



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

Distr.: General  
10 July 2025

Original: English

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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

1. The Committee considered the sixth periodic report of Fiji ([CEDAW/C/FJI/6](#)) at its Pacific technical cooperation session, held from 7 to 11 April 2025 in Suva, and adopted the present concluding observations at its ninety-first session.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State Party of its sixth periodic report, which was prepared in response to the list of issues and questions prior to reporting ([CEDAW/C/FJI/QPR/6](#)). It also appreciates the State Party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee ([CEDAW/C/FJI/FCO/5](#)). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the country exchange.

3. The Committee commends the State Party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection, Sashi Kiran, and included representatives of the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs; the Ministry of Health and Medical Services; the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations; the Ministry of Trade; the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management; the Ministry of Defence; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change; the Ministry of Agriculture; the Fiji Police Force; and the Office of the Solicitor General.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2018 of the State Party's previous report ([CEDAW/C/FJI/5](#)) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

- (a) Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, in 2024;
- (b) Amendment to the Interpretation Act, which removes the requirement for women to include their spouse's surname on their birth certificates, in 2023.

\* Adopted by the Committee at its ninety-first session (16 June–4 July 2025).



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) Maternal and child health policy, in 2025;
- (b) National policy on the rights of persons with disabilities (2024–2033), in 2024;
- (c) National action plan to prevent violence against all women and girls (2023–2028), in 2023;
- (d) Guidelines on gender-based violence for healthcare professionals, in 2023;
- (e) Policy on gender in agriculture (2022–2027), in 2022;
- (f) Gender equity and social inclusion policy (2021–2024), in 2021;
- (g) National anti-trafficking strategy (2021–2026), in 2021;
- (h) National disaster risk reduction policy (2018–2030), in 2018.

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 instruments:

- (a) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in 2021;
- (b) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography, in 2021;
- (c) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in 2019;
- (d) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in 2019;
- (e) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in 2018;
- (f) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in 2018.

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

7. **The Committee calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals and urges the State Party to recognize women as the driving force of sustainable development in 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) and invites the Parliament of Fiji to implement, in line with its mandate, 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 and ratification of the Optional Protocol thereto**

9. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party is the first country in the Pacific region to ratify all nine major international human rights treaties. It also notes the establishment of the Human Rights Task Force, which serves as the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up on the implementation of human rights treaties. However, it notes with concern that:

(a) Women, especially rural women and iTaukei women, older women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, are often not aware of their human rights under the Convention or of the remedies available to them in cases of violations of those rights;

(b) The lack of capacity-building for the judiciary and law enforcement agencies on the domestic application of the Convention has resulted in the limited use thereof in legal proceedings.

### **10. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Continue to raise awareness among women of their human rights under the Convention and the legal remedies available to them in cases of violations of those rights, and ensure that information on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations is available to all women in accessible formats;**

(b) **Strengthen the capacity of the Human Rights Task Force for reporting and follow-up on the Convention, and involve civil society organizations that promote women's rights and gender equality in the work of the mechanism, taking into account the four key capacities of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up, namely engagement, coordination, consultation and information management;**

(c) **Ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are made an integral part of systematic capacity-building for all judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and lawyers, with a view to enabling them to directly apply or invoke the provisions of the Convention in court proceedings or interpret national legislation in the light of the Convention.**

11. The Committee notes with concern that the State Party, despite having accepted the recommendations made during the first, second and third universal periodic review cycles, in 2010, 2014 and 2018, indicated during its universal periodic review in 2025 and during the dialogue with the Committee that, due to resource and capacity limitations, it would defer its accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention in order to prioritize and complete its work on its pending reports to human rights treaty bodies.

