



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-ninth session

### Summary record of the 2106th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 18 October 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

## Contents

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

*Ninth periodic report of Cuba*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

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

*Ninth periodic report of Cuba (CEDAW/C/CUB/9; CEDAW/C/CUB/Q/9; CEDAW/C/CUB/RQ/9)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cuba joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Cuba**, introducing her country's ninth periodic report (CEDAW/C/CUB/9), said that Cuba was fully committed to achieving gender equality and had implemented nearly 80 per cent of the Committee's previous recommendations. The reformed Constitution explicitly recognized the right to equality and prohibited direct and indirect gender-based discrimination, while the new Family Code provided a broad catalogue of rights and guarantees for gender equality.
3. The National Programme for the Advancement of Women had established an action plan that included seven priority areas and 46 measures for the development of policies benefiting women. For example, such policies had led to the creation of 246 childcare centres and the extension of maternity leave and social protection. A governmental monitoring mechanism was in place to evaluate the Programme's effectiveness.
4. In 2024, 55.7 per cent of deputies in the National Assembly of People's Power were women, as were 80 per cent of judges and 53 per cent of judges in the People's Supreme Court. More than 60 per cent of higher education graduates in Cuba were women, and gender parity had been reached in the scientific field. An observatory on gender equality had been created for the collection and dissemination of data on gender issues, and such data were publicly available online.
5. The Constitution recognized the State's responsibility to prevent gender-based violence and provide support to indirect and direct victims. The Comprehensive Strategy for Prevention and Support in Relation to Gender-based Violence and Violence in the Family set out 10 strategic areas focused on prevention, care, protection and recovery. It relied heavily on education and awareness-raising about gender-based stereotypes at the local and community levels.
6. The amended Criminal Code, in addition to criminalizing all forms of domestic violence, had established gender-motivated killings of women as a distinct criminal offence. Since the creation of the Ombudsman's Office in 2023, the Office had processed 132 cases related to violence and discrimination. Cuban women had free and universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including the right to a safe abortion at public hospitals.
7. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States of America over the past 60 years, in addition to its inclusion of Cuba on its State Sponsors of Terrorism List, was a flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban population, causing food and medicine shortages and feeding the energy crisis. The embargo had also prevented Cuban researchers from making important medical advances, by limiting their access to the necessary scientific equipment and tools.
8. An evaluation of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women had identified a number of challenges, including the need to raise women's awareness of the support it offered, the low participation rate of women in the labour market, particularly in rural areas, and the widespread nature of patriarchal stereotypes.
9. The Office of the Attorney General would soon launch an interoperable administrative registry that would provide real-time information on violent deaths of women and girls related to their gender. A 24-hour hotline would also be set up for women and girls who were victims of violence. A decree had recently been issued establishing a national system for comprehensive life care, which would reduce the burden of care placed on women. Steps were also taken to create a comprehensive and specialized system of care for direct and indirect victims of gender-based and domestic violence.
10. Lastly, she wished to emphasize that her delegation shared the deep concern expressed by the Committee regarding the genocide committed against the Palestinian people in the

Gaza Strip and the violence which had spread to other countries. She wished to pay tribute to the victims who had been deprived of their right to life, 70 per cent of whom were women and children, and to call for peace.

*Articles 1–6*

11. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would be grateful for further information regarding the status and treatment of the individuals detained in connection with the protests held in July 2021 against the shortages of food, water, electricity and fuel for transportation. It would be useful to know how many of the individuals who had been detained were women and how many were still in detention. Were there any plans to release those protesters and other political detainees?

12. She wished to learn whether persons deprived of their liberty for taking part in protests or other social actions had the right of appeal, and how the Government safeguarded the independence of the judiciary as a mechanism to guarantee women's access to justice. Noting that Cuba had maintained the death penalty for over 20 offences, she said that the existence of such a penalty threatened dissent and freedom of expression and reduced the civil space in the country. She would like more specific information about the Ombudsman's Office. How many complaints had it received from women, and what had their complaints related to?

13. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would like to know what concrete steps had been taken, for example through cooperation with civil society and the media, to systematize and enhance women's awareness of their rights under the Convention and of the means of enforcing those rights, in particular in remote and rural areas. She would welcome further information on the measures implemented to disseminate among relevant stakeholders the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations, as well as on the national mechanism for monitoring the implementation of those recommendations. In reviewing the national legislation, had the Government found any discriminatory laws affecting women's rights that were inconsistent with international standards?

14. It would be of interest to know whether the Government intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. She would also be curious to hear why the Government had not incorporated a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women into the country's legislation, and what legislative and policy measures were in place to address the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women.

15. **A representative of Cuba** said that the Constitution recognized the right of all persons to have access to justice. Men and women enjoyed equal legal capacity and the same guarantees to exercise their legal rights. Free legal consultations were available to all individuals and the cost of legal services could be reduced or offered free of charge in cases of gender-based or domestic violence and for economically vulnerable individuals. Between January 2023 and August 2024, 739 pro bono legal services had been provided.

16. Since the Ombudsman's Office had been established in June 2023, it had dealt with 1,001 cases, of which 616 had fallen within its competence and 132 had related to victims of violence and discrimination. Of the 616 cases, 310 had been resolved, and of those cases related to victims of violence and discrimination, 48 had been resolved.

17. **A representative of Cuba** said that the administration of justice and the conduct of trials in Cuba were the sole prerogative of the Supreme Court and other courts duly established by law. Judgments were not subject to amendment by any other authority, and no other body was authorized to delay their application. Court rulings could be reviewed only through legally established appeal procedures. Cuba met the highest standards of independence and impartiality of the judiciary, as set forth in the relevant United Nations principles. Judges enjoyed immunity and could be removed only for legal cause, and only by the bodies that elected them. Due process guarantees were in place, including the public, oral nature of hearings and the right of appeal.

18. Cuba was well aware of the arguments in favour of the elimination of the death penalty or the introduction of a moratorium. The Cuban Government itself favoured abolition of the death penalty, but it could only proceed to do so once conditions were right. The death penalty

had not been applied for 20 years and there was no one on death row in Cuban prisons. The most serious crimes, including those that carried the death penalty, had instead been punished with a prison term of 30 years or life imprisonment. The new Criminal Code had removed the death penalty from a number of offences, maintaining it only for crimes of the utmost seriousness, such as terrorist offences.

19. There were no political prisoners in Cuba. No one was imprisoned for their views or ideology. Anyone serving a prison sentence had been duly tried by a competent court for crimes previously defined by law, and with all due process guarantees. Persons who had committed common offences should not masquerade as prisoners of conscience or human rights defenders.

20. The events of 11 July 2021 had not been peaceful protests. There had been riots; vandalism and violence had taken place; public security and people's lives had been endangered; people had been injured; and property, including public property, had been deliberately destroyed or damaged. There was no impunity in Cuba for crimes that put at risk the physical integrity of individuals or the constitutional order. The relevant cases had been prosecuted in strict compliance with the law, with all due process guarantees. There had been no gender bias or gender component to the prosecution.

21. **A representative of Cuba** said that her department carried out awareness-raising and dissemination on all the international human rights instruments to which Cuba was a State party. The target groups were communities at large, judicial officials and civil servants. As part of the implementation of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, such work focused specifically on the Convention and issues relating to gender and women's rights aiming to reach people in rural and remote areas and women from vulnerable groups. The main purpose was to reinforce women's understanding of their rights under the Convention and of the mechanisms for redress in the event of violations of their rights.

