastfeed and non-discrimination against young women (see annex 4). During the same period, the Constitutional Chamber issued decisions upholding the right to timely medical care, access to social security and compliance with the principle of parity (see annex 4).

Article 3: Enjoyment of rights on a basis of equality

15. The policies introduced by Costa Rica to ensure equality between women and men include the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030 and the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women 2017–2032. Both policies are the product of dialogue with civil society and efforts to reflect the specific needs and interests of women from across the country. The national policy for effective equality between women and men and the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women are the two instruments developed by Costa Rica to achieve Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (gender equality and women’s empowerment), and are thus supported by the High-level Council on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Presidency of the Republic and the Office of the Comptroller-General.

16. The national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030 is intended to reduce key gaps and inequalities between women and men, based on an intersectional and intercultural approach and a management model that favours

regionalization.¹ The plan of action 2019–2022 (see annex 5) sets out 53 strategic actions derived from the main pillars of the policy, as well as commitments made by 57 institutions. In 2019, progress was made or compliance achieved for 40 of the 53 strategic actions.

17. The national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women 2017–2032 is an intersectoral and interinstitutional policy that guides the actions of the National System for Addressing and Preventing Violence against Women, which is made up of 22 institutions.² As part of the implementation of the policy, in 2019 and 2020, training and advocacy sessions were held with various societal actors to discuss issues related to violence against women. A total of 616 people participated. Certain training programmes have been paused due to public sector budget cuts made as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency.

18. The local committees for the provision of immediate care and follow-up in high-risk cases involving violence against women, a strategy set out in the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women, have proved to be effective in ensuring the immediate protection of women at risk of femicide and carrying out subsequent monitoring and follow-up of such cases. In 2019, three new committees were established in the cantons of Garabito, Los Chiles and San Carlos, in the north of the country. There are currently 19 committees operating throughout the country. According to the domestic violence courts, the committees provided assistance to 377 women in 2019.

19. The Girasoles initiative, run by the Civic Centres for Peace programme of the Directorate for the Promotion of Peace and Civic Harmony, is aimed at young mothers and socially vulnerable young women who are not in education or employment, and is intended to prevent forms of violence such as trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The initiative is based on a model developed by the Paniamor Foundation with funds from the Embassy of the United States of America. The initiative is in the process of being rolled out.

20. With regard to the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women, legislative progress has been made with the recognition of street harassment as a form of violence against women, following the adoption of a law criminalizing conduct that was previously classified as a misdemeanour (see annex 3). To date, 52 men have been arrested and 4 convicted under the law. The law contributes to the implementation of the Committee's recommendation that Costa Rica address the sexual harassment of women in the workplace, in public places and on public transportation by adopting gender-sensitive procedures for the investigation of sexual harassment and by imposing appropriate sanctions for perpetrators (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 17 (c)).

21. In response to the recommendation to expand capacity-building on women's rights, including their right to access justice, for officials handling cases of gender-based violence (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 9 (c)), the judiciary held a training course on human rights and access to justice for the personnel of the Judicial Investigation Agency. The content of the training course has been incorporated into all the programmes offered by the Training Unit of the Judicial College, with a view to raising awareness among officials of how to treat individuals going through the legal system who have been affected by violence.

¹ The full policy is available at <https://www.inamu.go.cr/documents/10179/401246/INAMU+PIEG+2018-2030+NEW.pdf/f8333d70-df04-417e-bbe9-c48c412a3cfb>.

² The full policy is available at <https://www.inamu.go.cr/documents/10179/967660/PLANOV1+2017-2032/fcb84a5b-cb73-4ce0-a08c-a1b886180b02>.

22. Among the measures taken to address the need to guarantee access to justice for vulnerable women (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, paragraph 8 (d)), the judiciary has strengthened coordination with organizations of women of African descent and has improved training for judicial and administrative officials regarding access to justice for migrant, refugee and indigenous populations. In that connection, the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Indigenous Affairs has conducted annual visits to the indigenous territories to ensure that cases involving indigenous women get priority, and has liaised with other offices to ensure that such cases are dealt with as effectively as possible, given the vulnerabilities of such women. In addition, efforts have been made to mitigate the language barriers faced by speakers of indigenous languages and Limonese Creole English (among the Afro-Costa Rican population).

23. Among other initiatives, the National Institute for Women, as part of activities organized in cooperation with the comprehensive support network for vulnerable women involved in criminal proceedings and their dependents, held a course in 2020 entitled “Reflecting on the social vulnerabilities of women in conflict with criminal law”. A total of 100 female public defenders from throughout the country attended the course, including officials from the Bribri indigenous territories.

24. During the period 2017–2020, institutions including the Joint Institute for Social Aid, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and Peace, the judiciary and State universities spearheaded major initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing sexual harassment within their institutions. The Institute of Technology of Costa Rica received 543 complaints during that period, of which 77 per cent were filed by female students, lecturers and administrative staff. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education recorded 432 disciplinary cases involving sexual harassment of girls and adolescents.

25. With regard to institutional public policies, 10 instruments in the agricultural sector stand out as having been designed with a gender perspective and the needs of rural women in mind. The details of the policies are set out below. Other notable policies include the national policy for equality between women and men with regard to training, employment and enjoyment of the outputs of science, technology, telecommunications and innovation (2018–2027) and its first plan of action (2018–2023); the national policy on trafficking in persons 2019–2029; and the national policy on sport, recreation and physical activity 2020–2030.

26. With regard to the recommendation that Costa Rica allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the Unified System of Statistical Measurement of Gender Violence and increase efforts to collect statistical and qualitative data on cases of gender-based violence against women disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and rural/urban areas (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 17 (b)), some progress has been made, with the National Statistics and Census Institute, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund and the Ministry of Education working together to assess the incorporation of indicators based on the data they produce. The judiciary, through the Observatory on Gender-based Violence against Women and Access to Justice, supplies up-to-date information, disaggregated by sociodemographic variables, on femicide, domestic violence and sexual violence. Under the overall supervision of the Technical Secretariat for Gender Issues and Access to Justice, work is being done to coordinate and display graphically new reports and digital dashboards containing disaggregated information on prosecutions for sex crimes. The process of creating these tools is expected to be complete by 2021. In addition, the classifications used by the 911 Emergency System relating to violence against women have already been incorporated into the Unified System of Statistical Measurement of Gender Violence.

Article 4: Temporary special measures

27. In accordance with the provisions of article 4 of the Convention, the affirmative action directive issued by the Executive President of the National Training Institute (PE-464-2017) provides that in fields with low female participation, such as metalworking, vehicle mechanics, marine and electrical engineering and materials technology, women's access to training is guaranteed, regardless of where they live. However, at the time the present report was submitted, no information had been received regarding the impact of the implementation of this directive.

28. In addition, the judiciary is implementing affirmative action in selection and recruitment processes, with a view to promoting the hiring of women in vulnerable situations, including indigenous women and women with disabilities. The changes made to the selection process reduce barriers and enable women from indigenous areas to occupy positions within the judiciary (see annex 6).

Article 5: Modification of social and cultural patterns

29. The Government of Costa Rica has endeavoured to modify social and cultural patterns through measures designed to combat discriminatory and stereotyped practices between women and men, both within the apparatus of the State and among the general population. In the 2017 national survey on the perception of women's human rights, 58.3 per cent of those surveyed said that they knew what women's human rights were, citing "equality and non-discrimination" and "freedom, the existence of laws, the right of defence and respect". Some 61.8 per cent said that one of the reasons women were discriminated against in Costa Rica was simply because they were women, while 83.4 per cent of female survey respondents said that women were discriminated against by men in everyday life. These survey results indicate that significant progress has been made in terms of the recognition of women's human rights by Costa Rican society, but they also highlight the inequalities and discrimination faced by women in the country, which reaffirms the need to continue to promote cultural change in order to guarantee substantive equality for women.

30. As part of the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030, a number of institutions, including the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, the Directorate-General of the Civil Service, the Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance, the Ministry of Justice and Peace, the Joint Institute for Social Aid, the National Insurance Institute, the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements, the National Child Welfare Agency, the National Production Council, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the State Distance Learning University, the Costa Rican Institute of Sport and Recreation and the National Technical University, have carried out awareness-raising and training activities aimed at incorporating a gender perspective and the human rights of women, sexual diversity and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons into their institutional work. In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these activities were held virtually, given the restrictions on in-person events.

