



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Seventy-third session

Summary record of the 1705th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 11 July 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Gbedemah

Contents

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

Ninth periodic report of Cabo Verde (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Ninth periodic report of Cape Verde (continued) (CCPR/C/CPV/9; CCPR/C/CPV/Q/9 and CCPR/C/CPV/Q/9/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cabo Verde took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 10 to 14 (continued)

2. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that a research centre at the public university was taking measures to promote gender equality as part of a research project. A recent study had found that gender-based violence occurred between school pupils and by school personnel themselves. The research centre was working with the Government to draw up an action plan that took into account the different characteristics of each school. In the meantime, the regulations governing teaching staff already prohibited corporal punishment in schools. Disciplinary action had been taken for misconduct, with most cases involving sexual harassment. A campaign for zero tolerance had led to a number of disciplinary procedures, and the punishment nearly always had been dismissal of the teacher. On one occasion, an entire school department had been dismissed, since it had tried to avoid cooperating with the inquiry procedure. Education policy for the 2019/20 school year would address the protection of children's and adolescents' rights and the prevention of violence, with the focus once again on zero tolerance for abuse.

3. With the introduction of the national plan to combat gender-based violence against girls, cases had begun to be reported to the authorities. The three-week preparation period for the 2019/20 school year, due to start in September, would include training to help teachers detect cases of sexual abuse and violence, especially in the home. Another initiative was to give children a voice in the process. In one municipality, the Government had mounted a campaign with the slogan "More prevention, less improvisation", in which children themselves took an active part. The campaign was successful and would be expanded nationwide during the next school year.

4. There were no specific data on the number of pregnancies among schoolgirls, but national data showed that fertility among adolescents had fallen. The Government was concerned nevertheless, since the fertility rate was not down among girls aged 15 and under. Those cases were being addressed as part of the campaign against sexual abuse.

5. Cabo Verde had 16 embassies, of which 6 had a female ambassador. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had achieved gender parity in its upper echelons, with half of its most senior posts held by women.

6. Cabo Verde had made progress in certain areas of employment, such as domestic work. In 2016, barely a tenth of domestic workers had been registered, but following a national registration campaign, the numbers had gradually picked up, and by 2018 more than 17 per cent had been registered. The campaign had required employers to pay domestic workers the minimum wage. Cooperation between the Government and civil society was very important, and following a recommendation made by the Cabo Verdean Association to Combat Gender-Based Violence, a union had been set up for domestic workers.

7. Equal pay for equal work was a gradual process. Trade associations were working to facilitate that process, including efforts to gain recognition of various types of work in the informal sector as a professional category. The public sector already provided for equal pay for equal work.

8. The association representing domestic workers was working on the regulatory framework for the sector. It had presented draft proposals for amendments to the relevant legislation to the Ministry of Justice to bring it into line with the Labour Code. The Government hoped that ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) and the Social

Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and consequently their incorporation into national law, would provide a better framework for action.

9. The only initiative to reduce sexual harassment had been by the Municipal Council of Praia, and although there had been no reported cases of sexual harassment in the workplace, there had been indications of cases, such as among street cleaners.

10. The Labour Code stipulated that maternity leave should last 8 weeks, but the Council of Ministers had been discussing ratification of the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), which required 14 weeks' maternity leave. A study had found that most women actually took 12 weeks' leave because doctors normally gave the final month as sick leave, which was paid for by social security. Most women also chose to add on four weeks' holiday leave, bringing the total time off work to 16 weeks with full pay. The Government had also found that, although many countries provided longer maternity leave, employees did not receive full pay for that time. It was looking at possible options for the future.

11. There was no paternity leave in Cabo Verde, only two days of justified leave of absence. Due to patriarchy, nearly all childcare in Cabo Verde was done by women, so the Ministry of Health had introduced a section on paternal responsibility in its antenatal programme.

12. In 2015, only 330 informal-sector workers were registered for social security; by 2016, there were more than 3,700, most of whom were women. For the first time ever, there were more women than men registered for social security.

13. **Mr. Bergby** said that he wondered what legal framework the State had at its disposal to protect domestic workers from sexual harassment and provide redress.

14. **Ms. Acosta-Vergas** said that she had understood that children with disabilities attended the same schools as other children but wished to know whether children with disabilities were educated using a totally inclusive model, allowing them to attend any school, regardless of their disability. She wondered how many of the reported 1,915 children with disabilities were girls. On the subject of disciplinary measures for perpetrators of violence, she wondered whether cases were heard by the courts.

