



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan\*

1. The Committee considered the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan (CEDAW/C/UZB/6) at its 1862nd and 1864th meetings (CEDAW/C/SR.1862 and CEDAW/C/SR.1864) held on 15 and 16 February 2022. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/UZB/Q/6, and the responses of Uzbekistan are contained in CEDAW/C/UZB/RQ/6.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its sixth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by the Director of the National Human Rights Centre, Akmal Saidov, and included representatives of the Oliy Majlis (the parliament), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Prosecutor General, and the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

#### B. Positive Aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2015 of the State party's previous report (CEDAW/C/UZB/5) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-first session (7–25 February 2022).



- (a) The Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, in 2019;
- (b) The Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence, in 2019;
- (c) The Law on the Protection of Reproductive Health of Citizens, which proclaims equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the exercise of their reproductive rights, in 2019;
- (d) Law on Combatting Trafficking in Persons, in 2020;
- (e) The amendment to article 15 of the Family Code, establishing the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men, in 2019;
- (f) The Electoral Code, establishing a minimum quota of 30 per cent for the women candidates nominated for national elections, in 2019.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption of the following:

- (a) The Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality for the period 2020–2030, in 2021;
- (b) The National Human Rights Strategy, in 2020;
- (c) The establishment of the “Iron notebook”, “Women’s notebook” and “Youth notebook” to identify and support disadvantaged families and persons in need, including women and girls, in particular during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in 2020;
- (d) The action plan for the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan, in 2017.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2021.

### **C. Sustainable Development Goals**

7. **The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of the State party and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.**

### **D. Parliament**

8. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Oliy Majlis, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.**

## E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

### Legislative framework

9. The Committee welcomes the progress made by the State party in establishing a progressive national legislative framework to protect women's rights and promote gender equality since the consideration of its fifth periodic report in 2015. Due to the recent adoption of many important pieces of legislation, the Committee considers that it is difficult to assess progress and trends over time in terms of the actual situation of women and their enjoyment of their human rights in regard to all areas covered by the Convention. The Committee notes that the definition of discrimination in the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) encompasses direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex. It nevertheless notes with concern that the definition does not cover intersecting forms of discrimination. The Committee also notes with concern that the Convention has not been directly applied or invoked in court proceedings, despite the existing provisions ensuring the precedence of international treaties over national legislation and the related capacity-building provided to judges and lawyers. The Committee is also concerned that the State party has made a reservation to article 12 of the recently ratified Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, preserving substitute decision-making practices, which contradicts the object and purpose of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as enshrined in article 1 and prevents the State party from fully implementing and addressing all human rights of women and girls with disabilities in compliance with the human rights model of disability.

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

(a) **Strengthen the implementation of the national legislative framework to protect women's rights and promote gender equality;**

(b) **Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation with a definition of discrimination against women that covers direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in line with article 1 of the Convention;**

(c) **Strengthen capacity-building for members of the judiciary and legal professionals regarding the direct application and use of the Convention in legal proceedings and the interpretation of national legislation in the light of the Convention;**

(d) **Withdraw its reservation to article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

### Access to justice

11. The Committee notes that the legislative review initiated in 2018 has strengthened the court system and increased transparency in court procedures and that an e-justice system has been developed, with a possibility to submit lawsuits electronically, pay online and participate through video conference, thereby facilitating access to justice in rural areas. However, it notes with concern persistent barriers to women's and girls' access to justice, including their limited knowledge of their rights and the remedies available to claim them, limited capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement officials to apply the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as judicial gender bias, persistent gender stereotypes and the use of reconciliation procedures before mahallas in cases of gender-based violence against women.

12. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women’s access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party address the barriers to women’s and girls’ access to justice, including by:**

(a) **Conducting judicial training and awareness-raising campaigns to eliminate judicial gender bias and persistent gender stereotypes, and ensure that prosecution takes precedence over reconciliation procedures before mahallas in cases of gender-based violence against women;**

(b) **Strengthening awareness-raising among women and girls, including in rural areas, about the legal remedies available to claim violations of their rights;**

(c) **Raising awareness among religious and community leaders about the need to destigmatize women claiming their rights and provide training on women’s rights and gender equality to the judiciary, the police and other law enforcement officials to dismantle patriarchal attitudes, discriminatory gender stereotypes and judicial bias against women claiming their rights.**

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

13. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission in 2019 and the Senate Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support, both in 2020. It also notes the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality for the period 2020–2030, in 2021. Nevertheless, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) That the merger of the Women’s Committee, mahalla authorities and family centres into a new Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support may shift the focus from gender equality to women’s traditional stereotypical roles in the family, and that the national machinery is fragmented, which reduces its capacity to ensure that gender equality policies are effectively implemented and gender mainstreamed across all government departments;

(b) The limited cooperation of the national machinery with civil society, in particular in rural areas, despite increased funding for civil society organizations, including women’s rights organizations.

14. **The Committee recalls that relegating women to traditional roles as child bearers rather than promoting their role as active agents of development and rights holders is contrary to advancing the status of women. It recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Clearly define the mandates and responsibilities of the different components of the national machinery for the advancement of women and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to enable it;**

(b) **Strengthen cooperation of the national machinery with civil society organizations, in particular those working on women’s rights, to ensure that they meaningfully participate in decision-making in all areas covered by the Convention.**

#### **National human rights institution**

15. The Committee notes the amendments to the Ombudsman Act to mandate the Office of the Ombudsman to receive complaints from persons deprived of liberty and to serve as the national preventive mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2017 and 2019 respectively. It notes that the Office of the Ombudsman has been accredited with “B” status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights

Institutions in 2020. It further notes with concern that the Office of the Ombudsman lacks a specific mandate to protect and promote women's rights.

**16. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the Office of the Ombudsman by providing it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to discharge its mandate effectively, independently and in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and provide the Office with a specific mandate to promote and protect women's rights and address complaints from women and girls in a confidential, gender-sensitive manner.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

17. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption in 2019 of the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, which provides for temporary special measures. It also notes that the State party carried out a study on the use of temporary special measures to advance the substantive equality of women and men in the State party. However, the Committee remains concerned about the limited use of temporary special measures in most areas covered by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, and the limited impact of existing temporary special measures.

**18. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, and recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 14), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Promote understanding of the purpose of temporary special measures among State officials, parliamentarians, policymakers, employers and the general public;**

(b) **Adopt temporary special measures and establish time-bound targets, as a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in both the public and private sectors, especially at the decision-making level, and with particular attention to women belonging to ethnic minority groups, women with disabilities and older women;**

(c) **Establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of temporary special measures and assess their impact on achieving the substantive equality of women and men, and adopt adequate sanctions for non-compliance;**

(d) **Adopt temporary special measures, including measures to improve data collection, and establish monitoring mechanisms to reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence against women;**

(e) **Adopt temporary special measures and establish time-bound targets to support particularly disadvantaged women, including rural women, older women, women with disabilities and women in detention, in accessing meaningful employment, secure housing, appropriate health care and quality education.**

#### **Stereotypes**

19. The Committee notes that the State party is promoting the sharing of childcare responsibilities between women and men, including through the inclusion of paternity leave in the new Labour Code, which is currently before the Senate. However, it remains concerned about:

(a) The adoption of the Mediation Act in 2018, which established a system of family mediation as an alternative way of settling family conflicts and disputes, as well as a presidential decision in 2018 on the framework for strengthening the institution of the family and a road map for its implementation, which may further reinforce the persistent patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society in the State party;

(b) The lack of a comprehensive strategy to address discriminatory gender stereotypes;

(c) The persistence of discriminatory gender stereotypes and portrayals of women in the media.