31. Another area of progress that is contributing to cultural transformation efforts is the development and implementation of various information campaigns, including "For real?", which was launched in 2019 by the National Institute for Women to dispel myths about teenage sexual behaviour and to reduce early pregnancy, and "Code harassment", which is the result of an agreement signed in 2020 between the National Institute for Women and the Municipality of Curridabat to raise awareness of street harassment. Also noteworthy is the "Are you a good colleague?" campaign run by the

Ministry of Justice and Peace, which is intended to encourage reflection on attitudes and practices that reinforce machismo in public institutions. In addition, various State entities have developed information strategies aimed at employers, encouraging them to purchase insurance for domestic workers, and others aimed at domestic workers, to ensure that such workers know their rights and understand the importance of demanding them. For instance, the National Institute for Women has launched a campaign called “We are still here!”, to highlight the rights of domestic workers during the pandemic and their contribution to the country’s economy and development.

32. In 2020, to promote the concept of shared responsibility for caregiving, and as part of a strategy associated with the granting of paternity leave, the National Institute for Women launched a free virtual course called “Dad can do it too”, which is aimed at the general public and is intended to encourage fathers to participate more and take on more responsibilities.

33. In addition, considerable efforts have been made to generate knowledge aimed at highlighting persistent gender inequalities and gaps in the country, in order to gather data that facilitate decision-making. Of particular note are the national surveys undertaken on various topics, including the 2017 national survey on the perception of women’s human rights, the 2017 national time-use survey, the 2019 national survey on the perception of violence against women, conducted in the framework of the national policy for addressing and preventing violence against women, and the 2018 national survey on disability. Studies have also been carried out on the situation of specific groups of women in the country, including one conducted in 2019 entitled “Proposed occupational profile of domestic workers in Costa Rica”, which was used as an input by the National Wages Council of Costa Rica and other entities in their efforts to close gender-based wage gaps. The third report on women’s human rights in Costa Rica, published in 2019, contains an analysis, carried out over four years, of whether women’s human rights are progressing, regressing or stagnating in such areas as the right to education, economic and labour rights, political rights, the right to sexual and reproductive health, and the right to a life free of violence.³

34. In 2020, a number of studies were carried out on the specific impact of COVID-19 on women’s lives, including a study entitled “Impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities and recommendations for an effective short- and medium-term approach”, conducted by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities; another entitled “Forward-looking gender-focused study to guide strategies for action aimed at improving the integration of women into the labour market, in the context of COVID-19, in the tourism and trade sectors”, coordinated by the National Institute for Women; and a report on the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of women in Costa Rica, also carried out by the National Institute for Women (see annex 1).

35. A gender perspective has been mainstreamed into 34 research projects registered with the Office of Research of the University of Costa Rica. In addition, 50 research projects and 16 social action projects incorporating a gender perspective have been undertaken at the National University of Costa Rica and the University of Costa Rica, and nine gender-sensitive courses are offered by various colleges. Both the University of Costa Rica and the National University offer specialized masters degrees in gender studies, while the National Technical University has made changes to its academic curriculum (see the section on article 10 for more detail).

36. In terms of strategies for improving the production of statistics in Costa Rica, in 2015, the National Statistics and Census Institute and the National Institute for Women worked together to draw up guidelines for mainstreaming a gender

³ The full report is available at <http://bit.ly/iiiedhm/>

perspective into the production and dissemination of statistics by the national statistical system, and in 2018, they published the “Guide to mainstreaming a gender perspective into the production and dissemination of the statistics by the national statistical system”. A total of 98 per cent of the institutions of the national statistical system received training on the subject. It is hoped that the results of the implementation of the guidelines will be available in the medium term.

37. Despite such advances, Costa Rica faces a considerable challenge in this area, particularly in relation to ensuring the visibility of certain population groups, including indigenous women, women of African descent, older women, women with disabilities, young women, migrant women, women in prostitution and trans women.

Article 6: Suppression of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women

38. In response to the recommendation that the State party harmonize the definition of “trafficking in persons” in its legislation with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 21 (b)), Costa Rica adopted two amendments to the Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Establish the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons (Act No. 9726 of 30 July 2019), which brought the definition of “trafficking in persons” into line with the Palermo Protocol through the inclusion of the phrase “through the use of technology”. In addition, the text of the Act was amended to cover forced abortion, and the definition of “sexual exploitation” was expanded. The Right to Time Act (Act No. 9685 of 21 May 2019) not only established a statute of limitations of 25 years for victims of sexual offences to file a complaint, starting from when the victim turned 18, but also extended the time limit for filing a complaint to 25 years for victims of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and sexual servitude.

39. With regard to the recommendation that Costa Rica allocate resources to ensure that women and girls who are victims of trafficking receive prompt care (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 21 (a)), in 2019, the projects funded by the National Fund against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants received a total of 1,409,345,249.01 colones (\$2,299,095.02), which represents 77 per cent of the total approved by the Office of the Comptroller-General.⁴ In 2019, Costa Rica devoted the highest proportion of resources yet to comprehensively tackling the crimes of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. In addition, Costa Rica has allocated human, technical and financial resources to caring for women and girl victims of trafficking in persons and issued a directive on comprehensive care for migrants (Directive No. 010-MP-MIDEPLAN-MTSS-MSP-MGP-MRREE of 12 June 2018), which sets out guidelines to follow in the event of suspected trafficking or smuggling of migrants. According to the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons, active interinstitutional participation has enabled it to consolidate the national policy on trafficking in persons 2019–2029 and the National Coalition’s strategic plan 2020–2025, the objective of which is to promote and coordinate public policies aimed at preventing, investigating and punishing trafficking in persons. In order to strengthen comprehensive care for victims of trafficking in persons, the National Coalition developed and implemented the protocol for the comprehensive care of victims of trafficking in persons in the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund health service and the National Child Welfare Agency institutional protocol for the care of underage victims and survivors of trafficking in

⁴ To convert figures from Costa Rican colones to United States dollars, the exchange rate for 16 February 2021 established by the Central Bank of Costa Rica was used, with \$1 equivalent to 613 colones.

persons and minors dependent on a victim of trafficking. The Ministry of Education has focused its efforts on drafting and implementing a protocol for institutional action on the restoration of rights and access to the Costa Rican education system for victims and survivors of trafficking in persons and their dependents.

40. During the reporting period, the 22 bodies that make up the National Coalition, as well as its observer bodies, made considerable efforts to carry out awareness-raising and training, reaching a total of 73,109 people, including airline personnel, university students and public officials.

Article 7: Measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country

41. With regard to the Committee's recommendation that Costa Rica adopt a strategy to promote the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women in political and public life and support women's candidacies and political campaigns for the 2018 presidential elections (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 25 (a)), equal representation was achieved in 2018 in the Legislative Assembly, with women and men accounting for 45.6 per cent and 54.4 per cent of assembly members, respectively, thanks to the implementation of a regulation requiring political parties to ensure vertical and horizontal parity when selecting candidates (Supreme Electoral Tribunal resolution No. 3603-E8-2016); however, equal participation has not been achieved in all the legislative committees (see annex 7). With regard to the executive branch, in 2018, Epsy Campbell Barr was elected First Vice-President of Costa Rica, the first woman of African descent to hold the position. That same year, she also became the first woman of African descent to serve as President of a country in the Americas when the President of the Republic delegated his responsibilities to her while he was out of the country. Also in 2018, the executive branch appointed for the first time a gender-balanced Cabinet (14 women and 11 men). In addition, for the third time in Costa Rican history, a woman was elected President of the Legislative Assembly, after 18 years of that position being occupied only by men. In connection with the Committee's recommendation contained in paragraph 25 (b), there are still unresolved issues in the area of local politics, as the regulations have yet to be applied to municipal elections, despite the lobbying of political parties and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal by the National Institute for Women, the Office of the Ombudsperson of the Republic and the Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance, among others. In the 2020 municipal elections, only 8 women mayors were elected out of a total of 82 (i.e., 9.7 per cent of mayors are women and 90.3 per cent are men).

