



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

Distr.: General  
30 October 2024

Original: English

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Benin\*

1. The Committee considered the fifth periodic report of Benin (CEDAW/C/BEN/5), submitted at its 2108th and 2109th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2108 and 2109), held on 21 October 2024. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/BEN/Q/5, and the responses of Benin are contained in CEDAW/C/BEN/RQ/5.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its fifth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report (CEDAW/C/BEN/CO/4/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Justice and Legislation, Aïmabou Guy Yvon Déchénou, and also included representatives of the National Institute for Women and the National Assembly, as well as the Permanent Representative of Benin, Angelo Dan, and other representatives of the Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2013 of the State party's fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/BEN/4) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Presidential Decree on legal aid to prevent and avoid discrimination in access to justice, adopted in October 2024;

(b) Act No. 2021-13 of 20 December 2021, amending the Personal and Family Code, which includes anti-discrimination provisions;

\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-ninth session (7–25 October 2024).



(c) Act No. 2021-12 of 20 December 2021, which serves as a reference framework for strategies and measures aimed at reducing inequalities between men and women by 2025;

(d) Act No. 2021-11 of 20 December 2021, expanding the jurisdiction of the Court for the Prevention of Financial Offences and Terrorism to cover gender-related offences;

(e) Act No. 2020-23 of 29 September 2020, establishing the Criminal Code, which criminalizes gender-based violence and violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights;

(f) Act No. 2019-43, of 15 November 2019 which provides for 24 mandatory seats for women in the National Assembly;

(g) Act No. 2019-40 of 7 November 2019 amending the Constitution of Benin of 1990, which maintains the provisions of the Constitution that enshrine international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Benin and require the State party to assure the dissemination and the teaching of the Constitution and these instruments;

(h) Act No. 2017-15, amending the Rural Land Code and ensuring gender equality in access to property, in 2017.

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

(a) National Institute for Women, which provides free legal assistance for women and girl victims of gender-based violence and free judicial assistance for those seeking access to justice;

(b) National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality;

(c) Directorate of Women's Advancement and Gender in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance, and the National Gender Promotion Policy, aimed at eliminating gaps between men and women by 2025.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international and regional instruments:

(a) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2017;

(b) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in 2018;

(c) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, in 2020.

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

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

## **D. Parliament**

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

## **E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations**

### **Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations**

9. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's significant policy changes and legal advancements with regard to mainstreaming gender equality and women's rights in its legislative and policy frameworks and programmes. The Committee also notes with appreciation that articles 7 and 40 of the Constitution enshrine international and regional human rights instruments that promote women's rights, including the Convention, and require the State party to assure their dissemination and teaching. However, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of gender stereotypes against women and girls that contribute to gender gaps in the public and private spheres. The Committee notes with concern the limited awareness and understanding among women, formal and informal justice systems, all law enforcement officials and communities on the rights of women as recognized in the Constitution and the Convention and the limited application of the texts of the Convention and the general recommendations of the Committee, owing to the proliferation of languages in the State party.

10. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to uphold its commitment to women's human rights, including their equal right to education, participation in all decision-making processes, justice, health and equality in marriage, as well as their right to be free from all forms of gender-based violence. The Committee calls upon the State party to strengthen the application of the Convention in legal proceedings for the benefit of all women, and to strengthen its efforts to raise awareness widely of the Convention and to disseminate and translate into local languages the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations, in particular among rural women, women and girls with disabilities, refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women, elderly women and women in poverty, given the State party's history as one of the few kingdoms ever to have an all-female military army and warriors (the Agojie). The Committee also urges the State party to increase its efforts to educate women about their rights under the Convention and the legal remedies available for claiming those rights.

### **Constitutional and legal framework**

11. The Committee commends the State party for a number of laws to eliminate discrimination against women, including article 26 of the Constitution, which provides that men and women are equal before the law, article 1 of the Personal and Family Code, which provides that all human beings without any distinction of any kind are subjects with rights, from birth until death, and article 6 of the Rural Land Code, which provides for gender equality in access to property. The Committee is nonetheless concerned about the limited implementation and enforcement of existing legislation and policies on women's rights and non-discrimination and existing

stereotypes against women perpetuated by patriarchy that contribute to gender gaps in different spheres.