**12. Recalling that the Optional Protocol provides for increased protection of women's human rights in the State Party and additional procedures that strengthen the monitoring of those rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party accede, as soon as possible, to the Optional Protocol to the Convention.**

### **Constitutional and legislative framework**

13. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party's Constitution guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination and includes a broad range of prohibited grounds for discrimination, including sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and disability. However, the Committee reiterates its

concern about the absence of anti-discrimination legislation ensuring formal (de jure) and substantive (de facto) equality of women and men, addressing both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

14. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/FJI/CO/4, para. 11, and CEDAW/C/FJI/CO/5, para. 14) and recommends that the State Party incorporate into its Constitution or other appropriate legislation a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, covering direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention (with a specific focus on article 2 (e)), the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States Parties under article 2 of the Convention, and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Women's access to justice**

15. The Committee is concerned about limited access to justice for women, including victims of gender-based violence, due to barriers such as legal costs, insufficient legal aid, geographical isolation and a lack of trust in the judiciary and police. It notes with concern that family court proceedings are often prolonged and that there are no women judges in mobile courts, which are deployed to remote areas and outer islands only three times per year.

16. Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Address financial, linguistic, procedural and sociocultural barriers to women's access to justice, including by simplifying procedures and reducing legal costs to ensure that women have access to affordable and, if necessary, free legal aid, particularly for disadvantaged groups of women and women living in remote areas and outer islands;

(b) Strengthen complaint mechanisms, and ensure that they are independent, effective and gender-responsive; raise awareness among women about available remedies and provide training for the judiciary, police, law enforcement officials and other relevant professionals on women's human rights and on gender-sensitive interrogation and investigation methods at all stages of investigation; and address judicial gender bias;

(c) Increase the frequency and coverage of mobile courts in remote areas and outer islands to ensure that women have timely access to justice; use technology for long-distance court hearings; and introduce measures, including temporary special measures, to promote the appointment of women judges, including to mobile courts.

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

17. The Committee notes with appreciation the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in January 2025, aimed at promoting open dialogue, addressing historical grievances and fostering national unity and reconciliation. However, it notes with concern the very limited representation of women in delegations of the State Party to peace negotiations, in particular at decision-making levels. It also notes with concern that the State Party has not adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security.

18. 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) Adopt a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which takes into consideration the full spectrum of the Council's agenda on women and peace and security, as reflected in Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, and incorporates a model of substantive equality that addresses gender-based violence against women and discrimination against women in all spheres of their lives, including intersecting forms of discrimination;

(b) Ensure the meaningful and inclusive participation of women in all processes related to transitional justice and women and peace and security, in particular with regard to the adoption, implementation and assessment of a national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security; and ensure the equal representation of women in the State Party's delegations to peace negotiations, in particular at decision-making levels, and collect disaggregated statistical data in that regard;

(c) Develop indicators for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of national and regional action plans on women and peace and security.

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

19. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to promote gender equality, including the development of the Fiji country gender assessment in 2023 and the ongoing work on the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development initiative for the period 2025–2030. However, it notes with concern the absence of an overarching national strategy on gender equality, and the limited financial and institutional capacity of the Department of Women to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in all sectors for the advancement of women and girls. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of gender-disaggregated data and that gender-responsive budgeting is not used by all ministries as a tool for more effective and transparent implementation of gender policies across all government departments.

20. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Strengthen the Department of Women by providing it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to enable it to coordinate and implement gender policies effectively;

(b) Finalize the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development initiative for the period 2025–2030, adopt a comprehensive national strategy on gender equality and systematically apply gender assessments across all legislative, policy and programmatic frameworks; and ensure that gender-specific data collection includes disaggregated data in order to address the needs of women, in particular those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups;

(c) Explicitly integrate gender-responsive budgeting into all chapters of the State budget and include effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms across all sectors and levels of government.

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

21. The Committee notes with concern that the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission of Fiji was accredited "B" status by the Global Alliance

of National Human Rights Institutions in June 2021. The Global Alliance identified specific areas requiring further strengthening through legislative or administrative reforms, including the lack of a clear, transparent and participatory selection and appointment process for commissioners, the term of office of commissioners and the composition of the decision-making body of the Commission.

**22. The Committee recommends that the State Party implement the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in order to strengthen the independence of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission of Fiji and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to be able to carry out its mandate effectively and independently, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles, annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/134), and seek the advice and technical support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in that regard.**

#### **Women human rights defenders**

23. The Committee acknowledges the efforts of the State Party to review legislation that restricts the right to freedom of expression, such as the Media Industry Development Act (2010). However, it remains concerned that:

(a) Section 6 (5) of the Constitution and relevant provisions of the Public Order Act (1969), the Electoral Amendment Act (2022) and the Crimes Act (2009) restrict the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, which affects women civil society activists, women human rights defenders, women journalists and whistle-blowers;

(b) Women human rights defenders in the State Party often face technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including cyberbullying;

(c) There is a lack of participation of women human rights defenders in the design, implementation and monitoring of laws, policies and budgets for the advancement of women and gender equality.