22. Among the key vectors in such activities were local and community media channels and civil society organizations such as the National Union of Jurists of Cuba. The latter had helped in an initiative to raise awareness in the general public and among legal professionals of gender aspects of key human rights instruments. In addition, hundreds of jurists had attended postgraduate courses on gender and law, violence and masculinity. The Office of the Attorney General had also helped organize more than 1,500 training courses on gender equality and women's empowerment for its own staff.

23. **A representative of Cuba** said that Cuba took the ratification of instruments such as the Convention extremely seriously. In ratifying such instruments, it had undertaken to comply strictly with the international obligations they entailed, and it did so in practice. Cuba thus had a long-standing policy whereby it did not recognize the competence of any of the international human rights treaty bodies to receive individual communications. The Government did not envisage any change in that position.

24. **A representative of Cuba** said that the Federation of Cuban Women formed part of the national governmental mechanism responsible for following up on the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations. The National Programme launched under Presidential Decree No. 198/2021 aimed to promote progress towards equal rights and equal opportunities and to identify any factors that stood in the way of Cuban women's advancement or reflected persistent discrimination in Cuban society, thus preventing women from overcoming discrimination in the economic, political, social and family spheres. The Programme comprised seven special action lines and 46 targets addressing subjects such as women's economic empowerment, the media, access to education, social work, decision-making and reproductive health. It was coordinated at the highest levels of government and provided a key opportunity to monitor progress in gender equality.

25. A working group had been set up, bringing together representatives of the central Government, State agencies and civil society, and identical bodies had been established in every province. The working group was also responsible for drafting the Government's replies to the Committee. Its structure encouraged a multidisciplinary and intersectional approach. As the National Programme had been in place for three years, the group was currently reviewing its operational guidelines. The Standing Commission on Children, Youth

and Equal Rights for Women of the National Assembly had recently carried out an audit and reported to the Council of State.

26. **A representative of Cuba** said that Cuba prohibited all forms of discrimination that undermined human dignity in any way. The prohibited grounds of discrimination had been broadened to include sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. Under the Constitution, international treaties in force for Cuba formed an integral part of the domestic legal order. Accordingly, the definition of discrimination set forth in the Convention was directly applicable in law. Under the *amparo* procedure for the protection of constitutional rights, legal provisions were interpreted in the manner most favourable to the individual concerned, with due respect for human dignity, and in accordance with the values and principles set forth in the constitutional provisions on equality and non-discrimination. In the course of the recent legislative reforms, 47 laws and 110 decree-laws had been adopted, with due regard for the cross-cutting nature of the gender perspective.

27. The new Family Code, which placed gender equality at the centre of family relations, represented a major step forward in the application of the gender perspective in Cuban law. Other legislation and initiatives along those lines included the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, the Comprehensive Strategy for Prevention and Support in Relation to Gender-based Violence and Violence in the Family and various ministerial resolutions and decisions in the areas of labour and education.

28. Such a comprehensive reform, with the incorporation of new concepts into the law, had necessitated the preparation of an extensive plan to reach out to judicial officials and the population at large in order to ensure broad awareness of the content of the new legislation in terms of the gender perspective and non-discrimination.

29. **A representative of Cuba** said that, while action on intersectional discrimination needed to be developed, the National Programme against Racism and Racial Discrimination, known as the Color Cubano (Cuban Colour) Programme, comprised a raft of measures and actions to tackle racial discrimination in a cross-cutting manner.

30. **Ms. Bethel** said that she would like to know how the delegation evaluated the results of the Government's efforts to disseminate the Convention in rural and urban areas and across various sectors. While acknowledging the State's sovereignty, she said that she wished to point out that the purpose of the Optional Protocol was to permit the Committee to adjudicate the practical implementation of rights under the Convention – an instrument the State party had already ratified – to the benefit of the women of Cuba.

31. Recalling that the State party had agreed in 2013 to consider expanding the definition of discrimination against women and incorporating it into its legislation, she encouraged it, as a country with many and varied ethnicities and races, to look closely at the question of intersectionality.