**12. The Committee recommends that the State party take concrete actions to reinforce the existing legal and policy framework on gender equality and non-discrimination, and train all law enforcement officials on international and regional instruments on women's rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, such as the Convention and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), ratified by the State party, which take precedence over national law. The Committee calls upon the State party to revise its legal and policy framework to reflect 50:50 parity between women and men as a starting point and universal norm in all decision-making systems in line with general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.**

#### **Access to justice**

**13. The Committee commends the State party for passing the Presidential Decree on legal aid, in October 2024, aimed at ensuring equal access to law and justice for all and the elimination of all forms of discrimination in access to justice, the provision of mandatory legal aid for criminal cases and the establishment of the National Institute for Women, which provides free legal and judicial support to women and girls. However, the Committee notes with concern the lack of awareness among women, including women and girls with disabilities, rural women, refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women and elderly women on the availability of legal aid services and how to seek legal redress and the preference to not report abuse and remain silent.**

**14. Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party takes concrete steps to:**

**(a) Increase awareness-raising campaigns on available access to justice mechanisms and services, including legal aid services among women, including women and girls with disabilities, and on women's rights and how to claim them and provide legal literacy among communities and women, including women with disabilities, women refugees and migrants, asylum-seekers and elderly women;**

**(b) Strengthen witness and victim protection measures to encourage women and witnesses to report cases and to testify so that they are protected from reprisals and stigmatization, and ensure inclusive and gender-responsive justice mechanisms and legal services that meet the specific justice needs of all women, including the provision of sign language interpreters, Braille and accessible infrastructure for women and girls with disabilities;**

**(c) Increase the number of women in the justice, law and order sector, including judges, lawyers, prosecutors and police officers, and conduct regular capacity-building on women's rights, access to justice, national legislation and the Convention;**

**(d) Investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of physical and online acts of harassment, discrimination, intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders, ensure the right to due process and equal access to effective legal remedies to women human rights defenders who are victims of such acts, and undertake public awareness campaigns on the importance of women human rights defenders, journalists and non-governmental**

**organizations working on women's rights in advancing women's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination in the State Party;**

**(e) Regularly monitor and assess the implementation and utilization of justice mechanisms and services, including legal aid, to assess their effectiveness in promoting women's equal access to justice and legal aid.**

### **Women and peace and security**

15. The Committee notes with appreciation the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security through the adoption of the national action plan for 2016–2021. It further commends the State party for hosting the Women in Security – Africa Conference, held in Cotonou on 4 and 5 September 2024, which was focused on enhancing the role of women in peace and security processes throughout West Africa, and the increasing participation of women in the defence and security sector and peacekeeping operations. The Committee also notes the increasing peace and security challenges related to the spillover of the security situation in the Sahel, which is creating a humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that women remain underrepresented in senior positions in peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes.

**16. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, and recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Renew the expired national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security for 2016–2021 in cooperation with all women in their diversity, representatives of women's civil society organizations and women human rights defenders, and ensure that it takes into consideration the full spectrum of the Security Council agenda on women and peace and security, as reflected in Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, and incorporates a model of substantive equality that addresses all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women in all spheres of women's lives, including intersecting forms of discrimination against women;**

**(b) Ensure that women contribute through equal, consistent and effective representation in regional peace processes and negotiations and calls for specific consideration of the women and peace and security agenda in peace negotiations;**

**(c) Take the necessary measures to ensure a systemic and increasing role for and representation of women in peace negotiations, conflict resolution, defence and security, and diplomacy, including in international security affairs;**

**(d) Ensure the protection and safety of women and girls in schools and communities impacted by conflict in the Sahel.**

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

17. The Committee welcomes the implementation and mainstreaming of women's rights and renews its appreciation for the national machinery for the advancement of women, including through the establishment of the National Institute for Women, the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality, the Directorate of Women's Advancement and Gender in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance and the National Gender Promotion Policy, aimed at eliminating gaps between men and women by 2025. It is concerned, however, about the absence of gender-disaggregated data on the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights, which limits the adoption and effective implementation of targeted and informed strategies and programmes.

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its national machinery by providing it with adequate visibility, power and human, technical and financial resources at all levels in order to further increase its effectiveness and enhance its capacity to collect gender-disaggregated data on the enjoyment of women and girls of their human rights and coordinate and monitor actions for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

19. The Committee commends the State party for the revision of the Electoral Code to introduce 24 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly, each representing one electoral district, which resulted in an increase of the percentage of women in the National Assembly from 7 per cent in 2019 to 25 per cent in 2023. The Committee is nonetheless concerned about the lack of legislation on temporary special measures and data on positive discrimination to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as political and public life, inclusive education, employment and sports.