**20. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 16) and recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy, including for the online domain, targeting community and religious leaders, teachers, girls and boys, and women and men to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**

**(b) Continue to raise awareness among media workers to address discriminatory gender stereotypes and the objectification of women and to promote positive portrayals of women as active drivers of development in the media;**

**(c) Take targeted measures, including awareness-raising, to promote the equal sharing of domestic and childcare responsibilities, as well as responsible fatherhood.**

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

21. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence, in 2019, and the Government Decree on Protection Orders. The Committee also notes the adoption of the standard operating procedures for the multisectoral response to gender-based violence, in 2020. However, the Committee remains concerned about the high incidence of gender-based violence against women in the State party, including the stark increase in cases of domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdown. It also notes with concern:

(a) The absence of a legal definition and a provision specifically criminalizing domestic violence in the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence, and the weak enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of the law;

(b) The absence of criminal law provisions specifically criminalizing different forms of gender-based violence other than sexual violence and rape, and inadequate protection from gender-based violence of women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination, including women and girls belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, women and girls with disabilities, and women living with HIV/AIDS;

(c) The fact that the definition of rape is based on the use or threat of violence rather than lack of consent;

(d) The 30-day limit to the duration of protection orders, with the possibility of extension for one month, their limited enforcement, the absence of expulsion orders, the lack of victim support services, the barriers to women's and girls' access to justice in cases of gender-based violence, including revictimization during criminal proceedings, and the wide use of reconciliation and mediation procedures by mahallas.

22. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend its current legislation, including the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence, to ensure that domestic violence is specifically criminalized, can be prosecuted *ex officio* and is sanctioned with appropriate penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence;

(b) Review the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence and other relevant national legislation to cover all forms of gender-based violence and take into account the special needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, including women with disabilities, migrant women, women living with HIV/AIDS, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women;

(c) Amend its legislation to base the definition of rape on lack of consent rather than the use or threat of force;

(d) Ensure the timely and effective issuance, enforcement and monitoring of protection orders, including, where appropriate, expulsion orders, in cases of domestic violence, and impose adequate deterrent penalties for non-compliance with such orders;

(e) Encourage reporting of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence, and ensure that all such cases are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted *ex officio* and punished with appropriate sanctions; give priority to criminal proceedings over reconciliation; and ensure that police officers who fail to take action or discourage victims from filing complaints are held accountable;

(f) Ensure women's and girls' access to justice and encourage reporting of gender-based violence to the law enforcement bodies, including through affordable and, if necessary, free legal assistance; relax the burden of proof on complainants; ensure affordable access to forensic evidence; and continue to build the capacity of judges, prosecutors, the police and other law enforcement officers regarding gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods;

(g) Strengthen victim support services and protection, including 24/7 hotlines, adequate shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and economic support throughout the State party;

(h) Intensify awareness-raising for the general public on the criminal nature of all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence, and the need for women to be able to report such cases to law enforcement authorities without fear of reprisals, stigmatization or revictimization.

#### **Trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution**

23. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Law on Combatting Trafficking in Persons (2020), which introduces measures to prevent trafficking in persons and a national referral mechanism for victims and brings the definition of trafficking in persons into line with the international standards. It also notes the establishment of the National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labour, chaired by the Speaker of the Senate, which includes representatives of civil society. However, the Committee notes with concern that the State party remains a source

country for trafficking in women and girls for purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. It also notes with concern:

- (a) Reports, despite the criminalization of forced labour, of forced labour and exploitation of women during the cotton harvest season;
- (b) The fact that, despite the criminalization of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, national legislation does not exempt transnational victims of trafficking from criminal liability for illegally crossing the border;
- (c) The social stigma, discrimination and gender-based violence experienced by victims of trafficking and the lack of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes;
- (d) The lack of measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex and the lack of data on trafficking in women and girls from, within and to the State party;
- (e) The absence of exit programmes for women wishing to leave prostitution.