32. **Ms. Reddock** said that, in its responses, the delegation had made no mention of the destructive impact of the embargo. Had the State simply been able to deal with all the challenges that the embargo had entailed?

33. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wished to draw the delegation's attention to the international legal framework on sanctions, including the various recommendations made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, the Guiding Principles on Sanctions Compliance and Human Rights issued by the Special Rapporteur, general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

34. **A representative of Cuba** said that the visibility of the Convention was ensured through specialist training in its provisions for law enforcement officers, policy advisers, journalists and community leaders. In addition, the Convention was disseminated in rural areas through schools and other educational centres.

35. **A representative of Cuba** said that the reason Cuba did not recognize the human rights treaty bodies' competence to receive individual communications was that it considered

that its national legal framework was sufficiently robust to cope with any situation in respect of the promotion and protection of all individual rights.

36. **A representative of Cuba** said that the United States embargo had a direct impact on women and families. Banking transactions were restricted because Cuba was listed as a sponsor of terrorism; maintenance of energy equipment was hampered by the lack of spare parts; cancer medication was inaccessible; during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it had been impossible to import ventilators donated from abroad. Each hour or day of the blockade represented a specific cost: 25 days equalled the amount needed to fund one year of essential medicines, or US \$339 million; 4 months equalled the amount needed to guarantee families' food rations for one year, or around US \$1.6 billion; 15 minutes equalled the amount needed to cover demand for hearing aids for children in the country's special education system, or US \$144,000.

37. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she would be interested to know how the working group set up by the Federation of Cuban Women undertook to mainstream gender equality across sectoral policies and how actions were coordinated with provincial mechanisms. She would like to know how the Federation promoted the participation of women of African descent, women with disabilities and rural women in the adoption and implementation of public policies. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of the collaboration between the Federation and women's organizations in implementing the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, and of how the Federation assisted independent civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Cuba in their respective activities advocating for gender equality.

38. She wondered whether the delegation could say whether there was a protocol to standardize the provision of psychological and legal support for women nationwide. The Committee would be interested to find out how many complaints the Ombudsman's Office had received from women since its establishment in 2023, and in what areas. How many such complaints had been resolved?

39. It would be interesting to know what gender sensitivity training had been provided to that Ombudsman's Office. Did the Government plan to establish a national human rights mechanism in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles)?

40. **A representative of Cuba** said that two national workshops had been held for all the local representatives of the Ombudsman's Office and other stakeholders and for institutions concerned by the mandate of the Office. A third workshop would be held shortly, focusing on awareness-raising. In addition, field visits were regularly conducted to all parts of the country, and the local offices and units checked in regularly through videoconferences.

41. **A representative of Cuba** said that the temporary working group on women's empowerment focused on the seven areas of key concern, including monitoring progress on women's empowerment and advancement in terms of gender equality. After three years of existence, the working group had set up the infrastructure and mechanisms required to ensure that Cuban women around the country would learn about the programme and its implications for them personally.

42. **A representative of Cuba** said that the State's comprehensive national human rights system included national bodies that were tasked with protecting the rights of specific population groups. They included the national commission that coordinated activities under the Color Cubano Programme, the working group for the monitoring of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women and the national commission for the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Civil society played an active role in promoting and protecting human rights in collaboration with those State entities. There was no single model for the establishment of a national human rights institution, nor was there any obligation to create one, and there was no evidence to show that countries where such institutions had been established were the ones that protected human rights most effectively.

43. **A representative of Cuba** said that women of African descent currently accounted for 31.9 per cent of all members of the National Assembly and 56 per cent of the female

membership. Multiracial and black women had benefited from a number of actions taken under the Color Cubano Programme, including the creation of a social observatory to monitor racial issues and the establishment of new complaints mechanisms. Each year, activities were organized throughout the country to mark the International Day for Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean and Diaspora Women, led by a network made up of more than 70 anti-racist groups around the country.

44. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she would be interested to learn more about the different ways in which the Federation of Cuban Women supported and collaborated with civil society actors and the steps that it had taken to support the creation of independent women's NGOs.

45. **A representative of Cuba** said that the Federation of Cuban Women coordinated the working group for the monitoring of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women. The membership of the working group included female representatives of civil society and female academics. Gender mainstreaming had been incorporated into all university courses, and the Centre for Women's Studies also carried out training on gender issues.

46. **A representative of Cuba** said that a gender perspective had been incorporated into curricula and textbooks at all educational levels and into programmes for further education, training and postgraduate studies. At university level, particular progress had been made towards integrating gender issues into the syllabuses offered by law schools. Panel discussions on gender issues had been held at an international law congress hosted by Cuba in May 2024, which had been well attended by local and international legal professionals.

47. **A representative of Cuba** said that the Government had recently held two consultative meetings with independent feminist groups based in Cuba that were not members of the Federation of Cuban Women.

48. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she wished to know whether the Government had considered implementing temporary special measures to ensure the provision of food to disadvantaged girls and older women and to address the high rate of migration from rural to urban areas.

49. **A representative of Cuba** said that temporary measures had been put in place to provide food to members of groups presenting specific nutritional needs, including pregnant women, underweight children and persons with disabilities. Specific measures had also been taken to guarantee access to maternity care for pregnant women and to improve women's access to employment.

50. **A representative of Cuba** said that women and girls who migrated from rural areas to cities enjoyed access to free education and health services on an equal basis with the rest of the population. Measures were taken to provide better protection for populations living in rural areas, especially women and girls, with a view to stemming migratory flows towards urban areas.

51. **A representative of Cuba** said that a working group chaired by the Prime Minister met every month to discuss the Government's policy on population dynamics. The movement of citizens from rural to urban areas had a considerable impact on water and energy supply and waste management in the country's cities. The working group was tasked with analysing the situation and formulating a response to it, including by revising the country's urban planning regulations.

52. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would like to know whether the Government had assessed the impact of its training and awareness-raising on the subject of gender stereotypes and, if so, what mechanisms had been put in place to measure the success of those activities. It would be helpful to know whether the Government would consider adopting a comprehensive multisectoral strategy, in collaboration with schools, civil society organizations, employers and trade unions, aimed at eliminating patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, including in rural and disadvantaged areas. Information on any activities that had been organized for men and boys to tackle gender ideologies and stereotypes would be of particular interest to the Committee. She also wished to find out whether the teacher training curricula included gender studies. The Committee would be interested to know whether the Government would consider working with teachers' organizations to carry out a review of all curricula and

teaching materials, with a view to removing stereotypical content on women and men. She would like to know whether the Government would consider raising awareness about gender stereotypes in parenting, in partnership with community organizations, schools and the media.

53. The Committee would be interested to learn to what extent the current economic crisis had affected the implementation of existing legislation protecting women against gender-based violence. Would the Government consider developing a new comprehensive law to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence against women, including femicide?

54. She said she would welcome updated information on the preparation of comprehensive national legislation to counter gender-based violence and wondered what alternative mechanisms were being considered as means to prevent gender-based violence. The Committee would like to know whether any official shelters for victims of gender-based violence had been created and to what extent the Government supported shelters operated by NGOs. It would also be useful to learn whether the system of reparations for gender-based violence was still active. If so, the delegation might wish to describe the procedure that victims had to follow to obtain reparation.

55. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she would be interested to know what time frame the Government had set for the adoption of a comprehensive law encompassing all forms of trafficking in persons, including the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls. Would such a law include clear provisions on prevention, protection and prosecution and the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims?

56. It would also be useful to know when the Government intended to establish a permanent high-level authority tasked with combating trafficking in persons. She wished to find out when the Government planned to amend the Criminal Code so that it would ensure that children between the ages of 16 and 18 years were fully protected against sexual exploitation and that victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation were protected from prosecution. Would the Code include stricter punishments for perpetrators and criminalize the use of the services of trafficking victims?