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legislation on temporary special measures and collect data on the implementation of positive discrimination, such as statutory quotas, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, with time-bound targets and benchmarks, as well as penalties for non-compliance, to increase the representation of women in all areas where they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including in political, public, economic and cultural life, inclusive education, employment, social security systems and sports, in particular in leadership and decision-making positions. It should adopt targeted temporary special measures to address inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups of women, such as women and girls with disabilities, rural women and refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women. The Committee also recommends that the State party shift its approach from numerical quotas to achieving parity in all spheres of political and public life, including in decision-making positions. The Committee recommends in addition that the State party provide training on temporary special measures for civil servants.**

#### **Gender stereotypes**

21. The Committee commends the State party on its legal and policy frameworks and initiatives to combat patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes which undermine the enjoyment of women's social, economic, cultural and political human rights, thereby constituting an underlying cause of gender-based violence against women.

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

(a) **Develop and implement a comprehensive human rights-based strategy, including for the digital space, to eliminate gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society and gender stereotypes that condone different forms of gender-based violence against women;**

(b) **Provide relevant public officials, the media and the private sector with capacity-building on the use of gender-responsive language, and promote positive portrayals of women as active drivers of development;**

(c) Take steps to promote the equal sharing of domestic and family care responsibilities between women and men, including through public education, and by introducing shared parental leave;

(d) Develop targets and indicators to systematically measure the impact of the strategic interventions undertaken.

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

23. The Committee appreciates measures taken by the State party to strengthen the legal framework to combat gender-based violence against women and provide appropriate support and services to victims. However, it remains concerned about the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage, in the State party, the increased risk of gender-based violence as a result of the spillover of the conflict in the Sahel, including among refugees, internally displaced women and migrant and asylum-seeking women, the lack of clarification to victims of gender-based violence that the medical certificate for bringing a criminal complaint is free of charge and the underreporting of gender-based violence against women for fear of reprisals and stigmatization, economic dependency on the perpetrator and women's lack of awareness of their human rights and of the remedies available to claim them.

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

(a) Strengthen referral pathways for gender-based violence against women to ensure that reports of gender-based violence, including cyberviolence, are effectively investigated and prosecuted, perpetrators are adequately punished and that victims have access to adequate support services, including accessible shelters, free medical police forms, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling, legal assistance and a 24/7 hotline, as well as to adequate compensation, and reinforce measures to combat all forms of gender-based violence against women against disadvantaged groups such as elderly women, women and girls with disabilities and refugee, asylum-seeking and internally displaced and migrant women and girls;

(b) Take concrete steps, including working with healthcare providers, cultural and religious leaders, to combat female genital mutilation, including among infants;

(c) Increase public awareness, including through information, communication and educational materials translated into local languages, among women and girls and communities about women's rights and available justice mechanisms and legal aid services;

(d) Provide rehabilitative programmes for perpetrators of gender-based violence;

(e) Ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age, region and relationship between the victims and perpetrators;

(f) Ensure a sufficient number of adequately funded shelters and reinforce the protection and support services for women victims of gender-based violence, including free medical treatment and psychosocial counselling, and remove obstacles faced by women victims of gender-based violence in accessing justice, including by eliminating the requirement for a medical certificate to initiate criminal proceedings for rape.

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

25. The Committee commends the State party for its legal and policy framework and initiatives, including the national action plan on anti-trafficking (2020–2024) and the Penal Code, which criminalized all forms of labour trafficking and some forms of sex trafficking. However, it notes with concern the absence of a law that criminalizes trafficking in persons above the age of 18 and the continued use of *Voudoun* curses to control female victims of trafficking by threatening to curse their families if they leave.

26. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Enact a comprehensive law on trafficking in persons above 18 years of age and implement standard operating procedures to support effective identification, investigation, referral, prosecution and adjudication of cases where women and girls are trafficked;**

(b) **Provide capacity-building for the justice and law and order sector actors, including the judiciary, the police, immigration officers, border guards and social workers, in partnership with civil society organizations and academia, on the gendered nature of trafficking in persons to support their capacity for early identification, safe disclosure procedures, referral and safe return of women victims to appropriate services and protection, including at borders, paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups of women, such as women in prostitution, refugee and asylum-seeking women and women and girls with disabilities;**

(c) **Ensure the systematic collection of disaggregated data and information on the general trends of trafficking in the country, including the age and number of women and girls subjected to trafficking, the impact of the insecurity in the Sahel on the trafficking of women and girls and the number of prosecutions and convictions;**

(d) **Strengthen measures to address the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty and high unemployment among women and girls;**

(e) **Pursue international, regional and bilateral cooperation efforts with countries of origin, transit and destination, including through information exchange and the harmonization of procedures, to prevent trafficking and bring perpetrators to justice.**

**Participation in political and public life**

27. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to increase the representation of women in political and public life, including the election of the first female Vice-President, and the revision of the Electoral Code to provide for a mandatory quota to promote women's leadership based on its history of advancing women's leadership in the army through promoting an all-female military army and warriors. However, the Committee notes with concern that women in the State party remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, including in the Government, the National Assembly, the public service, the foreign service, the armed forces, international organizations and the private sector.