15. **Mr. Bergby** asked whether the State party had considered ratifying ILO Convention No. 156 and the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

16. **Ms. Toé-Bouda** said that she wondered whether the State party had statistics or other indicators showing the extent to which treaties ratified by it had been invoked before the courts and whether legal professionals were aware of them and used them during trials. She also wished to know whether the Convention had been referred to by the courts.

17. Noting that the State party had explained that there were shelters and halfway houses for victims of gender-based violence, she wondered whether it had statistics on the number of victims who had used those facilities, as the Committee had received information that the halfway houses were not fully functional. It would like to know whether that State party had taken measures to make them so and whether victims were not simply sent home, thus laying them open to further violence.

18. The Committee was concerned about eight reported femicides that had taken place in the country in 2018 and wished to know whether the authorities had followed up on the many complaints that had been lodged. She also wished to know whether the State party would consider measures other than shelters to better protect the victims of violence.

19. Lastly, in the light of the fact that the country faced drought, she wondered whether the Government had considered keeping food security stocks to prevent famine and what it intended to do to repair the dams, which would benefit the economic activities carried out by women. Given that Cabo Verde was surrounded by the sea, she wondered whether the Government had explored the possibility of desalination plants, like the ones used in Israel.

20. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that Cabo Verde was considering taking action on ILO Conventions Nos. 156 and 183 and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Regarding domestic workers, the Labour Code provided for penalties for sexual

harassment. Although no complaints had been made, awareness-raising campaigns were under way.

21. Special education was implemented using inclusion and integration. Since teachers were not trained, there were other staff to support the children with disabilities such as hearing and visual impairments, but the staff were not specialized. As a result, some children were not making progress. She did not know how many of the 1,915 children were girls and how many were boys.

22. Responding to the question on discrimination, she said that international conventions were a compulsory module for legal professionals, but she did not know how many court cases had made reference to them.

23. The four shelters that existed had been introduced only recently. The shelter on the island of Fogo had hosted one victim, with her son, and the centre for Praia had hosted two. The law required the perpetrator of domestic violence to leave the home. To expedite court proceedings, the public prosecution service had proposed introducing summary judgements. Furthermore, divorce proceedings involving domestic violence were being streamlined so that victims did not have to wait too long for the estate to be divided. The social support measures included a social inclusion benefit, which was paid over a two-year period to women who were poor and had children under 15, and a productive inclusion programme, which used measures such as vocational training to help women generate an income.

24. On water and sustainability, the country always had a food reserve and was rehabilitating water-storage infrastructure in response to declining rainfall and a lower water table. In an area in the north of the main island, Santiago, where water levels had fallen drastically, desalination efforts were being stepped up. Desalination efforts were also under way on other islands.

25. Cabo Verde had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, in 1981, so many of its aspects had been incorporated into the country's Constitution, which was why article 7 of the Constitution, for instance, said that one of the tasks of the State was to progressively remove economic, social, cultural and political obstacles that hindered true equal opportunities, especially discrimination against women in the family and in society.

26. **Ms. Al-Rammah** said that women with disabilities faced multiple discrimination that undermined their access to health care and prevented them from enjoying their sexual and reproductive rights. Health-care facilities were often not accessible to them and staff were not trained to address their particular needs. Women with disabilities were often forced to terminate their pregnancies and ran a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. In view of that situation, she asked what measures would be taken to make the health-care system more inclusive and accessible for women with disabilities and to ensure that such women were not forced to have abortions. Given that health-care professionals visited rural areas only once per month, she asked what steps would be taken to increase the number of hospitals and health professionals in such areas.

27. Noting that women continued to face obstacles to safe abortion services, she asked whether the Government would train more health workers to perform abortions and whether it would amend the law in order to simplify the administrative procedures related to abortion. She wondered why women were required to pay for abortion services and what plans were in place to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services were made available to all groups of women. The Committee would welcome further gender-disaggregated data on rates of communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS and Zika virus disease. It would be interesting to learn what plans and programmes were in place to combat the stigma faced by women living with HIV/AIDS. To what extent did women act as decision makers in campaigns to prevent and manage health epidemics?