57. The Committee would be interested to learn whether the Government planned to put in place a comprehensive identification mechanism for trafficking victims, with the participation of women's NGOs. She wished to know how many State officials had received training over the previous two years on ways of combating trafficking in persons, including aspects such as prevention, prosecution and victim identification, with an emphasis on the risks associated with sex tourism. She would welcome further information on any studies that had been carried out or were planned on the root causes, characteristics and prevalence of trafficking, sexual exploitation and prostitution, with a view to strengthening prevention measures and the protection of vulnerable groups such as children, women of African descent, rural women and girls, women with disabilities and anyone at risk of sexual exploitation as a result of sex tourism. It would be helpful to know how many awareness-raising campaigns for community networks and vulnerable groups had been conducted over the previous two years, including at the local level.

58. The nature and extent of the support offered to victims of trafficking were still not clear to the Committee. How many shelters and assistance centres had been put in place, and where were they located? What were their capacities and specializations, and what overall package of services was offered in terms of medical care, psychosocial counselling, legal counselling and rehabilitation and reintegration services? Did the Government support the victim support work carried out by women's NGOs?

59. **A representative of Cuba** said that, as part of the ongoing improvement of the national education system, a new programme had been introduced for the 2023/24 academic year, incorporating themes such as gender equality, gender roles, gender gaps and inequalities, sexist and discriminatory stereotypes and patriarchal culture, the gender division of labour and the role of women in social development. Those subjects had been incorporated in the national curricula, textbooks and methodological guidelines for teachers. As part of that process, new age-appropriate teaching materials had been designed on the basis of research into gender issues carried out by the Central Institute of Educational Science.

60. **A representative of Cuba** said that the Government had organized a series of activities to raise awareness of gender stereotypes among men and boys, in partnership with the Inter-American and African Masculinity Network. Intergenerational meetings, where older men explained to boys and young men the ways in which a culture of machismo and patriarchal attitudes permeated society, had proved to be particularly successful. Recently adopted legislation on maternity also set out the important role that fathers and other family members had to play in the care and upbringing of children.

61. The Government had put in place stronger legislation aimed at comprehensively responding to and addressing violence against women. Although the drafting of a higher-level law against gender-based violence had yet to begin, the Government was monitoring developments and remained committed to passing a comprehensive law on gender-based violence in due course. In accordance with a recommendation previously issued by the Committee, the Government had already amended the Criminal Code to explicitly establish that any person who killed a woman in an act of gender-based violence would be punished and would face very severe penalties. The Comprehensive Strategy for Prevention and Support in Relation to Gender-based Violence and Violence in the Family also provided for monitoring and evaluation measures. Continuous efforts were thus made to identify areas for improvement in the existing legislation and protection mechanisms.

62. **A representative of Cuba** said that public bodies and institutions were required to carry out periodic impact assessments of the measures they had taken in relation to women's empowerment, family affairs and gender-based violence. In the period leading up to the dialogue with the Committee, a total of 15 evaluation activities had been completed. They had assessed the effectiveness of different aspects of the Family Code, the National Programme for the Advancement of Women and the Comprehensive Strategy for Prevention and Support in Relation to Gender-based Violence and Violence in the Family. The results of such evaluations were analysed by the Committee for Youth, Children and Women's Equal Rights and the working group for the monitoring of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women. Their conclusions were then submitted to the National Assembly and the Council of State, which were responsible for deciding on any measures that might be needed to strengthen the effectiveness of the initiatives in question.

63. **Ms. Reddock**, noting that the Committee was aware of reticence in some countries about the idea of specifying femicide as a distinct criminal act, said that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had assisted certain Governments in establishing multisectoral committees that built a better understanding of the need to specifically address the phenomenon. Would the Government consider putting in place a femicide committee in Cuba?