42. Nevertheless, measures have been introduced to ensure equal participation in social organizations, in accordance with Act No. 8901 on Minimum Proportions of Women in Leadership Positions in Associations, Trade Unions and Social Organizations, with the issuance of implementing regulations for the Act. The regulations are the result of partnership and synergy among social organizations, their leaders and the institutional framework, under the leadership of the National Institute for Women. As at the end of the reporting period, the regulations were awaiting signature by the President.

43. Significant progress has yet to be made in ensuring the equal participation of women on the boards of private companies (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 25 (c)) and in executive posts (para. 25 (d)). The National Institute for Women, as the national machinery for the advancement of women, continues to provide information, training, psychological support and legal guidance and advice to ensure that the rights of women in politics are enforced and defended, particularly in cases of violence.

According to the National Institute for Women, from 2017 to 2019, there were 3,616 specialized counselling sessions, provisions of assistance and incidents, including cases of violence and discrimination, involving women experiencing political violence and harassment. During that period, six electoral amparo proceedings were brought for violence against women representing and exercising public office. However, none of these proceedings has succeeded, owing in part to gaps in the ordinary legislation, which does not recognize the forms of political violence and harassment of women, set out penalties or define the competencies and roles of the various public institutions and political parties (see annex 8).

44. As part of efforts to build capacity in the area of leadership, as recommended by the Committee ([CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7](#), para. 25 (a)), the Centre for the Political Training of Women of the National Institute for Women has been strengthened with a view to evaluating and improving the training courses it offers, which are intended to promote the empowerment and political involvement of women leaders in their diversity. During the period in question, the Centre, in line with the actions set out in the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030, conducted 37 training courses on political rights, transformative leadership and tools for advocacy and political participation, benefiting a total of 695 women leaders from all over the country and belonging to different groups, including rural women, women with disabilities, transgender women, indigenous women and women of African descent. There is a permanent scheme in place for women of African descent. The participants reported having strengthened their transformative leadership skills towards achieving equality between women and men and having acquired greater knowledge and personal and collective capacity for political participation and advocacy, through the questioning of stereotypes, prejudices and roles imposed by society. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal also held a workshop for newly elected women assembly members on political communication strategies for forging links with the public and creating alliances for the development of common parliamentary agendas that include women's political rights. Other initiatives in this area included the training of groups of women politicians at various levels, including student governments, political parties and young women leaders, with over 1,000 women receiving training in total. Such activities were developed as a result of interinstitutional work between the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the National Institute for Women, the Ministry of Education and other public and private bodies. During the workshops, topics such as leadership and women's political rights were addressed, through methodologies and approaches focusing on diversity and intersectionality.

45. In order to support women's non-governmental organizations and women human rights defenders, as recommended by the Committee ([CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7](#), para. 25 (f)), the National Institute for Women provided advisory services to women's and mixed social organizations, including rural and urban women, indigenous women, women of African descent, migrant women, transgender women, women community rights advocates and women entrepreneurs, with the aim of strengthening women's organizational and partnership capabilities. In 2020, the National Institute for Women held the eighteenth National Forum of Indigenous Women, which brought together women from the country's eight indigenous peoples to discuss their specific needs during the pandemic. The National Institute for Women also held a round table on women's leadership in the time of COVID-19, in which 59 women leaders from across the country took part.

Article 8: Measures to ensure that women have the opportunity to represent their Governments

46. With regard to the recommendation contained in paragraph 25 (a), the Government has supported and encouraged the candidacies of Costa Rican women for high-level posts in international organizations, with appointments confirmed for leadership and secretariat positions at the International Organization for Migration, the Italian-Latin American Institute, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Inter-American Development Bank. In 2019, of 192 Foreign Service posts, 68 were occupied by women (35.4 per cent), 79 by men (41.1 per cent) and 45 were vacant (23.4 per cent); of the heads of mission, 20 were women and 27 were men (see annex 9). The foreign policy of Costa Rica is aimed at ensuring that issues related to human rights, gender and climate change are discussed in spaces for international dialogue. For example, Costa Rica spoke on four occasions in the dialogue on sexual orientation and gender identity, held during the thirty-fifth regular session of the Human Rights Council in 2017, and presented an omnibus resolution at the forty-seventh General Assembly of the Organization of American States, also held in 2017, entitled “Gender balance and equitable geographical distribution and representation of different legal systems in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights”. Costa Rica has promoted gender equality in multilateral environmental agreements, enabling it to raise awareness of its own national initiative, “Coalition for all”, a catalytic instrument intended to promote common positions and language on gender equality within the United Nations Environment Programme. For its part, the National Institute for Women leads the Action Coalition for Climate Justice of the Generation Equality Forum, together with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. In addition, Costa Rican women with disabilities are represented on the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.

Article 9: Right to nationality

47. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 39 (a)–(d), in 2018, Costa Rica granted Costa Rican nationality to a stateless woman, becoming the first country in Latin America to do so. In the legislative sphere, a new chapter on naturalization for persons declared stateless and stateless refugees was added to the regulations on procedures, requirements and criteria for naturalization decisions (Supreme Electoral Tribunal, Decree No. 2–2017), which promotes a model of differentiated care for the prevention of statelessness in indigenous and border areas. In 2019, an act protecting the right to nationality of indigenous persons and guaranteeing the integration of indigenous persons living in border areas (Act No. 9710 of 2 February 2019) was adopted; the act establishes procedures for recognizing and protecting indigenous cultures. In that connection, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal reports on the bilateral work carried out with its counterpart institution in Panama and activities related to the Chiriticos project, which is intended to improve registration rates among Ngäbe-Buglé indigenous persons. In the framework of Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Costa Rica issued Executive Decree Regulations recognizing the right of foreign nationals to have their sexual and gender identity recognized on the DIMEX, the identity card for foreign residents (Decree No. 41337-MGP of 18 December 2018), and Decree Regulations recognizing migration rights for same-sex couples (Decree No. 41329-MGP of 28 December 2018). The Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs has reported an increase in gender-based asylum claims, from 1 for domestic violence and 1 relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,

intersex, queer and other persons in 2017, to 14 for domestic violence and 3 relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other persons as at October 2020 (see annex 10).

Article 10: Measures to ensure women's education and training

48. Costa Rica has high educational standards. However, the main challenge continues to be ensuring that educational spaces are free of inequality and discrimination against women in all their diversity and that the necessary conditions are in place to prevent the exclusion of women and promote retention. Given that, from an early age, women face circumstances that put them at risk of educational exclusion, it is a national achievement that exclusion rates for women have fallen from 7.2 per cent in 2017 to 5.2 per cent in 2019. In the first half of 2019, 2,426 women were reintegrated into the education system, well above the target of 1,000 people per year.

49. With regard to the recommendation contained in paragraph 27 (a), in 2013, the Ministry of Education, as part of efforts to ensure that the indigenous population had access to appropriate bilingual education, issued Executive Decree No. 37801-MEP of 15 July 2013, entitled "Reform of the indigenous education subsystem". Among other things, the curriculum was strengthened to include subjects in indigenous languages; in addition, the Department of Intercultural Education has prioritized the collective development of syllabuses that promote the maintenance of the ancestral languages of indigenous peoples, as well as the acquisition of language skills in Spanish and another foreign language (see annex 11).

50. With regard to ensuring the access and retention of girls and adolescent and adult women in all levels of the regular education system, the Ministry of Education has implemented protocols, guidelines and directives covering youth and adult education, which are intended to promote the access and inclusion of women with disabilities in educational institutions. There are 265 primary schools in the indigenous territories, where the education of women is guaranteed. With regard to the training of teaching staff, the Ministry of Education has established systematic awareness-raising and training processes aimed at eradicating discrimination against women, including violence and sexual harassment.

51. Costa Rica is also implementing a national strategy for alleviating extreme poverty called Bridge to Development, which includes two programmes that provide economic benefits to enable people to continue studying or to re-enter the education system. From 2017 to 2020, over 52.8 per cent of the beneficiaries of the AVANCEMOS programme were women, including women with disabilities, trans women and indigenous women. In 2019, 7,400 indigenous students received AVANCEMOS benefits, of whom 52.3 per cent were women. Similarly, in 2019 and 2020, 48.5 per cent of the beneficiaries of the CRECEMOS programme, aimed at preschool and primary school students, were girls.