28. **Ms. Reddock** said that poverty and the lack of economic empowerment made it difficult for women to fully enjoy their rights. Although agriculture accounted for only 7 per cent of the economy, 40 per cent of women had been working in that sector in 2016. In order to alleviate poverty and improve food security, it was necessary to ensure that women working in agriculture could make a decent living. In that regard, she wished to know whether the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development incorporated the gender perspective, how the

Plan would ensure women's involvement in a successful agriculture sector and whether women had access to technical support and in-depth training in agricultural innovation, new technologies and agribusiness development. In the light of the challenges posed by the reform of land registration carried out between 2012 and 2017, she wished to know what was being done to ensure that property jointly owned by men and women, including those in de facto unions, was jointly titled from the outset. In view of the fact that the legal centres had been closed, she wished to know how vulnerable women could obtain legal advice concerning their property rights. The Committee would welcome information on any plans to promote gender equality within sporting bodies and place women in decision-making roles in the field of sport.

29. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that a national plan was in place to enhance the accessibility of health-care services and facilities. In accordance with that plan, all new buildings were required to meet accessibility standards and reduce barriers to a minimum. In order to enhance the accessibility of information on sexual and reproductive health services, materials containing such information were being translated into Braille. Health centres had been established in rural areas and, in accordance with a national plan, roads were being built to ensure that persons in rural areas had access to all services. The Government was providing support to public and private universities with a view to increasing the number of trained health professionals, some of whom undertook part of their training abroad. Abortion services were made available through the social welfare system.

30. In order to promote the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents, five support centres had been specifically established for that age group. A national plan was being implemented to eradicate certain communicable diseases, including malaria and zika virus disease, and to undertake research into such diseases. Customs duty on insect repellent had been lifted in order to make it more affordable. At the start of the rainy season, grass-roots campaigns were launched to combat diseases prevalent in that season.

31. A plan to promote gender equality in the tourism sector was being conducted. In order to combat poverty among women working in agriculture, measures were being taken to increase rural women's access to technology, land and water. The Government was implementing projects aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change on the forestry sector, conserving biodiversity within the tourism sector, strengthening protected areas and facilitating the adaptation of agriculture to the effects of climate change. Hydrographic basins were being reorganized with a view to benefiting women and young persons. All environmental action plans incorporated the gender perspective, made use of gender-disaggregated data and took into account the needs of persons with disabilities. Following the closure of the legal centres, victim support centres operating within town councils provided legal advice, counselling and social support to persons who needed such assistance, including persons on low incomes. Measures were being taken to assess the effectiveness of the support provided.

32. **Ms. Reddock** said that it was still not clear how women could obtain legal advice on their property rights, whether women had the opportunity to develop large-scale agricultural businesses from which they could make a decent living and what steps were being taken to promote gender equality in the field of sports.

33. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that national sports federations that wished to establish contractual agreements with the Government, and thereby obtain funding, were required to promote gender equality in all their activities. A commission for the promotion of women in sports had been established to ensure that sports federations and bodies complied with their obligations in that regard. The number of women involved in small and medium-sized enterprises had increased as a result of measures to facilitate their access to credit. A social income policy had been established to support the poorest women. Town councils provided women with legal advice on land ownership rights and efforts were being made to raise women's awareness of the importance of acquiring land titles.

34. **Ms. Bethel**, noting that the Government was attempting to diversify its economy by developing the sustainable use of ocean resources, said she wished to know how that development could improve the living standards of women and girls working in agriculture and how women and girls could be included as decision makers in economic development

programmes. The Committee would welcome information on measures to ensure food security, access to safe drinking water and access to affordable electricity generated from renewable resources for rural women and girls. She wondered what was being done to enable women to occupy decision-making roles in agriculture and rural development and what access rural women had to credit, technology and social security programmes. It would be interesting to learn the extent to which the State party was investing in childcare, care for older persons, affordable housing and transportation in order to reduce the proportion of unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women.

Articles 15 and 16

35. **Ms. Tisheva** said that married women were at greater risk of poverty because they spent long periods away from the labour market, were paid less when they worked and were less likely to be insured. Although they had the same rights as men in a formal sense, they had less bargaining power in marriages and after their dissolution. Women were also subjected to domestic violence, which sometimes continued after marriages dissolved when economic circumstances forced separated couples to continue living together. In view of that situation, it would be interesting to know the extent to which women made use of legal counselling, how effective that counselling was and how the State party ensured that women had access to it during and after marriage. The Committee would welcome information on any measures taken to raise women's awareness of their legal rights, including through the establishment of legal centres. It would also appreciate hearing about any plans to undertake research into the problems faced by women in the areas of marriage and property rights and how that research might inform the State party's policies on gender equality.