64. **A representative of Cuba** said that there were shelters for female victims of violence in the country and that civil society had taken some laudable initiatives in that sphere. Ways of offering comprehensive, specialized services to support victims of all forms of violence were under consideration. A workshop had been held in order to plan just such a coordinated, comprehensive and integrated response. Once a more precise plan had been crafted, the Government would seek the Committee's technical advice for its implementation.

65. Female victims of violence received reparation and support, which could take the form of material and moral damages and psychological counselling. Legal and psychological support was available as soon as legal proceedings were initiated. The Government drew a distinction between the act of killing a woman because she was a woman and femicide, which implied a systemic problem of impunity for such an act. There was no such impunity in Cuba for such acts. They immediately gave rise to legal proceedings.

66. **A representative of Cuba** said that, after a very thorough debate in the National Assembly, the parliament had rejected the idea of introducing any specific legislative provision criminalizing femicide, since killing a woman was automatically punishable under the current law.

67. **A representative of Cuba** said that the State had zero tolerance for any form of human trafficking. In accordance with the international instruments to which Cuba was party, the law combated human trafficking and acts associated with it. Child labour was expressly prohibited by the Constitution. Human trafficking was a separate crime in the Criminal Code and the constituent elements of the crime were consonant with the definition contained in the

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The country's criminal law encompassed crimes against human dignity and forced labour, and victims' rights were protected in criminal proceedings.

68. The few cases of human trafficking in the country were not linked to organized crime. The authorities' action concentrated on preventing and combating trafficking and on protecting victims. The National Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons and Protecting Victims incorporated a gender approach and sought to defend and protect human rights, with particular emphasis placed on the protection of women, adolescents and girls. Since 2013, an annual report had been issued on action taken under the Plan. The country's regulations prohibited sex tourism; in the very few cases where foreigners had engaged in sexual relations with minors, the perpetrators had been convicted of corruption of minors. Numerous regulations were designed to suppress all forms of sex tourism. Over 17,000 teachers had participated in training in the prevention of trafficking in persons, along with over 7,000 persons who were active in the tourism sector.

69. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know when legislation that absolved victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation from criminal responsibility would be adopted and whether any legal provisions existed that would prevent such persons from once again becoming victims of those crimes. She wondered whether the use of trafficking services had been criminalized. The Committee would find it helpful to receive statistics showing the number of trafficking victims over the previous three years, if possible disaggregated by sex, age and nationality, and the number of persons who had been convicted of human trafficking. It would be useful to know how many victims had received compensation, as well as what types of assistance had been given to women and children over the previous three years. She was curious to find out whether any rehabilitation programmes were being run for women who wanted to leave prostitution. The Committee would welcome information on instances and patterns of online and technologically facilitated trafficking of women and girls and on any training received by the police and the judiciary to counter such trafficking.

70. **A representative of Cuba** said that the much of the requested data had recently been published in a report in the official newspaper, *Granma*, and that the delegation would subsequently send it to the Committee.

71. **A representative of Cuba** said that a publicly accessible national report on trafficking in persons was published every year. As far as the prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking was concerned, there had been 10 cases in 2021, 6 in 2022 and 14 in 2023. Cuban law did not punish or criminalize victims of trafficking or criminalize prostitution, but it did punish pimps, as pimping was deemed to be a form of exploitation. Awareness-raising campaigns about trafficking were run, in particular in schools and universities. The Government tried to address the root causes of prostitution and to ensure that young women had access to education and training, so as to offer them alternative ways of earning a living. Similarly, family guidance centres provided courses to help women access employment and to advise families on ways to help family members avoid sex work.

72. **A representative of Cuba** said that, in extending support to victims of trafficking, great care was taken to ensure that they did not again fall victims to that very serious crime. Human trafficking had been criminalized in the Criminal Code adopted in 2022. The report mentioned by the previous speaker contained a brief summary of trafficking cases that had been prosecuted and had been based on reports, complaints and denunciations submitted to the courts.