52. In response to the recommendation concerning the Schools for Change programme (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7, para. 27 (c)), an impact assessment of the programme was conducted in 2018, which revealed the need for change in order to mainstream a gender perspective into existing programmes. As a result, the handbook for the Living Together programme is being restructured in order to mainstream a gender perspective. This programme has legal backing and a formal operating structure and is implemented at all levels of the education system. In addition, since 2020, the Ministry of Education has been updating a repository of gender equality and equity issues, which serve as inputs for work in this area. To date, 1,283 people have registered.

53. Costa Rica has worked to improve women's access to and retention in higher education. Of particular note is the inclusive admissions model of the National University of Costa Rica. The university conducts visits to schools throughout the country, including in areas that are difficult to access, such as rural and indigenous areas. It also uses media outlets and social networks to publish details of the admissions process, clarify the University Admissions System and online registration, and explain the inclusivity criteria, which take into account students' gender, the ranking of their schools, their regions of origin and the development index of their districts of origin. As a result of such initiatives, during the period 2017–2020, 54 per cent of new students were women. In addition, with regard to both gender and place of origin, in the five-year period 2016–2020, women and men from rural areas accounted for, on average, 15 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, of incoming students. This model has improved the inclusion of students with reduced access to education and, most importantly, enabled them to enter in-demand professions. In addition, there are measures in place that prioritize students who are pregnant or who have children, such as priority enrolment, access to scholarships and childcare centres. The National Technical University has also implemented actions that may be good practices worth replicating, based on the follow-up and results of those actions, including the introduction of curricular flexibility as a strategy to promote inclusive education. In addition, the National Training Institute is developing strategies to reduce the number of women excluded from education, by taking into account their caring responsibilities for dependents and strengthening protection mechanisms and the procedure for reporting physical, sexual or psychological violence. Specifically, this includes providing economic benefits and addressing the care needs of students' dependents. The National Training Institute has also developed a strategy called Breaking the mould, through which it seeks to incorporate women graduates of its programmes into the formal labour market in vocations with low female participation. Another strategy called Partnership for Bilingualism is also being implemented as part of the national policy for effective equality between women and men. In 2019, 3,853 women achieved proficiency in English by attending National Training Institute centres located throughout the country; 121 of the graduates were women with disabilities.

54. The Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promoter promotes equality between women and men in terms of access to training and the inclusion of small and medium-sized enterprises in the export process. During the reporting period, there were 14,602 registrations for 735 types of training, with women accounting for 50 per cent of registrations.

55. In order to close technological gaps and develop tools to increase female workforce participation, Costa Rica established the national policy for equality between women and men with regard to training, employment and enjoyment of the outputs of science, technology, telecommunications and innovation 2018–2027 and a corresponding action plan covering the period 2018–2023. The policy is an effort by public institutions, civil society and the private sector, with regional representation, to promote the equal participation of women in this area. With regard to follow-up of the activities set out in the national policy and the action plan and carried out between 2018 and 2020, some of the main advances included the establishment in 2020 of the High-level Commission and the issuance of its own regulations, and the creation of the Centre for Technological Innovation, which is composed of officials with a technical background drawn from the same institutions that make up the High-level Commission (12 in total). One of the areas of the policy in which the greatest progress has been made is pillar 1, "Attracting women to science, technology and innovation". Of particular note is an ongoing research programme on gender barriers to access, training, retention and employment of women in science and technology; there are currently 25 studies under way under the programme. Progress has also been made in

mainstreaming a gender perspective into educational initiatives at every level and in every category of the formal education system in Costa Rica. There are 7 permanent initiatives and 33 activities that include a gender perspective (see annex 12). For instance, the National Technical University has incorporated gender-sensitive language into its redesigned syllabuses, while the National Training Institute has mainstreamed a gender perspective into its orientation programme, institutional regulations, curriculum design, quality management systems and technical training. In addition, as part of the activities of the Interinstitutional Commission for Meetings of Women in Science and Technology, annual meetings have been held for the last 10 years with young women from the public education system to promote interest in science and technology. Some 500 young women from across the country take part every year.

56. The Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Education Programme is intended to promote the development of twenty-first century skills and competencies in primary and secondary schools, incorporating a gender perspective, with a view to ensuring that science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics are explored and valued by students in their vocational projects.

57. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice and Peace established a subprogramme to support women, which promotes access to education and training for women deprived of their liberty, on an equal footing with men.

58. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education, through its Food and Nutrition Programme for Schoolchildren and Young People, sought to continue delivering food parcels to families with children and teenagers enrolled in the public education system. The guidelines for the delivery of such parcels state that young women who are pregnant or who have children should be prioritized, in order to minimize the risk of such individuals dropping out of the education system during the pandemic.

Article 11: Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment

59. In Costa Rica, the national open unemployment rate for the period from the third quarter of 2017 to the third quarter of 2020 was higher among women than men, reaching an unemployment rate for the male population of 17.4 per cent, while that of women was 29.0 per cent in 2020. According to the third report on women's human rights in Costa Rica, women continue to receive lower wages than men for equal or similar work; they are mainly employed in services and retail, which are among the occupations with the highest levels of informality and lowest qualifications; in addition, inequality still persists in terms of domestic work between women and men, in terms of time spent and the proportional burden, limiting women's economic growth and their access to, retention in and career development in the labour market. This situation has worsened in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, owing to the health measures implemented, which have mainly harmed the country's informal and tourist sectors, in which women are highly represented.

60. The Government of Costa Rica continues to make efforts to eradicate wage inequality between women and men (recommendation contained in paragraph 29 (a)). Of particular note is the adoption of the Protection of Equal Pay for Women and Men Act (Act No. 9677 of 8 March 2019), which is an amendment to the Social Equality of Women Act (Act No. 7142 of 1990). The Act seeks to guarantee women equal pay with men, in both the private and public sectors, for work of equal value under the same employer, whether in the same position or in different positions of equal value, or in similar or reasonably equivalent functions. Under this Act, the Inter-agency

Commission on Equal Pay for Women and Men was established in November 2020 to take steps to ensure that the National Statistics and Census Institute includes the equal pay indicator in the relevant studies. The intention, based on the Commission's studies, is to establish indicators to be included in the National System of Indicators so as to improve the analysis of gender wage inequality.

61. As noted in the follow-up report to the concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Costa Rica (CEDAW/C/CRI/7), in 2019 the Government drew up a proposed occupational profile for domestic workers, which made it possible to move towards closing gender-based wage gaps. Through its decision CNS-RG-2-2019, dated 24 June 2019 and published in Official Gazette No. 153 of 13 August 2019, the National Wage Council agreed to conduct a process of eliminating the wage gap between the minimum wage for domestic service and the minimum daily wage for unskilled workers. This process will take place over a period of 15 years, by means of an additional annual adjustment of 2.33962 per cent in the domestic service line item, the application of the increases starting in 2020 and ending in 2034. In 2025, after 5 years of the process, the National Wage Council will carry out a technical and economic analysis of the social, economic and labour conditions of the country, to determine if it is feasible to reduce the indicated term. In addition, following the approval on 6 July 2017 of the regulation for and implementation of a new insurance modality, the Financial Management Board of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund reports that from 2017 to April 2019 a total of 18,199 domestic workers were covered by such insurance, of whom 17,653 are women and 546 men. In 2019, a study was conducted of the financial impact of the contributory insurance modality under the reduced benefit for female domestic workers in health, disability, old-age and death insurance, showing the implementation of this modality had a positive impact, thereby increasing the contributor base in both health insurance and in disability, old-age and death insurance (see annex 13).

62. In addition, the National Wage Council reviewed wage categories in some jobs in which women are overrepresented or where they face obstacles to their inclusion, such as coyol palm harvesting and some positions in the fishing industry. By being defined as unskilled workers, people are guaranteed a minimum wage and full labour rights (see annex 14).

63. In order to improve access to employment for sectors or groups of the population excluded from social security coverage and training, which generally include women (recommendation contained in paragraph 29 (b)), the Government established the Tripartite Board for Transition from Informality to Formality (Government, trade unions and employers), a joint effort supported by the International Labour Organization whose main objective is the formalization of labour through actions focused on four pillars: education and technical and vocational training, social protection, facilitation of procedures and tax simplification. Within this framework, priorities are identified that require inter-agency attention in terms of formalizing women's employment.

