



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Ninetieth session

### Summary record of the 2133rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 February 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Haidar

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

*Eighth periodic report of the Congo (continued) (CEDAW/C/COG/8;*  
*CEDAW/C/COG/Q/8; CEDAW/C/COG/RQ/8)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Congo joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation of the Congo to continue replying to Committee members' questions.

*Articles 10–14*

3. **A representative of the Congo**, replying to questions raised in the previous meeting (CEDAW/C/SR.2132), said that girls were able to gain access to an education on the same footing as boys in her country. The National Strategy for the Education of Girls in the Congo was being evaluated and would be relaunched if necessary. Under the Government's various educational initiatives, children attended school and ate school meals free of charge. To avoid any risk of problems related to menstruation causing girls to miss lessons, single-sex toilets and showers had been built in many schools. The most recent data collected on the enrolment rate dated from the mid-2010s; new data were being collected but were not yet available.

4. The Government worked with partners to raise girls' awareness of jobs in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. With support from partner Governments, including those of China, Cuba, France and the Russian Federation, grants were available for girls who wished to take up careers in the sciences.

5. Special educational institutions existed to help girls who had dropped out of school. The Directorate-General for the Integration of Women in Development, which was part of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy, was responsible for helping them to find such institutions. In addition, the Ministry of Young People, Sports, Civic Education, Training and Employment offered young people, in particular young women who had dropped out of school, free training in many subjects.

6. **A representative of the Congo** said that, since 2020, measures taken to increase the enrolment rate among Indigenous children had resulted in more than 14,000 such children, over half of them girls, being enrolled in school.

7. **A representative of the Congo** said that Indigenous women were covered by the Government's rural development efforts. Part of the budget for the annual celebrations of International Women's Day was spent on capacity-building for rural women, which included encouraging their involvement in cooperatives and distributing agricultural tools to them.

8. **Ms. Barriteau** said that she would appreciate clarification of whether Indigenous girls, children with disabilities and orphans could be enrolled in regular schools. In the literacy programme for women and girls, in particular in rural areas, was the emphasis placed on reimmersion and remedial work, or purely on functional literacy?

9. **A representative of the Congo** said that the literacy programme was intended for all women, throughout Congolese territory. It included instruction on the symbols used on the packaging of hazardous products, such as bleach, to enable completely illiterate women to identify them.

10. **A representative of the Congo** said that her country had four institutions that specialized in the education of children with disabilities. Concerning Indigenous children, the Observe, Reflect, Act programme enabled them, both girls and boys, to attend the same schools as the majority Bantu population. The Government was striving to make Indigenous parents more aware of the need for their children to stay in school all year, even during harvest periods. Some Indigenous women continued their education for long enough to attend university. One was serving as deputy public prosecutor in the Brazzaville *Tribunal de Grande Instance* (court of major jurisdiction).

11. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would appreciate an overview of any strategies in place to raise awareness among employers and employees about women's rights in the workplace and about the need to take steps to protect women against violence and sexual harassment in employment. He was also curious about the State party's legislation and case law in that connection. In addition, he wondered whether the State party had considered ratifying the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). He wished to know what measures the State party had planned or taken to address the de facto difference in the pension rights enjoyed by men and women and to reduce the gender pay gap. What had the Government done to collect accurate statistical data on such matters?

12. **A representative of the Congo** said that, in her country, women and men of equal qualifications received the same remuneration. In early 2025, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy had launched the National Strategy for the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, 2025–2034. Moreover, a national agency for the informal economy was in the process of being established. Her Government was keen to increase the country's gross domestic product and, accordingly, was striving to bring people into the formal economy wherever possible. For example, it sought to formalize the work of female domestic servants, who were exposed to wage discrimination by the informal nature of their work. However, they were not subjected to forced labour, which did not exist in the Congo. All Congolese had de jure pension rights, and the inability of informal workers to claim those rights was another reason for the Government's determination to formalize as many economic sectors as possible. The Government was implementing a project under which loans were granted to women in the informal sector to enable them to jointly establish microenterprises, which could then obtain financing from a support and guarantee fund.