36. In view of the fact that households headed by women experienced high rates of poverty, the delegation might provide information on the extent to which separated fathers complied with the obligation to pay child maintenance. She wondered what was being done to monitor child marriage, including marriages involving migrants, what the State party intended to do to end child marriage, whether studies of child marriage would be conducted, whether any individuals had been prosecuted in relation to that offence and, if so, whether any convictions had been secured. The delegation might also state what plans were in place to study the prevalence of polygamy and the ways in which it was practised. It would be interesting to learn whether any individuals had been prosecuted for polygamy, whether any convictions had been secured in relation to that offence and what measures would be taken to eradicate it.

37. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that it was in the nature of small islands that there was little distinction between the issues facing rural and coastal areas. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment was seeking to implement the "blue economy" for the benefit of rural women, for example through programmes to retrain those working in activities such as collecting sand from beaches for use in the construction sector, to enable them to find employment in aquaculture. The Government was investing heavily in youth, including girls, in the form of the Maritime University, which would, when established, conduct research, and offer higher education and vocational training in sea-related sectors, such as fishing.

38. The Government was working to continue the expansion of access to drinking water and electricity that had taken place in recent years. All of the State party's desalination plants were included in the National Action Plan for Renewable Energy 2015–2020/2030. The electrical grid now covered 90 per cent of the country. Subsidized drinking water and electricity were available for disadvantaged and vulnerable women with children under the age of 15.

39. The green economy was delivering excellent employment opportunities for women, who accounted for 50 per cent of those involved in the installation of solar panels on the island of Sal. In technical and vocational schools, an awareness-raising campaign would be conducted in the academic year 2019/20 to encourage students, including a large number of girls, to work towards jobs relating to the replacement of conventional vehicles with electric ones.

40. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment's projects targeted the whole value chain, rather than just production. Training was offered to women so that, rather than simply working in the fields, they could make use of new technology and improved seeds, or work in cheese production, for example. There was a State allowance available to offer subsistence to families with no income and training was available, among other things, to help individuals find work.

41. The State party was fully committed to easing the burden of unpaid care work done by women. The Government was working with and providing funding for the municipalities, non-governmental organizations and other bodies in relation to setting up the national care system. Some 103 carers, of both sexes, had been trained to take up formal posts with decent pay and conditions; they would be caring for children, mainly those 0–3 years of age, persons with disabilities and older persons. Two new care centres, one for adults and one for children, had also been established. The Government was also attempting to keep children in school for longer each day, by offering meals, and recreational and educational activities.

42. As had been mentioned in the report, the deeply entrenched culture of informal arrangements for the transfer of property persisted in the country. That problem had been compounded by the fact that there was no established system of legal counselling in matters of marriage and divorce in Cabo Verde and such counsel was not widely sought.

43. The proportion of girls married by the age of 18 in Cabo Verde was 1.8 per cent. While fewer adolescent and young women were falling pregnant, it was a cause for concern that the figure for those under the age of 15 had risen. Since sexual activity with a girl under 15 years of age was a crime and the persons responsible for getting the girls pregnant were almost always adults, health centres and schools had a legal obligation to report such situations to law enforcement agencies immediately upon their discovery. Where the person involved was a teacher, criminal proceedings were initiated against him at the same time as any disciplinary process.

44. While the State party had no records or statistics relating to de facto polygamy, there was a sense, anecdotally, that the practice was decreasing, largely because of social pressures. De facto unions, in general, were decreasing because the female partners in such unions were officially deemed to be the heads of "single-parent families", a term that carried a degree of social stigma. As a result, the nuclear family and marriage were increasingly prevalent.

45. **Ms. Ameline** urged the State party to seek, when renewing its aid partnerships with the European Union and others, to ensure that women were given a leading role in decision-making rather than merely being the targets of programmes.

46. **Ms. Bethel** said that, while she very much appreciated the State party's comprehensive responses to most of her questions, she would welcome clarification of whether there were measures in place to guarantee women's participation in decision-making in regard to agriculture and rural development.

47. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know whether the fact that official recognition of a de facto union could be requested after three years' cohabitation, provided that both partners were over the age of 19, meant that the legal age for marriage was 16. She wondered whether such a provision did not open the way towards child marriage.

48. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that the system of official recognition of de facto unions was a case of the law reflecting the social reality. While child marriage was not recognized in Cabo Verdean legislation, children over 16 years of age could get married subject to parental consent. Nevertheless, there had only been three such cases in the previous three years.

49. **The Chair** said that she was grateful to the delegation for the openness of the dialogue and wondered whether the head of delegation had any concluding remarks.

50. **Ms. Rosabal Peña** (Cabo Verde) said that, in view of the importance she attached to issues of gender equality, the dialogue had been of particular significance to her personally. She was grateful to the Committee for its questions and suggestions.

The meeting rose at 4:55 p.m.