64. In addition to the above, from July 2017 to December 2020, the National Employment Programme supported a total of 50,565 people, of whom 58.3 per cent were women who received support nationwide. This programme seeks to improve the living conditions and employability of women workers currently in the informal sector, with the aim of increasing their chances of obtaining employment in the formal sector under appropriate conditions, or developing a productive business idea (see annex 15).

65. In 2020, despite the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Programme continued to offer support to beneficiaries, meeting the scheduled targets. As at December 2020, 6,800 women benefited from the different modalities of the

Programme, 55.5 per cent of the total number. The Find a Job programme had its largest graduating class with 4,597 women beneficiaries (58.9 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries) (see annex 16).

66. In addition, in the framework of the Network of Comprehensive Care for Women in Criminal Cases and their Vulnerable Dependants, during the period from 2017 to 2020, training was provided to women at different levels of care in the prison system, who took courses at the National Learning Institute and received certification in skills such as hairdressing, care for older persons or waitressing, which have enabled them to develop skills to improve employability and economic independence once they are discharged from the system. In 2020, a specific process was set up with the women workers at an agro-industrial project in a semi-institutional modality, which focused on training in social and employment skills to assist in the search for work, geared up to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic (see annex 17).

67. In addition, thanks to the Gender Equality Management System and the Gender Equality Seal, progress has been made in having the importance acknowledged of guaranteeing gender equality in labour relations in the country's private sector. Since April 2016, more than 178 organizations have been participating in some phase of the process; more than 500 organizations are aware of and have shown interest in implementing actions, and spaces for dialogue and meeting have also been opened to share experiences of good practices (see annex 18).

68. Labour inspection processes are a fundamental pillar in the promotion and protection of the labour conditions of women workers. The Government has strengthened these processes through the provision of personnel and the formalization of procedures and instruments developed with a gender perspective that make it possible to identify discriminatory practices against women in the workplace, such as unequal pay, sexual harassment, workplace harassment, segregation of occupations by sex (reproducing traditional gender roles), in the selection and hiring of personnel, in training, promotions and advancement. An example of this is the Guide to Labour Inspection with a Gender Approach, which has been prepared jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Institute for Women since 2018. During the period from 2017 to 2019, such labour inspections with a gender focus upheld fair pay for appropriate working hours and protected occupational health and also combated labour involving children, persons with disabilities and migrants.

69. To improve working conditions, the Occupational Health Council made technical standards available to the general public free of charge for two years, including the PN INTE T 201–2019 Standard: Prevention, detection and response to workplace harassment or “mobbing” in the workplace.

70. An important milestone that demonstrates the progress in breaking sexist stereotypes in the workplace is the amendment of article 88 of the Labour Code (Act No. 9758 of 29 October 2019), eliminating the prohibition on night work for women and formally eradicating a discriminatory rule against women because of their gender, despite the fact that this restriction had already been lifted in the country in practice.

Article 12: Measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care

71. In response to the recommendation on technical guidelines for therapeutic abortion (contained in paragraph 31 (b)), in December 2019 the Government of Costa Rica formalized the Technical Standard for Therapeutic Abortion. In addition, in December 2020, the Ministry of Health adopted the Clinical Care Protocol for the medical procedure linked to article 121 of the Criminal Code: therapeutic abortion,

drafted by the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund. Both instruments represent substantive progress in guaranteeing the well-being of women with pregnancies that put their health at risk. It should be noted that communication strategies have been developed that focus on the need for therapeutic abortion to save women's health or lives, and on raising awareness to avoid stigmatizing those who undergo the procedure.

72. With regard to the health of adolescent girls and women, there has been significant progress in reducing the teenage pregnancy rate, which fell from 29.8 in 2013 to 21.5 in 2018. The coordination of such important inter-institutional and intersectoral efforts as the Meso-American Health Project, the Ministry of Education's programme on emotional relations and sexuality, the expansion of the coverage of the Comprehensive Approach to Teenage Pregnancy Programme within the framework of the Teenage Mother Care Council and regulatory changes to protect girls and young women from improper relationships could be contributing to a cultural change of greater protection and support for girls and young women, in which the reduction of pregnancies could be an indicator.

73. This transition process has been strengthened by increased access to modern contraceptive methods for young women and the strengthening of care programmes. In that regard, the female condom was registered in the official list of medicines, guidelines were prepared for the dissemination and promotion of the right to use such condoms, and the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund made its first purchase of this product. It should be noted that the take-up of modern contraceptive methods such as Implanon has been quite successful among the adolescent population and that Executive Decree No. 41722 of 23 April 2019 authorizes the registration and sale of emergency oral contraceptives without a medical prescription. In another important step, sexual and reproductive health counselling is being provided at clinics for young women without them having to be accompanied by an adult or to have adult permission. With regard to the health of girls and young women, it should be noted that a human papillomavirus vaccination strategy has been implemented, aimed at 10-year-old girls. According to information from the Ministry of Health's Epidemiological Surveillance Unit, as at September 2019, a total of 29,450 (81 per cent) of 10-year-old girls had been vaccinated.

74. In addition, in 2020 the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund adopted a guideline for surgical sterilization in persons with disabilities that was duly endorsed by the Fund's administration, in coordination with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. Once it had been prepared, it was disseminated through the media and the joint production of information material on the subject was begun, for it to be sent to health centres in order to promote a better understanding of the guidelines and thus guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities. However, in the context of the pandemic, some progress in the implementation of the policy agenda for women with disabilities was affected. For example, the agreement between the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, the Women's Hospital and the National Rehabilitation Centre to provide the medical equipment and personnel required for better sexual and reproductive health care for women with disabilities has been affected by the creation of the Special Centre for Care for Patients with COVID-19 in the National Rehabilitation Centre, which places limits on care for women with disabilities.

75. With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning the protection of pregnant women and mothers (contained in paragraph 31 (d)), on 17 March 2020, the amendment of article 12 of the General Health Act (Act No. 9824 of 21 January 2020) was adopted to protect pregnant women before, during and after childbirth, recognizing and seeking to ensure the protection of pregnant women when they undergo health procedures, especially gynaecological procedures, through comprehensive medical and administrative care that is timely and respectful of their

condition. In addition, the Guidelines to Comprehensive Care of Women, Boys and Girls in the Prenatal, Childbirth and Postpartum Stages and the LS-SS-010 Guidelines to Care during Pregnancy, Childbirth and Immediate Post-partum for Pregnant Women Infected by COVID-19 and for Newborns (Health Services) of May 2020 were adopted.

76. In-vitro fertilization procedures performed at the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund marked another important achievement. In June 2019, the High Complexity Reproductive Medicine Unit was inaugurated at the Women's Hospital. By December 2020, the Unit achieved a pregnancy rate of 41 per cent, exceeding international standards of effectiveness. From its inauguration until December 2020, there have been 27 births: 14 girls and 13 boys, 20 pregnant patients have already been discharged by the Unit and 10 women are in initial follow-up of early pregnancy. In addition, the Andrology Laboratory opened in September 2019 and the Highly Complicated Reproductive Medicine Unit cryobank holds 163 vitrified embryos, which are the product of in-vitro fertilization cycles that have been performed so far. The Gamete Cryopreservation and Fertility Preservation Programme holds 30 vials of sperm from cancer patients; in addition, 64 vitrified oocytes are kept in custody as part of in-vitro fertilization processes. The egg and sperm donation programme is currently conducting a preliminary analysis of the first potential donors. Coverage is 100 per cent both for diagnosis, medical and surgical management, and for low and high complexity reproductive medicine procedures (following protocols).

77. Finally, it is important to highlight national efforts to incorporate a gender perspective in disaster risk management; for example, the National Risk Prevention and Disaster Response Commission has developed a workplan for training personnel in the national emergency system. In addition, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Committee (an inter-agency body coordinated by the Ministry of Health) drafted in June 2020 the instrument LS-SI-022 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Guidelines in the Framework of the COVID-19 Health Alert, which was prepared taking into account the gender perspective.

Article 13: Discrimination in women's economic and social life

78. Since 2017, coordinated efforts between the National Institute for Women, the Superintendency-General of Financial Entities and the Development Banking System have made it possible to move towards a programmatic road map to gain an understanding of the status of Costa Rican women in the national financial system. As a result of this process, the first "Report on gaps between men and women in access to and use of the financial system in Costa Rica" has been produced. The report showed that of the total number of loans granted in the country in 2018, 43.8 per cent were allocated to women and 56.2 per cent to men, which is equivalent to a gender gap of 22 percentage points.