#### *Articles 7–9*

73. **Ms. Mikko**, noting that Cuba had an authoritarian system where the Communist Party was the sole political party with power, said that she wished to know whether any follow-up mechanisms had been established to periodically assess progress made by various policies to increase the number of women in executive posts. She would be grateful for data on the proportion of companies that had taken steps to promote gender equality at the executive level in the engineering, transport and sugar industries. It would be useful to have some examples of the adoption of specific goals, timelines or statutory quotas for the inclusion of women, including those in vulnerable situations, in the public administration, the diplomatic

service and senior government positions. She would like to know what specific measures were being implemented to ensure that the significant progress made in female representation in politics and the judiciary translated into greater influence and decision-making power for women at all levels of government. In that connection, it would be instructive for the Committee to hear how many parliamentary standing committees and parliamentary committees were headed by women. The Committee would like to find out what steps the Government was taking to address the underrepresentation of women, particularly women of African descent, in key decision-making roles. Lastly, she asked whether the delegation could provide details of women's civil society organizations and explain to what extent they were affected by restrictions on foreign funding.

74. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonso** said that she wished to know in what circumstances women in Cuba forfeited their nationality. She wondered if there was any provision for an expatriate Cuban woman to renounce her Cuban citizenship, and whether the choice ultimately was hers, or whether in the final instance it was the Government that had discretionary power over the matter. In the latter case, she would like to know whether there was any possibility of appealing against the Government's decision. She wished to know in what conditions expatriate women who were Cuban by birth but who had lost Cuban citizenship could recover their Cuban nationality.

75. **A representative of Cuba** said that over 55 per cent of the members of the National Assembly were women. Three women served on the Politburo, one of whom was the Secretary General of the Federation of Cuban Women. The first secretaries of 6 of the 15 provinces were women, and 6 provinces had female governors. In the Central Committee of the Communist Party, 46.7 per cent of the membership was female. Approximately 47 per cent of the first secretaries of municipalities were women. Over 44 per cent of the members of the country's parliamentary committees were women, and they played a crucial role when it came to the adoption of legislation; 6 of the 11 parliamentary standing committees were headed by women. Women chaired 48 per cent of municipal assemblies and acted as the vice-chairs of over 57 per cent of them. Women chaired 46 per cent of the People's Councils. While only 18.5 per cent of ministers were women, over 80 per cent of vice-ministers were female, and 52.3 per cent of the members of the Council of State were women.

76. **A representative of Cuba** said that 21 per cent of the members of the Politburo were women.

77. **A representative of Cuba** said that special training and retraining courses were held to enable women to access work in non-traditional sectors. Women accounted for 20 per cent of workers in the mining industry, 18.4 per cent in the transport sector and 11 per cent in the building trade. However, the average monthly salary of men was higher than the average for women.

78. **A representative of Cuba** said that, in order to have more women in senior positions in non-traditional sectors, it was necessary to have more women entering them. For that reason, efforts were made to encourage women to take up non-traditional occupations. Twenty-four per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises were owned by women, but the aim was to increase that percentage. The number of women in senior positions in the State sector was increasing.

79. **A representative of Cuba** said that Cuba was a democratic State, not an authoritarian one. There was no international obligation to have a multiparty system. Indeed, the multiparty system was no more legitimate than any other system. The State's system had been chosen democratically in a popular referendum in which 85 per cent of the people had participated.

80. Civil society organizations could operate normally within the framework of the law. However, they could not receive funding when its purpose was to undermine the constitutional order which had been lawfully chosen by the Cuban people. He therefore invited Committee members to refrain from value judgements when referring to the Cuban political system.

81. **The Chair** said that she wished to reassure the delegation that the Committee members' analysis of the situation in each State party with regard to its compliance with its

obligations under the convention was based on the principles of the Convention itself, in particular, with reference to articles 7 and 8.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*