**24. Recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration and its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 20), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Prohibit the practice of unpaid work during the cotton harvest season;**
- (b) **Ensure that women and girl victims of trafficking have adequate access to support services, including shelters, counselling services and reintegration programmes, and adequately fund or subsidize the premises and utility costs of non-governmental organizations operating shelters and providing victim support services;**
- (c) **Ensure that all cases of trafficking in women and girls are investigated and prosecuted and the perpetrators adequately punished, and that convicted perpetrators must serve their sentences;**
- (d) **Ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on trafficking, disaggregated by age, sex, nationality of victims and forms of trafficking;**
- (e) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of being trafficked and provide access to income-generating opportunities, financial support, legal assistance, hotlines and pre-departure information to migrant women and girls;**
- (f) **Discourage the demand for commercial sex, including by carrying out educational and awareness-raising measures targeting the general public, in particular men and boys, and combat all forms of subordination and objectification of women;**
- (g) **Provide exit programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities to women who wish to leave prostitution.**

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

25. The Committee notes with appreciation that, in the 2019 elections, 41.3 per cent of candidates to the Legislative Chamber were women. However, the Committee remains concerned that women are still underrepresented in decision-making positions, including in the Oliy Majlis, academia, the judiciary, the public service and the diplomatic service.

**26. Recalling its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Amend its electoral law to introduce targeted measures, including temporary special measures such as increased quotas and dedicated campaign**



**financing, to increase the representation of women at all levels of government, in the Oliy Majlis and local councils, in the judiciary, in academia and in the foreign service, in particular at decision-making levels;**

**(b) Introduce measures to combat negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviours towards women in politics, including awareness-raising and educational campaigns in schools, the Oliy Majlis and among the general public;**

**(c) Introduce preferential recruitment of women to the civil service and the foreign service, paying particular attention to women belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups;**

**(d) Require political parties to include an equal number of women and men candidates on their electoral lists, at alternating ranks (zipper system);**

**(e) Provide capacity-building to women politicians and candidates regarding political campaigning, leadership and negotiation skills, and raise awareness, in collaboration with the media, among politicians, the media, religious and community leaders and the general public, on the importance of the full, independent and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life as a requirement for fully implementing the human rights of women and for achieving political stability and economic development in the State party;**

**(f) Provide capacity-building and training to women managers and leaders in the private sector and work with private sector entities on the importance of the full participation of women in leadership positions.**

#### **Nationality**

27. The Committee notes the adoption of the amended Law on Citizenship in 2020 and notes that the State party has granted citizenship to 16,298 stateless persons since 2016. The Committee, however, notes with concern:

**(a) That the Law on Citizenship prohibits citizens from holding dual nationality, which increases the likelihood of statelessness, in particular for women, and requires foreigners to renounce their nationality without having acquired or received assurances that they will acquire Uzbek nationality;**

**(b) That the Law on Citizenship provides for the loss of citizenship by Uzbeks living abroad who have not undergone consular registration within a seven-year period even if this leads to statelessness, and that Uzbek nationals may renounce citizenship without having proven that they will obtain the nationality of another country;**

**(c) That children born in the territory of Uzbekistan are not granted Uzbek nationality even when they face statelessness;**

**(d) That, despite the adoption of the Presidential Decree on the Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Granting Political Asylum (2017), the national asylum system is not compliant with international norms and standards requiring protection and access to relevant civil, social and economic rights for asylum seekers and refugees, including women, in particular refugee women from Afghanistan.**

**28. Recalling its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Amend the Law on Citizenship, granting citizenship to children born in the territory of Uzbekistan who would otherwise become stateless and making the loss or renunciation of nationality contingent on possession or acquisition of**

another nationality, and allow reacquisition of nationality for women who would otherwise become stateless;

(b) **Ensure that girls and boys born in the territory of the State party are registered at birth and have access to Uzbek nationality and identity documents, regardless of their parents' consent, nationality, or residence or marital status, and that loss or renunciation of nationality is contingent on the possession or acquisition of another nationality;**

(c) **Establish a national asylum system that is compliant with international norms and standards, and amend other relevant legislation to provide protection and access to basic services for asylum-seeking and refugee women;**