79. Among the measures implemented in recent years to address the recommendation to increase the allocation of resources for women's access to financing (contained in paragraph 33 (b)), a series of credit initiatives for women stand out, such as the "+Mujeres +Natura" financial programme led by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy and the Office of the First Vice-President of the Republic, with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Fundecooperación, which funds and manages the funds of the Costa Rica-Netherlands Agreement, and the Joint Institute for Social Aid, which is aimed at women biodiversity managers, agricultural producers, ecotourism entrepreneurs, scientists and researchers, and seeks to mobilize resources so that women can access credit on favourable terms to finance their activities. The intention of this initiative is

to strengthen women's economic empowerment, address gender gaps in environmental management and make progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Programme includes three financial instruments to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19: the National Forestry Financing Fund's credit at your side, a credit line for productive development, working capital, infrastructure, equipment and innovative projects related to the forest; "MUJERES NATURA", a credit line granted by Fundecooperación, which aims to integrate the gender perspective, equality and empowerment of women in the management of biodiversity; and the Payment for Environmental Services Programme, aimed at women owners of forests and forest plantations, which consists of a financial award by the State to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and protect biodiversity and water and to acknowledge the scenic beauty service provided by forests. Overall, under this programme in 2020, 181,657,500 colones (\$296,341.76) was awarded to women.

80. The Joint Institute for Social Aid, through Fideimas, granted a total of 2,314 loans in the period from 2017 to 2020, of which 65.2 per cent went to women in charge of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. Of these, 72.6 per cent were urban women and 27.4 per cent rural women. Of the productive activities financed, 37.4 per cent were in trade, 30.4 per cent in industry, 18.6 per cent in the agricultural sector, 13.2 per cent in services and 0.4 per cent in tourism. Other active programmes include the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Pronapyme (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Support Programme), the Crece Mujer credit line of the National Housing and Urban Planning Institute and others available through the Development Banking System.

81. With regard to support for women's business activity and entrepreneurship, through the Emprende project coordinated by the National Institute for Women with support from the European Union, in the period from 2012 to 2018, technical advice and support was provided to strengthen women's entrepreneurial capacities to a total of 996 micro- and small enterprises run by women. For its part, in the period from 2017 to 2020, the National Institute for Women's Fomujeres fund benefited a total of 444 women's projects, with an investment of 1,046,866,247 colones (\$1,707,775.28).

82. The Foreign Trade Corporation of Costa Rica has a structure of regional offices and seeks to develop export capacity in rural areas. Between 2017 and 2020, this effort led to the identification of 1,034 exporting companies or companies with an export potential in rural regions of the country. The proportion of these companies whose capital is led by women is 29 per cent, 4 points higher than in the central region of the country (25 per cent). A highlight among the programmes implemented by the Corporation, the Alivio Programme was developed in 2020 to support companies that have been affected by the crisis generated by COVID-19. In its first phase, it reached and supported 191 companies, 24 per cent of which belonged to women.

83. In 2020, for its part, the Women Export programme ensured continuity in the activities of the business internationalization plan, focused on closing gaps, mainly in the commercial and sustainability areas of their business management, generating more than \$375,000 from new business in 2020 and \$35,000 from business continuity in 2019. It is important to note that in 2020 efforts focused on counteracting the effects of the economic crisis facing the country as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had an impact on women by exacerbating the disadvantages they have historically faced. However, the measures remain insufficient to comprehensively address women's economic needs.

84. With regard to access to housing, in 2020 the "Definition of priority population in housing projects financed under article 59 of the National Housing Finance System Act" protocol was prepared, enabling the prioritization of women in conditions of extreme poverty as potential beneficiaries of housing projects. The number of housing

vouchers delivered to women by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development during the period from 2017 to 2020 accounts for 55.5 per cent of the total number of vouchers processed and covered by the national budget.

85. In the area of sport and recreation, significant progress has been made in recent years to promote women's participation in sporting activities and decision-making forums. In 2018, the Women, Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Commission of the Costa Rican Institute of Sport and Recreation was established, operating as a gender mechanism at the institutional level and promoting affirmative actions to promote women's sport, gender parity in the composition of the Institute's different bodies, training spaces and technical advice on the prevention of sexual harassment in sport and recreation, women's human rights and gender gaps in this area. Specifically, a protocol against sexual harassment has been adopted by the Football Federation and a specific protocol for the Women's Football Union, which would apply to the Costa Rican women's league, is expected in the near future.

86. From academia, the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica in particular has led different activities to strengthen equality and the empowerment of women through sport. The Institute is a member of the International University Sports Federation Executive Committee where its representative currently chairs the Gender Equality Committee, composed of representatives from five continents. In 2017, the University Federation was awarded the winner's prize by the International University Sports Federation for gender equality in sport.

87. The product of the joint efforts of different agencies, including the National Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Sport, the Costa Rican Institute of Sport and Recreation, the National Institute for Women and the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica, in 2019 the TICA Women and Sport Network was formed, which seeks to coordinate efforts so that women in their diversity can have equal opportunities in sport, recreation and physical activity. It is expected that this initiative will soon be approved for formal adoption by the National Sports Council. Among the most recent achievements is the approval, in September 2020, of the National Policy on Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity of Costa Rica covering 2020–2030, which incorporates a gender and human rights perspective and is considered a major step forward in the development, health and social well-being of the population.

88. In addition, the Civic Centres for Peace programme is an important aspect of Ministry of Justice and Peace activities. The programme promotes the prevention of violence, the strengthening of capacities for harmonious coexistence and the establishment of development opportunities for minors through education, technology, art, sport and recreation. In 2018, seven centres were set up, one in each province of the country. In 2019, a total of 536 training processes were carried out in which 9,987 people were enrolled, 53 per cent of whom were under 18 years of age; in this group, the majority were women (60 per cent).

Article 14: Rights of rural women and their role in the family economy

89. The Government of Costa Rica has done important work to coordinate efforts and form intersectoral alliances that have led to the adoption of regulations and public policies aimed at including the gender perspective in rural development and in economic and environmental issues. In order to address the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its seventh periodic report ([CEDAW/C/CRI/7](#)), strategic alliances have been forged between the National Institute for Women, the agricultural sector and the environment and energy sector, resulting in significant progress for the well-being of rural women.

90. With regard to the recommendation to guarantee rural women's access to land titles and ownership (contained in paragraph 35 (a)), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Executive Secretariat of Agricultural Sectoral Planning and the Rural Development Institute-National Institute for Women worked together to develop a short-, medium- and long-term strategy to increase women's security in land tenure. Approval of this strategy by the Rural Development Institute's Board of Directors is scheduled for the first half of 2021. In addition, in the period from 2017 to 2020, through the institutional land endowment service, the Institute allocated land to 1,481 rural women for the implementation of projects that will improve their socioeconomic conditions. On average, this area represents 50 per cent of the total land allocated by the institution in that period.

91. Regarding the recommendation to increase the effective participation of rural women in the benefits of rural development projects (contained in paragraph 35, subparagraph b), in the period from 2017 to 2020 a significant number of programmes and projects have been aimed at establishing, improving and promoting conditions to ensure that rural women have access to the resources and services offered by the State in rural development. Through non-reimbursable projects, rural credit, training and technical support in organizational and business management, some 136,000 women have benefited nationwide. The objective of these measures has been to strengthen women's capacities and skills so that they can develop value-added productive activities to generate their own income and resources through access to paid work.

92. An important step forward in the promotion of the participation of women in rural areas in projects traditionally led by men was implemented within the framework of the institutional supply programme, permitting gradual measures in the fields of training, awareness-raising and inclusion of gender criteria in administrative records, diagnoses and studies carried out by the National Production Council, to correct the low female participation in this market. In the Brunca region, for example, the proportion of women participating in projects increased from 20.8 per cent in 2017 to 38.6 per cent in 2020.