13. **A representative of the Congo**, noting that the minimum wage had recently been increased, said that the Mouébara Act established penalties for perpetrators of violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition, awareness-raising on the subject was carried out and employers were asked to take preventive measures in each individual workplace.

14. **A representative of the Congo** said that sexual violence and harassment had been criminalized pursuant to the Mouébara Act.

15. **A representative of the Congo** said that it was clear from the wording of article 61 of the Mouébara Act that it covered persons with disabilities. She wished to underscore the variety of different locations and conducts referred to in the article and to highlight that the penalty was doubled if the perpetrator was in a position of authority over the victim.

16. **Mr. Safarov** said that, while the Committee commended the State party for the adoption of the Mouébara Act, he would like to hear more about its practical implementation. It would be useful to know the number of criminal or administrative sanctions that had been handed down by the Congolese courts in respect of cases of sexual violence and harassment in the workplace. Had the State party considered remedying the paucity of labour-related data about the Congo available from international organizations such as the World Bank and the ILO?

17. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that it was unclear to her whether the draft law on parity provided only for political participation, or whether it also included provisions regulating the private sector. In addition, she would be interested to learn whether gender components had been incorporated into the environmental and social impact assessment framework that was required in order for businesses to operate in the country.

18. **A representative of the Congo** said that steps had been taken to map the actors involved in the informal economy and to generate statistics on such activities. The measures taken to formalize the informal sector formed part of the Government's efforts to increase the country's gross domestic product. All men and women had the right to receive a retirement pension, in line with their contributions.

19. Under a new law, social, environmental and financial impact assessments must be conducted before projects could be undertaken. The draft law on parity related only to elective and administrative public posts. The President had recommended that a campaign

should be conducted to change attitudes to gender parity in employment, especially among male civil servants, before the bill was adopted. In that connection, meetings had been held with prefects at the departmental level.

20. **Ms. Toledo Vásquez** said that she wished to know what measures had been taken to raise public awareness of the risks of early pregnancy and to protect girls against those risks. It would be of interest to learn about steps to ensure access to comprehensive medical care for women facing unwanted pregnancies or complications from unsafe abortions. The Committee would like to know how the State party ensured that women, and especially women who had had an unsafe abortion, could access healthcare services without being criminalized. In view of the serious risks that clandestine abortions posed to the lives of women and girls, it would be interesting to know whether the State party would consider legalizing abortion. Given that HIV/AIDS was the primary cause of death among women in the Congo, she would be grateful to receive information on any steps taken to reduce the taboos and stigma that hindered access to healthcare services for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

21. It would be useful to know what measures were taken to ensure the availability of quality healthcare infrastructure, equipment and staff, especially in rural areas and Indigenous communities. She wished to know what was done to increase the budget allocated to health, which currently stood at 13 per cent of the overall State budget. How many people benefited from the Universal Medical Insurance Fund, and what proportion of them were women and girls? What measures were taken to ensure access to clean water, adequate nutrition and menstrual hygiene products for Indigenous and rural woman and girls?

22. **A representative of the Congo** said that a number of strategies to combat maternal and infant mortality had been developed, including integrated strategic plans relating to reproductive, maternal, neonatal, infant and adolescent health. As a result of the measures taken, the maternal mortality rate, the neonatal mortality rate and the infant and child mortality rate had fallen significantly. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the mother-to-child transmission rate had declined considerably and the proportion of pregnant women who had access to antiretroviral drugs had increased.

23. Awareness-raising campaigns were conducted in schools and grass-roots communities to combat teenage pregnancy. Free modern contraceptives were made available in integrated health centres, but no particular method was promoted, as the selection was a matter of personal choice. Coils were made available for people who preferred not to use condoms. The reason abortion was prohibited was to prevent the procedure from being abused in a manner that amounted to femicide. Women whose pregnancies endangered their health or resulted from incest were required to obtain the authorization of a court in order to have an abortion.

24. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would welcome information on any measures taken to enhance social protection for women, especially those who worked in the informal sector or belonged to disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. She wondered how the Government planned to address the financial and infrastructural challenges that hindered women's access to social services and how it would identify excluded groups and improve access for women who qualified for social assistance. Would the State party consider ratifying the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), the Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167), the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)?