28. **In line with its general recommendations No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, the Committee recommends that the State party:**



(a) **Revise its legal and policy framework to call for 50:50 parity between women and men as a starting point and universal norm in all decision-making systems;**

(b) **Identify and combat the underlying causes of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions in all public and private spheres, including academia, sports, climate change, public service, diplomacy, defence, political parties and the judiciary.**

### **Nationality**

29. The Committee notes with appreciation the amendment to the Nationality Code, allowing women to automatically transmit their nationality to their children, and the adoption in 2021 of Act No. 2020-34, to facilitate birth registration. It further notes that the State party granted three-year residence permits with the possibility for individuals of African descent of applying for citizenship. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The continued low level of birth registration, especially in rural areas, which could be attributed to the penalty fees for late registration;

(b) Reports on the risk of statelessness for women and girls living in villages along the border with the Niger and Nigeria owing to the ongoing delimitation and demarcation of borders.

30. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, and recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/3-4, para. 42), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure access to affordable and, if necessary, free registration of births;**

(b) **Facilitate the access to Beninese nationality for stateless women and girls living in villages along the border with the Niger and Nigeria.**

### **Education**

31. The Committee welcomes with appreciation the State party's significant efforts in the field of education, including increasing school enrolment rates among women and girls at all levels of education. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The underrepresentation of women and girls in fields of study such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the dropout of girls from secondary level school, some as a result of child marriage;

(b) The lack of access to inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities.

32. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party enhance awareness of the importance of girls' education as a basis for their empowerment and:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen its education sector by providing it with adequate human, technical and financial resources at all education levels in order to further increase the literacy rates among women and girls, address the root causes of school dropout out among women and girls, support awareness campaigns to educate parents and communities about the importance of education for women and girls, provide inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities, provide education scholarships and bursaries to women and**

girls, increase the enrolment of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology, provide healthy school meals and menstrual hygiene kits, ensure sanitation and hygiene in schools, and enhance the capacity of the government entities in charge of education to implement, monitor and coordinate actions to advance women's and girls' education in line with the Convention;

(b) **Take strong measures to implement the Safe Schools Declaration.**

### **Employment**

33. The Committee welcomes the adoption of measures by the State party, including the constitutional protection of women's equal right to employment and the prohibition of workplace discrimination and the criminalization of workplace sexual harassment in the Labour Code. The Committee notes with concern, however:

(a) The limited enforcement of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, the significant gender pay gap in the State party and the list of prohibited occupations for women;

(b) The limited access to employment and adequate pay for women with disabilities and refugee and asylum-seeking women;

(c) The concentration of women in the informal sector, which is characterized by precarious working conditions, limited job security and the absence of social protection;

(d) The precarious working conditions and exploitation of women domestic workers employed as *vidomegons* and the absence of regulations;

(e) The large number of women engaged in unpaid care work;

(f) The disproportionately high unemployment rates among women in the State party, in particular in rural areas.

34. **The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 13 (1989) on equal remuneration for work of equal value and target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on achieving by 2030 full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men and equal pay for work of equal value, and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen, including through temporary special measures, access for women to formal employment and social protection;**

(b) **Recognize, measure and value unpaid care work, including through raising public awareness and adopting care-friendly employment policies;**

(c) **Improve access to employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, such as women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women and migrant women;**

(d) **Repeal all excessive restrictions on permissible occupations for women and ensure their free choice of employment.**

### **Health**

35. The Committee appreciates the progress achieved by the State party in the promotion of women's right to health, including sexual and reproductive health rights, including the provision of the malaria vaccine. It is concerned, however, that women in all their diversity, especially women with disabilities, rural women, pregnant women, women survivors of sexual violence and elderly women, continue to face barriers in accessing quality healthcare services and sexual and reproductive services.

36. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and targets 3.1 and 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 births and increase access to contraception and recommends that the State party:

Continue to strengthen with increased human, technical and financial resources equal and inclusive access to quality healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, such as maternal and neonatal healthcare, sexual and reproductive healthcare services and information, age-appropriate and comprehensive modern contraception methods for women in all their diversity, including women in poverty, elderly women and refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women, and free antiretroviral medicines for women and girls living with HIV, take healthcare services and hospitals closer to the population, increase public awareness campaigns to improve access to accurate information on malaria prevention, and eliminate gender stereotypes that stigmatize women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and hinder women's and girls' effective utilization of healthcare services.