93. Approximately 296,086 rural women benefited from economic subsidies of individual programmes granted by the Joint Institute for Social Aid in the period from 2017 to 2020, of whom 9.7 per cent were women with some degree of disability. The approximate amount invested was 98,702,812,582 colones (\$161,016,007.47). In 2020, the number of benefits increased by 29.8 per cent compared to 2017, which made it possible to provide support to more women, despite the national COVID-19 emergency. Meanwhile, from 2017 to the first half of 2020, some 127,019 rural women heads of household received subsidies from the Institute, representing an investment of approximately 46,905,288,987 colones (\$76,517,600.30).

94. With regard to strengthening women's participation in the decision-making bodies that define territorial governance (contained in paragraph 35, subparagraph c), the Rural Development Institute is promoting a new model of territorial governance with gender parity by establishing 29 territories, each with its own territorial council for rural development, made up of an assembly and its respective steering committee, on which rural women have a permanent seat. In these territories, processes have also been put in place to strengthen the capacities and skills of territorial actors in sustainable territorial rural development and management to guide medium- and long-term decision-making processes for territorial rural development. Rural women account for 5,606 of the total number participating, which is an average of 50 per cent of those trained. In the 29 territories, 45 per cent of the steering committees of the territorial councils for rural development are chaired by women. This governance model promotes territorial planning based on the specific needs that are reflected in the rural territorial development plans and in the strategic actions envisaged in the territories that will contribute to the economic empowerment of rural women.

95. For its part, the Fishing and Aquaculture Institute of Costa Rica has led decision-making forums for the management and governance of the country's 11 responsible fishing marine areas, through their respective local governance committees, in which women's participation has been increasing: 5 women participated in 2017, 18 in 2018 and 26 in 2019.

96. Another important development is the participation in 2018 by the National Institute for Women in national climate change governance, led by the Office of the Director for Climate Change and the Office of the President, which aims to strengthen the National Institute for Women's activities to support the advancement of women in the National Policy on Adaptation to Climate Change covering the period from 2018 to 2030 and the National Decarbonization Plan for the years from 2019 to 2050.

97. With regard to the recommendation on the elimination of stereotyped gender roles and intra-housing inequality that affects rural women (contained in paragraph 35 (c)), progress has been made in coordination with the National Institute for Women and UNDP for the implementation of the equality seal system in all agencies in the agricultural sector (see annex 19). This is a regional system of gender equality indicators in enterprises and institutions, which aims to identify, describe and quantify the degree of equality and gender gaps between women and men in institutions and, on the basis of that analysis, to draft and implement a plan to reduce the gaps that will enable the institutions to opt, in the medium term, for the gender equality seal promoted by the National Institute for Women.

98. In the context of implementing the Gender Equality Policy for the inclusive development of the agricultural, fishing and rural sector of Costa Rica covering the decade from 2020 to 2030 and its first action plan for the years from 2020 to 2024, the agricultural sector promoted the establishment in 2020 of the Chamber of Rural Women of Costa Rica, whose main purpose is to lobby to promote, from within civil society, the empowerment and economic autonomy of rural women in the country. With respect to the "rural women: land, rights and expressions" project, no progress was reported during this period.

99. Finally, with regard to ensuring rural women's effective access to appropriate agricultural technology, information and communications technology and mobile networks (contained in paragraph 35 (d)), the National Institute of Innovation and Agricultural Technology Transfer has been adapting and developing the use of controlled environment technologies for vegetable production for women's groups in the Chorotega and Central Pacific regions. In the years from 2017 to 2020, 58 women benefited, including 30 teenagers, from the Abangares Technical and Professional School. In terms of access to knowledge through the Agricultural and Rural Technology, Information and Communication Platform, of the 195,110 visits recorded between 2017 and 2020, 57.5 per cent were by women.

100. In another area of endeavour, under the coordination of the Gender Equity Office of the Technological Institute of Costa Rica and the School of Business Administration of the National University, a project began in 2018 called "Joint capacity-building for the social management of the Association of Indigenous Women of Cabécar de Talamanca Kábata Konana" (Women Protectors of Forests and Highlands), which aims to lead to participatory self-management processes among organized groups of women of the Cabécar de Talamanca territory, for them to have political influence through civic action to defend their rights, and to obtain resources to contribute to their Good Living. This was joined in 2020 by a new outreach project called "Productive and socio-organizational strengthening of projects for the local development of organized women's groups in the Cabécar de Talamanca Indigenous Territory", to strengthen the family economy of the women in these territories.

101. As mentioned, in recent years the Government of Costa Rica has adopted policies and programmes that are fundamental for the promotion of equality and the empowerment of rural women, such as the national territorial rural development policy covering the years from 2015 to 2030, and the gender equality for inclusive development policy in the agricultural, fisheries and rural sector of Costa Rica, for the period from 2020 to 2030, with their respective action plans. These policies are expected to make it possible to close gaps and combat the inequalities faced by women in access to and enjoyment of agricultural and rural services and rural economic development opportunities.

102. Other policies of note aimed at promoting gender equality in environmental matters include the national biodiversity policy for the years from 2015 to 2030, the national wetlands policy covering from 2017 to 2030, the national climate change adaptation policy covering the period from 2018 to 2030 and the national decarbonization plan for the years from 2019 to 2050. In 2018, the water and sewerage agency, with UNDP support, drafted the gender equality policy for the years from 2018 to 2033 and its first action plan covering from 2018 to 2022, the first gender policy in the environmental sector of Costa Rica. Other important initiatives that acknowledge the key role of rural women in the protection of the country's forests and rural development include the REDD+ Strategy Action Plan for the Forest and Rural Development Programme of the National Forestry Financing Fund; and the inclusion of the gender perspective in the preparation of the Convention on Biological Diversity sixth country report, which presents lessons learned and challenges to the continued promotion of the inclusion of the gender perspective in environmental initiatives. This process led to the establishment of the Gender and Environment Network led by the Planning Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture and Energy, and subsequently to the setting up of the Gender, Environment and Biodiversity Programme, through which Ministerial Directive No. 005–2019 “Reduction of gender gaps in the biodiversity sector – water, protected areas and forests – to ensure equality and the contribution of women in that sector” is being promoted.

103. The action plans and strategic alliances to ensure women's equal participation in areas relating to environmental issues and climate action are also supported by the commitments established in the Gender Action Plan of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is monitored by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2020, Costa Rica submitted a report to the Conference of the Parties on progress in its implementation and that of its predecessor, the Lima Gender Work Plan.

Articles 15 and 16: Equality before the law and family relations

104. As regards the recommendation concerning the recognition of unremunerated domestic work for purposes of distributing joint marital property and on compensation for an economically disadvantaged spouse for use in divorce proceedings (contained in paragraph 43, subparagraph (c)), the adoption of the amendment to article 35 of the Family Code (Act No. 9765 of 29 October 2019) on shared family responsibilities, which establishes that both spouses (it also applies to *de facto* unions) are obliged to meet family needs and expenses in proportion to their skills, opportunities and economic income, and to share unpaid domestic and care work, and parental responsibility for children and dependent family members, is considered a step forward. Whoever performs, exclusively or to a greater extent, unpaid domestic and care work in the household shall be entitled to have such work taken into account in the estimate of his or her financial contribution to the household.

105. With regard to the recommendation to appropriately address the consideration of the specific needs of women and children in determining child custody in cases involving gender-based violence in the domestic sphere (contained in paragraph 43 (a)), one regulatory measure that contributes to progress in this area is the adoption of the amendment to the Family Code and the Children and Adolescents Code establishing a family interrelationship regime (Act No. 9781 of 12 November 2019), which provides that after divorce or legal separation, the courts shall determine the custody, upbringing and education of minor children, taking into account the physical and moral aptitudes and capacities of the father and mother, in accordance with the best interests of the minor. Thus, under this Act, it should be possible to analyse and consider situations with a potential for intra-family violence in order to make custody decisions.

106. With regard to the legal right to paid paternity leave and equally shared parental responsibilities, (contained in paragraph 29, subparagraph d), the Government of Costa Rica submitted a report in 2019 to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at the Committee's request. To date, there has been no progress on a concrete proposal to implement paternity leave in the public and private sector of Costa Rica owing to budgetary constraints.