(d) **Ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

### **Education**

29. The Committee notes the progress achieved by the State party in promoting girls' and women's right to education since the consideration of its previous periodic report, as well as the State party's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The low enrolment rate of women and girls in tertiary and higher education and the high dropout rates among girls in secondary education, attributable to early pregnancies and child marriage as well as the preference given to the school enrolment of boys and the high cost of school fees;

(b) Persistent gender stereotypes in the education system and the absence of age-appropriate sexual education;

(c) The concentration of women and girls in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and their underrepresentation in the areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and information and communications technology, which reduces their prospects in the labour market;

(d) The limited use of gender-sensitive language and portrayals in textbooks and education materials at all levels of education;

(e) The underrepresentation of women at the decision-making level in the education system.

30. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education and its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 24), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure girls' enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary and higher education, including through information campaigns targeting parents and religious and community leaders on the importance of girls' education at all levels as a basis for their empowerment and through financial support to low-income families to cover direct and indirect costs of education;**

(b) **Address the causes of school dropout among girls, including child and forced marriage and early pregnancy, and ensure that young mothers can return to school following childbirth, with a view to completing their education, obtaining diplomas and gaining access to higher education or employment;**

(c) **Develop and integrate into school curricula: (i) inclusive and accessible content on gender equality, including on women's rights, women leaders in public life and the harmful effects of gender stereotyping and gender-**

based violence and discrimination against women and girls; and (ii) age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of education, paying particular attention to responsible sexual behaviour and preventing early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases;

(d) **Provide training on women's rights and gender equality for teaching personnel at all levels of the education system, and review school textbooks, curricula and teaching materials with a view to eliminating discriminatory gender stereotypes;**

(e) **Take coordinated measures to encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of education and career paths, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and information and communications technology, including through career counselling and scholarships and subsidies to cover indirect costs of education.**

### **Employment**

31. The Committee notes that the prohibition on the employment of women in certain industries and professions was lifted in 2019. However, the Committee is concerned that, the same year, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health developed and approved a new list of professions and jobs, advising against employing women in those professions. The Committee is further concerned about:

(a) The fact that only 12 per cent of managers in Uzbekistan are women, and that the action plan to create a pool of women eligible for managerial positions is pending adoption;

(b) The significant gender pay gap and horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, and barriers to women's promotion to management positions, higher-paid jobs and decision-making positions, including in national and local administrations;

(c) The lack of opportunities for the reconciliation of professional and family life and the insufficient efforts to promote and ensure the equal sharing of domestic and child-rearing responsibilities between women and men;

(d) Women's concentration in the informal economy and in low-paid jobs, often in exploitative conditions and without access to labour and social protection, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;

(e) Limited access to decent employment for disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, including women belonging to ethnic minorities, migrant women and women with disabilities.

32. **Recalling that progress in employment should go hand in hand with the empowerment of women and equality at work, the Committee recommends that the State party refocus its employment policy on gender equality and ensure that it is based on results, measurable indicators, partnerships with the private sector and opportunities for professional training in all areas, including innovative sectors and the information and communications technology sector. It also recalls its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 26) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the action plan to create a pool of women eligible for managerial positions;**

(b) **Take targeted measures to promote women's access to formal employment, including management positions and higher-paid jobs in traditionally male-dominated professions, and to decision-making positions in**

**national and local administration, by providing professional training, offering incentives for women's preferential recruitment, expanding the number and quality of childcare services and preschool education services in urban and rural areas, and taking measures to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment;**

**(c) Effectively implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value by regularly reviewing wages in sectors where women are concentrated and adopting measures to close the gender pay gap, including through gender-neutral analytical job classification and evaluation methods and regular pay surveys;**

**(d) Review the list of non-recommended occupations restricting women's access to certain professions and jobs; facilitate women's access to such occupations; and ensure that any restrictions are proportionate and applied on a case-by-case basis and not sweepingly for all women;**