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

37. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to increase women's financial literacy and access to financial credit and to improve their economic security, such as the "Microcredit for the poorest" (2006), the "Stronger Together" programme (2021) and gender-responsive public procurement provisions. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) Women's limited access to financial credit, land and other economic resources and the failure to leverage the traditional "tontine" practice<sup>1</sup> to alleviate poverty for women in rural areas;

(b) Challenges that undermine women's equal access to digital tools, literacy and mobile money services to effectively bridge the digital gender gap and boost their resilience in the revolutionary digital economy;

(c) The lack of disaggregated data on women's access to social protection schemes and pension benefits;

(d) The limited access to sports facilities, sports competitions and cultural activities for women with disabilities, older women and other disadvantaged groups of women, including at the local council levels.

38. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen its efforts to promote women's economic empowerment by leveraging the traditional "tontine" practice to alleviate poverty for women in rural areas, increase women's access to low-interest loans without collateral and financing opportunities, including credit guarantees, high-value supply chains and high-ticket public procurement contracts, as well as other economic resources and document the percentage of overall national credit funds accessed by women, and institute a land registry to capture land ownership by sex;

(b) Ensure women's equal access to digital tools, literacy and mobile money services to effectively bridge the digital gender gap and boost their resilience in the revolutionary digital economy;

<sup>1</sup> A traditional system for raising capital whereby individuals pay into a common pool of money.

(c) Put in place legal and policy measures to prevent gender bias and stereotypes from curtailing women's economic opportunities, including within the environmental and social impact assessment framework and prerequisites for foreign direct investments;

(d) Ensure that women have adequate access to social protection schemes, in particular women working in the informal economy, and provide disaggregated information on the levels of their pensions and other social benefits;

(e) Ensure that women have access equal to that of men to sports facilities, sports competitions and cultural activities, particularly at the local levels.

#### **Rural women**

39. The Committee commends the State party for its commitment to address the gendered impacts of climate change and disasters and its commitment to move the agricultural sector from a largely subsistence sector to a market-intensive oriented sector. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The absence of women's equal representation (50:50) parity in decision-making systems, including on climate change and disaster risk reduction, the agricultural sector and the blue economy;

(b) The barriers that women employed in agriculture face in accessing markets, agricultural technology and financing;

(c) The barriers faced by rural women and women in poverty in accessing reliable and affordable electricity.

40. The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, recommends that the State party continue to provide adequate gender-responsive financing, technical and human resources to increase women's meaningful representation in climate change and disaster risk reduction decision-making and in decision-making in the agricultural sector and the blue economy; increase women's knowledge on climate-smart agricultural techniques and technology; increase women's equal access to reliable and affordable electricity, markets, credit, financing, water and sanitation and land and property ownership, as well as eliminating all forms of discrimination against rural women.

#### **Women in detention**

41. The Committee notes the significant efforts undertaken by the State party to introduce alternatives to detention. However, the Committee notes with concern the lack of information on the number of women detained and on their conditions of detention.

42. The Committee recommends that the State party collect sex-disaggregated data on the number of women in detention, including in pretrial and administrative detention, and continue to strengthen with adequate financing, technical and human resources effective measures for the protection of women in detention, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution [70/175](#) of 17 December 2015 and contained in the annex thereto.

### **Marriage and family relations**

43. The Committee notes with concern:

- (a) The high prevalence of child marriage in the State party, especially in rural areas and among poor communities;
- (b) The persistence of polygamy and the limited legal and economic protection for women in de facto unions, women married under customary law and women in polygamous unions;
- (c) The lack of information about discriminatory customary laws related to marriage and family relations, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

44. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution and joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019), as revised, on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Address the root causes of child marriage, set the legal minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men, without exception, require civil registration of marriages and strictly enforce the prohibition of child marriages;**
- (b) **Ensure effective implementation of the law prohibiting polygamy in line with the Convention;**
- (c) **Ensure the economic protection of women and girls in de facto unions and raise awareness on the risks of such unions for girls' education and sexual and reproductive health rights.**

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

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

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

46. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.**

### **Dissemination**

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

### **Technical assistance**

48. **The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.**

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

49. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 14 (a), 16 (a), 24 (b) and 28 (a) above.

**Preparation of the next report**

50. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date for the sixth periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

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

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