107. Among the results of the implementation of the Responsible Parenting Act in the country, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal reports that between July 2017 and November 2020, of the total number of applications submitted, 37 per cent of fathers came forward to voluntarily declare their paternity. In that period, 66,390 DNA tests were carried out, of which 76.7 per cent confirmed paternity and 23.3 per cent resulted in rejection. The Tribunal is making efforts to improve response times in its civil services in terms of notification of responsible parenting decisions through the "regionalization project", which is being implemented in 14 regional offices and enables the population to access and carry out various procedures in rural areas where there are large numbers of people but no regional Supreme Electoral Tribunal office.

108. In the area of alimony, in recent years the judiciary has made significant improvements in the attention provided by the Ombudsperson and the courts, as well as in the mechanisms for speeding up court proceedings. In this regard, an online system has been implemented that permits citizens to use the Internet to request an order of enforcement by committal against a debtor; the service is permanently available. Furthermore, in order to ascertain the scale of the role of women in these court proceedings and the myths generated around them, since 8 March 2018, five digital⁵ and interactive boards were made available to the general public with statistical information on the ranges and amounts concerned in the main files on alimony, as well as data on the age, sex and marital status of those applying for alimony and being sued in these proceedings. For the period from 2017 to 2019, 159,109 people nationwide applied for alimony (20.6 per cent men and 79.4 per cent women); and 115,984 people were sued using the same proceeding (89.5 per cent men and 10.5 per cent women) (see annex 20).

109. In addition, the Government of Costa Rica has taken steps to promote equality between women and men before the law in the areas of marriage and family relations. For example, in the framework of the Accounting for the Contribution of Unpaid Domestic Work in Costa Rica Act (Act No. 9325 of 19 October 2015), one of the most important steps forward was the first national survey on the use of time, in 2017, the product of inter-agency efforts between the National University, the National Statistics and Census Institute and the National Institute for Women, and whose

⁵ Digital boards available at: <https://observatoriodegenero.poder-judicial.go.cr/index.php/soy-especialista-y-busco/estadisticas/pensiones-alimentarias>.

results (see annex 21) have made it possible to visualize the impact of the division of labour by sex on the distribution of women's and men's use of time.

110. Under the aforementioned Act, in 2018 the central bank established the unremunerated domestic work satellite account, following the conceptual, methodological and technical criteria of the System of National Accounts. The aim of the satellite account is to highlight the economic value of the unpaid work performed by male and female household members in productive activities for self-consumption. According to central bank results, the economic value of unpaid domestic work in Costa Rica for 2017 was 25.3 per cent of gross domestic product, or 8.3 trillion colones (\$135,399,673,735.72). Of this amount, women account for 18 per cent, or 5.9 trillion colones (\$96,247,960,848.28), and 2.4 trillion colones (\$39,151,712,887.43) is contributed by men (7.3 per cent).

111. Another issue that has been the subject of analysis and public discussion, and which is particularly important in the context of the national COVID-19 emergency, concerns the drafting of the national policy on the care system, a process led by the Department of Human Development and Social Inclusion with support from the Inter-American Development Bank, and which currently has a proposal that in 2021 will be submitted for consultation and review by the different actors involved. This policy is intended to integrate the needs of dependent groups, and to involve and engage various social actors through public-private and public-public partnerships that will result in opportunities for women's inclusion in the labour market, well-being and comprehensive development.

112. Within the framework of the National Network for Care and Development of the Child, the Joint Institute for Social Aid, the Education and Nutrition Centres and Children's Comprehensive Care Centres and the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia have made major efforts to strengthen and expand childcare alternatives and, in turn, to enable mothers to enter and remain in the formal education system and the labour market. Particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that services have remained operational, in line with the protocols established by the Ministry of Health.

113. In the case of the Education and Nutrition Centres and Children's Comprehensive Care Centres, in the period from 2017 to 2019, there was a significant increase in the coverage of overnight childcare services, which has helped women to attend school or work at night. In 2017, a total of 66 Centres provided care to 1,625 boys and girls under this modality; in 2018, the Centres grew to 100 in number and achieved a coverage of 3,059 boys and girls, and in 2019, a total of 119 facilities served 4,145 boys and girls.

114. The Centres for Child Development and Comprehensive Care programme of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia operates in partnership with non-governmental organizations and recently with local governments, providing a proportion of the cost of childcare. The current amount is 131,000 colones (\$213.70) per minor and accounts for approximately 62 per cent of the total cost of care. To date, 92 childcare centres, including municipal ones, have become Centres for Child Development and Comprehensive Care, with capacity for 9,522 children and adolescents. From January to August 2020, 5,579 minors were cared for.

115. With regard to the services offered by the Joint Institute for Social Aid of Costa Rica, between 2017 and 2018, approximately 21,016 women used the National Network for Care and Development of the Child for the care of their underage dependants. Most of the beneficiaries were from urban areas (93.2 per cent) and were between 18 and 40 years of age (86.2 per cent). In relation to the number of children benefiting during the period from 2017 to 2020, there are approximately 109,967 minors, mostly from urban areas (90.7 per cent). Of the total benefits, 47.9 per cent

were granted to girls and 52.1 per cent to boys, making a total amount invested of approximately 121,666,214,363 colones (\$198,476,695.53). Over the years, there has been an increase of approximately 5 per cent in the number of minors benefiting from the National Network and in the corresponding budget allocation.

116. With regard to the situation of women prisoners, the country is working on the institutionalization of guidelines for gender mainstreaming in the care of women in the prison system of Costa Rica. This includes the implementation of rules, approaches and principles, based on the responsibility of the State to ensure women's access to and fulfilment of human rights. Work has been done to raise awareness, provide information and train staff based on a gender perspective in order to improve both the quality of care provided to women while they are deprived of their liberty and the process of their discharge or change of level of care. The National Institute of Criminology is expected to bring into effect the Model of Care for Women in 2021, accompanied by a process of training and education on gender issues for all staff providing care for women at different levels.

117. In order to promote family bonding and conscious motherhood by women during their imprisonment, the Vilma Curling Rivera Comprehensive Care Council has a special module so that mothers can stay with their children for the first three years of their lives, which includes specific regulations in line with international recommendations and the protection of children's rights. Progress has also been made in the "Regionalization of Women" programme, which consists of the opening, between 2020 and 2021, of three new women's prisons in the Pérez Zeledón, Pococí and Puntarenas areas, each with a capacity for 36 women (4 in the mother and child sections).

118. According to reports by the Ministry of Justice and Peace, since the adoption of Act No. 9271 on electronic monitoring mechanisms in criminal matters, there has been an increase in the number of women benefiting from this type of custody and surveillance: there were 71 as at December 2017 and 208 as at July 2020. In general terms, this Act has no obvious impact in terms of a decrease in the number of women deprived of liberty or in the other modalities of care; indeed, there has been an overall increase in the number of women in the prison system, from 2,744 in 2017 to 3,045 as at July 2020 (see annex 22). However, of the overall total, 19 per cent serve their sentences in a closed institutionalized facility, while the rest are placed in different levels of care in the penal system. Of that 19 per cent of women in prison, there has been a decrease in the total number of approvals by the National Institute of Criminology in order to have a lower physical containment level, from 163 authorizations in 2017 to 86 in 2020.

119. Within the framework of the Network of Comprehensive Care for Women in Criminal Cases and their Vulnerable Dependents, a mechanism for inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination on behalf of women facing criminal proceedings coordinated by the National Institute for Women, a diagnosis was made based on a compilation of the immediate impact of COVID-19 on women in criminal proceedings, both in detention and in non-institutionalized alternatives, which made it possible to direct support and resources to meet their practical needs (for women in detention: toiletries and personal care products; and for women in other alternatives: daily meals). Initiatives related to strategic or larger-scale needs were also proposed, such as fundraising for technological devices that would allow access to the Internet within prisons, and that would enable women to continue with their regular activities during the pandemic, such as educational processes, virtual meetings with their families and cultural projects. Currently, the implementation of this initiative is uncertain, owing to the limited resources available. This is one of the biggest challenges in the penal system because existing resources are mainly used for court

hearings or meetings with public defenders, and for women prisoners to be able to have video calls with their families.

120. One important achievement that stands out in this period is the entry into force on 26 May 2020 of equal marriage for persons of the same sex in the country, through a decision of the Constitutional Court in which it complies with the provisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in advisory opinion OC-24/17, which holds that the State must guarantee the rights of the sexually diverse population. In this way, Costa Rica became the first country in Central America to guarantee the right to marriage for people of the same sex.