25. She would be grateful for details of any targeted economic empowerment programmes to support women in core economic sectors, including the energy sector, the extractive industries and the blue economy. Information on any plans to expand the range of financial products made available to women and to build their capacity to use them would be appreciated. It would also be useful to have gender-disaggregated data, for example on the number of businesses owned by women and the proportion of business loans that had been granted to such businesses every year for the past five years.

26. She wondered what percentage of leadership roles or board positions in top companies were held by women and whether the State party had regulatory provisions for safeguarding

women's rights in investments and business operations. The Committee would like to know what mechanisms were in place to ensure that business operators complied with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and article 9 of the Convention. It would be interesting to know whether any whistle-blowing or reparation schemes were in place to strengthen compliance with the Convention within the private sector and ensure the protection of women's economic rights. She would like to hear what was being done to close the gender digital gap and ensure that gender was mainstreamed in plans to develop the digital economy. Could the delegation provide details of any plans to promote women's participation in sports and recreational activities and to boost investment in women's sports?

27. **Ms. Akia** asked what efforts were made to mobilize adequate financing for climate action in the Congo, including projects to exploit renewable energy sources and promote equal access to clean energy and technology for all women and girls. She wondered whether the blue economy was accounted for in any of the various development programmes mentioned by the State party. Given the sensitivity of the agricultural sector and the blue economy to climate change, it would be interesting to know whether women and girls involved in those sectors were allocated funding to acquire climate-resilient and smart technology to increase their access to high-value markets and credit and to promote their ownership and control of land and natural resources.

28. She would like to know what measures were taken to increase the number of water, hygiene and sanitation programmes in all parts of the country, including programmes benefiting refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities, women living in poverty and rural women. The Committee would like to hear details of any steps taken to enhance access to education, employment, technology, justice and quality healthcare services for women with disabilities, rural women and refugee and asylum-seeking women. To what extent were rural women, refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women, women living in poverty and women with disabilities involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the rural and agricultural programmes intended to benefit them?

29. **A representative of the Congo** said that the statistics on tree planting in the Congo showed that the country's President was an environmental champion. The President had proposed the establishment of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, the purpose of which was to enable States in the subregion to shift the focus of their economies from forestry exploitation to the management of water-based resources. The agreement establishing the Fund had been signed by 12 countries on 9 March 2017. Efforts were being made to raise awareness among women farmers of ways to mitigate the effects of drought in order to maximize their yields.

30. The Ministry of Social Affairs had established a plan to provide immediate support to persons affected by natural disasters. A fund for supporting women working in the craft sector had been established. Women working in the informal sector were covered by the Universal Medical Insurance Fund if they paid a minimum contribution.

31. Under the Water for All programme, solar power was used to provide lighting and water to remote villages. Efforts were made to empower women through development programmes in agricultural areas. Under the Lisungi Project, the Government made conditional cash transfers to women undertaking income-generating activities as part of its efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality.

32. The Government had set up a dedicated fund to support small and medium-sized enterprises. Women entrepreneurs received training in entrepreneurial leadership and had access to credits and loans. A decree designating 6 November as National Tree Day had been issued. In March 2025, women would be participating in a project to plant trees in the commune of Djambala.

33. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Pro Climate Project would be implemented in designated areas to protect the environment and provide training and support to Indigenous communities living in and around those areas. Efforts had been made to consult the communities concerned about its implementation. Over the previous five years, Congolese women had excelled in a number of sports, particularly combat sports and handball. An inter-school competition was held every year to encourage pupils to participate in sports. Specific schools had been set up to train girls for sports competitions.

34. **A representative of the Congo** said that a project to train 300 women in self-defence would be implemented as part of the efforts to combat violence against women.

35. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would like to know whether the environmental impact assessment framework used for development projects had a gender component and, if not, whether the State party intended to review it to ensure that such projects brought economic opportunities for women on a sustainable basis.

36. **Ms. Akia** said that she would like to hear more about rural women's ownership and control of land. She wondered whether the State party's rural development programmes were inclusive of women with disabilities.

37. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Minister of the Environment was a woman and that she ensured that the gender dimension was incorporated in policies and laws. Statistics on land tenure would be provided in writing. Under current laws on land ownership, women, including those with disabilities, had the same rights as men and no longer faced discrimination.