**(e) Ensure maternity protection for women working in the informal economy; facilitate the return to work of young mothers; and promote equal sharing of household and childcare responsibilities between women and men, including by expanding the use of paternity leave;**

**(f) Ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156);**

**(g) Improve access to employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, such as women belonging to ethnic minorities, women with disabilities and migrant women, and provide pre-departure training for women who migrate.**

## **Health**

33. The Committee commends the State party for the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Reproductive Health of Citizens in 2019. The Committee, however, notes with concern:

**(a) The high maternal mortality rate (19.1 per 100,000 live births in 2019) and infant mortality rate (21.4 per 100,000 live births), despite a slight decrease, and the increase in stillbirths;**

**(b) The fact that article 113 of the Criminal Code establishes criminal responsibility for both exposure to and transmission of HIV, punishable with from five to eight years' imprisonment, even in cases of consensual sexual relations between adults, and that, under the Code of Administrative Offences, concealing the source of infection with a venereal disease or HIV/AIDS (art. 57) and avoiding examination (art. 58 on people with venereal diseases or HIV/AIDS) remain as offences;**

**(c) Women's and girls' limited access to available and affordable modern contraceptives, in particular in rural areas, and the barriers that adolescent girls face in accessing information on sexual and reproductive health and rights;**

**(d) The high number of early pregnancies, the absence in school curricula of mandatory age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the lack of training of teachers in this field;**

**(e) The high prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age;**

**(f) The increased rates of suicide and self-injury among adolescent girls.**

**34. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Address the causes of maternal and infant mortality by ensuring access to safe abortion and post-abortion services and obstetric care, addressing the high number of early pregnancies, and increasing the number of skilled birth attendants, including in rural and remote areas;**

(b) **Decriminalize the exposure to and transmission of HIV/AIDS through consensual sexual relations between adults and repeal article 113 of the Criminal Code, as well as articles 57 and 58 of the Code of Administrative Offences;**

(c) **Strengthen access to adequate and affordable health care for women and girls by ensuring a sufficient number of health-care facilities with adequately trained staff, including in rural and remote areas, and intensify the implementation of health programmes and inclusive awareness-raising programmes, to ensure affordable access to modern contraceptives to all women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged groups and rural women and girls;**

(d) **Introduce mandatory age-appropriate and inclusive education on sexual and reproductive health and rights in school curricula, including education on modern forms of contraception, the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and the risks of unsafe abortion;**

(e) **Strengthen efforts to ensure food fortification to address micronutrient deficiencies in women and children;**

(f) **Conduct studies to establish the root causes of suicide, reinforce measures addressing the mental health situation of young women and girls in the State party, and allocate adequate resources to provide appropriate support to women who have suffered physical and psychological trauma.**

#### **Economic and social benefits**

35. The Committee notes that the number of activities for self-employment was raised from 24 to 67 by presidential decree in 2020; it also notes the establishment in 2020 of a “Women’s notebook” platform to provide assistance to women in need. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work carried out by women and the substantial increase in women’s burden of unpaid care during the COVID-19 pandemic;

(b) The disproportionate effect of poverty on women, especially rural women, women single heads of households and women engaged in unpaid care work;

(c) The low percentage of women’s land ownership (23 per cent) and real estate ownership (36.6 per cent);

(d) The concentration of women’s entrepreneurship in low-profit sectors, such as wholesale and retail trade and agriculture, and home-based entrepreneurship.

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

(a) **Strengthen transformative policies and strategies to reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women, particularly rural women; facilitate access to quality and affordable gender-responsive public services such as health, education, childcare, transportation, water, land use, housing and energy services; and generate data on and establish the monetization of unpaid care work as a baseline for its recognition and compensation;**

(b) **Address the feminization of poverty, including by remedying the discrimination in pension and social security schemes, taking into account the interruptions in women's employment due to child-rearing periods and their engagement in unpaid care and domestic work;**

(c) **Introduce incentives and targeted measures, including business facilitation grants, incubation schemes, financial inclusion services and other stimulus packages, to promote entrepreneurship by women, expand their economic opportunities and boost their contribution to the economic life of the State party.**

#### **Rural women**

37. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to improve access for rural women to basic services and social benefits, including through the adoption of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for the period 2022–2026 and the creation of the nationwide Association of Women-Agrarians in 2019. However, it remains concerned about rural women's and girls' limited access to education, employment opportunities and health care. It is also concerned about the lack of a gender perspective in agricultural policies and rural women's underrepresentation in decision-making and in leadership positions.

38. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 30) and recommends that the State party combat poverty among rural women by ensuring access to education, adequate water and sanitation, formal employment, low-interest loans without collateral and other forms of financial credit for agribusinesses, and ownership and use of land. The Committee also recommends that the State party integrate a gender perspective in its agricultural policies and ensure rural women's equal participation in decision-making and in leadership positions.**

#### **Disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women**

39. The Committee remains concerned that: older women; women with disabilities; women belonging to ethnic minority groups, in particular women and girls belonging to Mughat/Luyli communities; refugee and asylum-seeking women; migrant women; women living with HIV/AIDS; and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women continue to face intersecting forms of discrimination in the State party.

40. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt targeted measures, including temporary special measures, to ensure access to justice, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, respecting the confidentiality of patient information, social protection and food security for disadvantaged groups of women such as: older women; women with disabilities; women belonging to ethnic minority groups, in particular women and girls belonging to Mughat/Luyli communities; refugee and asylum-seeking women; migrant women; women living with HIV/AIDS; and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, taking into account their specific needs.**

#### **Marriage and family relations**

41. The Committee notes with appreciation that article 15 of the Family Code was amended in 2019 to increase the legal minimum age of marriage to 18 years for both women and men. It also notes the information provided by the delegation that a draft Family Code unifying all legislation on marriage and family relations has been approved by the Oliy Majlis and submitted to the Senate. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The fact that, in exceptional circumstances such as pregnancy or childbirth, the *khokim* (local government) can authorize marriages at 17 years of age;

(b) Legislative provisions precluding women living with HIV/AIDS from adoption, guardianship and foster parenting;

(c) The fact that women who undergo a wedding ceremony under religious law without civil marriage registration do not benefit from the protection of the Family Code and are denied economic protection upon dissolution of the union;

(d) The persistence of polygamy and forced marriage, in particular in rural areas, despite their legal prohibition.

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

(a) **Review article 15 of the Family Code in order to remove the exception to the age of marriage and pursue its efforts to combat polygamy and child and forced marriage, especially in rural areas, including by: addressing their root causes; encouraging reporting; punishing the complicity of family members, religious and community leaders or law enforcement officers; establishing mechanisms to detect such cases; and ensuring the prosecution and adequate punishment of those responsible, in accordance with the joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014);**

(b) **Repeal discriminatory legislation precluding women living with HIV/AIDS from adoption, guardianship and foster parenting;**

(c) **Ensure that religious wedding ceremonies can be administered only after the civil registration of a marriage and protect the rights of women upon dissolution of religious and customary unions, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution;**

(d) **Ensure that women and men have the same rights and responsibilities in marriage and family relations and upon their dissolution, including equal parental rights, irrespective of their marital status, and the same rights to choose a family name, profession and domicile, in accordance with article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;**

(e) **Conduct training and awareness-raising activities for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies and local executive bodies on the prevention of polygamy and forced and child marriages;**

(f) **Reform data collection systems and registration procedures for the implementation of criminal and administrative legislation on polygamy and forced and child marriages.**

**Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention**

43. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

44. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in the context of the 25-year review of the**

**implementation of the Declaration and Platform in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.**

**Dissemination**

45. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official language(s) of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the Oliy Majlis and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

**Ratification of other treaties**

46. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a party.

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

47. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 22 (d), 30 (b), 34 (a) and 42 (b) above.

**Preparation of the next report**

48. The Committee invites the State party to submit its seventh periodic report, which is due in February 2026. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

49. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).