#### *Articles 15 and 16*

38. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she would like to know how the State party ensured that all customary marriages were registered so as to ensure that women in such marriages had the same rights as those married under civil law. She would appreciate a response to concerns that the law on the granting of citizenship to spouses was discriminatory against women, and further information on the practice of dowry. She wondered whether divorce was regulated as a civil status matter, in line with international standards.

39. The Committee would be interested to hear about plans to amend the legislation that provided harsher penalties for women who committed adultery than the penalties for men and that defined men as the heads of families in most circumstances and allowed them to choose the family's place of residence. She wondered what was being done to end discrimination against women in divorce settlements, especially with regard to financial assets. Could the delegation describe efforts to raise awareness of women's rights in respect of marriage and the family, including through the media and among religious and traditional leaders?

40. It would be helpful to receive up-to-date information about the process of review of the Personal and Family Code, including a time frame for its adoption and an explanation of how alignment would be ensured with the principles in the Convention. She wondered whether the State party intended to remove the exceptions currently allowing for child marriage and establish separate offences of child marriage and forced marriage. The Committee would like to hear about measures taken to prevent child marriage, including programmes to change attitudes and address stereotypes about women and girls and to provide training to persons involved in the family justice system. What awareness-raising and training programmes had been put in place to end discriminatory practices against widows, including degrading rituals?

41. **A representative of the Congo** said that a number of provisions of the Mouébara Act concerned widows' or spouses' rights. For example, article 70, which prohibited the expulsion of a spouse or partner from her home without justification, had put an end to previous abuses. Women were becoming more aware of their rights under the Act and thus more likely to report offences to the police. The President had instructed the Government to prioritize the adoption of the new Personal and Family Code, Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, which would incorporate protection of the rights of married women.

42. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Family Code provided that customary marriage was a prerequisite for civil marriage. Women whose customary marriages of several years broke down could request redress under the Code. Awareness-raising activities were conducted to inform them of that right. The Mouébara Act and the amendments to the Family Code were intended to reflect social change by providing for women's autonomy.

43. **A representative of the Congo** said that a commission to review the Family Code, Civil Code, Code of Civil Procedure, Penal Code and the Judiciary Code had been established

in January 2025. The commission would take into account all the Committee's concerns regarding family law.

44. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she would like to know when the amended legislation was expected to be adopted. She wondered whether the exceptions allowing for child marriage with the consent of parents would be eliminated and would like to hear about preventive action taken in communities where discrimination against widows was most prevalent.

45. **A representative of the Congo** said that the director of the National Programme to Combat Violence against Women conducted visits, accompanied by police officers, to widows who had been granted redress, to ensure the enforcement of court orders. For example, during such visits persons living in the house were removed and the widow was allowed to enter. Videos of such visits could be viewed on social media. In some circumstances the persons who had violated the widows' rights were arrested. Such actions raised awareness of widows' rights and helped enforce the inheritance rights of children.

46. **A representative of the Congo** said that awareness-raising on women's rights, including the protection of widows, was conducted among women's organizations, community leaders and local officials. Civil society organizations sent staff to visit households where deaths had occurred, to ensure that the widow would not be subjected to degrading practices after the funeral. A campaign to promote positive masculinity was intended to help eradicate gender stereotypes, including those concerning widows. The Mouébara Act was strictly enforced.

47. **A representative of the Congo** said that the reports on the review of the various Codes were due imminently. The amended laws would be submitted for adoption as a priority, in line with the President's instructions.

48. **A representative of the Congo** said that her Government was proud of its efforts to protect women's rights, most notably the adoption of the Mouébara Act. The Act was an inspiration to other African countries because of its broad scope, which addressed physical, economic, sexual, psychological and domestic violence. Her Government was committed to promoting the rights of women and improving their lives, in line with the Convention, and counted on the support of the international community to do so.

49. **The Chair** said that she was impressed by the number of innovative legal instruments and actions on the ground to implement them carried out by the State party. She thanked the delegation for the constructive dialogue, which had helped the Committee understand the challenges faced by women in the State party and the progress made.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*