**24. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Repeal section 6 (5) of the Constitution and the restrictive provisions of the Public Order Act (1969), the Electoral Amendment Act (2022) and the Crimes Act (2009) in order to ensure that women civil society activists, women human rights defenders, women journalists and whistle-blowers can freely carry out their advocacy for women's human rights and exercise their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association;**

(b) **Protect women human rights defenders from harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence; effectively investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of such acts; and provide effective remedies and reparation to victims;**

(c) **Take measures to ensure the meaningful participation of women human rights defenders in the design, implementation and monitoring of laws, policies and budgets for the advancement of women and gender equality.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

25. The Committee remains concerned that the State Party has not adopted any temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men despite significant gender disparities in participation in political and

public life and in education and employment, and despite the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities, rural women and girls, women and girls from iTaukei communities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.

**26. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/FJI/CO/5, para. 24) and recommends that the State Party adopt temporary special measures, such as parity quotas, special scholarships for girls and women, affirmative procurement and financial incentives for hiring women; and establish time-bound targets to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women, including women and girls with disabilities and other groups of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, and men in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged.**

### **Gender stereotypes**

27. The Committee remains concerned that, despite ongoing legal reforms, cultural norms and traditional power relations in the State Party, particularly in iTaukei communities, continue to reinforce male dominance and overemphasize the role of women as wives and caregivers, thereby undermining their social status and autonomous choices, and continue to exclude women from decision-making processes.

**28. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Adopt a comprehensive strategy with proactive and sustained measures targeted at women, men, girls and boys at all levels of society, including community and religious leaders, aimed at eliminating patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society; and allocate sufficient resources to, and regularly monitor and evaluate, the implementation of the strategy;**

**(b) Build the capacity of public officials and media professionals to address gender stereotypes and promote the equal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men, including by using gender-responsive language through positive media portrayals of women as active agents of change.**

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

29. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the national action plan to prevent violence against all women and girls for the period 2023–2028, the criminalization of marital rape, stricter sentencing policies and the establishment of a “no-drop” policy for prosecuting gender-based violence against women and girls. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The high prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls in the State Party, the continuing judicial practice of referring to survivors' prior sexual history and character in rape trials, the limited availability and accessibility of shelters and victim support services, in particular for women and girls with disabilities, and the lack of comprehensive, survivor-centred and disability-inclusive psychosocial and legal support for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence;

(b) The increase in online violence involving image-based sexual abuse, including non-consensual distribution of sexual, nude or intimate images or videos of women and girls, revenge porn, cyberbullying, cybergrooming, cybertrafficking, cyberscams, online “slut-shaming” and online gender hate speech, including against women in leadership positions, despite measures taken by the State Party to combat

gender-based online violence, such as the adoption of the Online Safety Act in 2018 and the establishment of the Online Safety Commission.

**30. 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 the implementation of the national action plan to prevent violence against all women and girls for the period 2023–2028; ensure that evidence related to survivors' prior sexual history or character is inadmissible as evidence in judicial proceedings concerning cases of sexual violence; and strengthen survivor-centred support services, including by increasing the number and geographical coverage of accessible shelters and access to protection orders, providing tailored services for women and girls with disabilities and strengthening witness protection in cases of gender-based violence against women and girls;**

(b) **Strengthen the implementation of the Online Safety Act (2018) and other mechanisms with a view to holding social media companies accountable for user-generated content in incidents of online harassment and gender-based violence against women and girls, and for the prompt removal of such content; ensure that such companies have effective reporting mechanisms; and prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of online harassment and gender-based violence against women and girls.**

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

31. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of the national anti-trafficking strategy for the period 2021–2026 and the establishment of a coordination office for managing trafficking cases. However, it remains concerned that the State Party continues to be a source, destination and transit country for trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, for purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. It also remains concerned about:

(a) Discrepancies between the definitions and penalties in national legislation on trafficking in persons and their inconsistency with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol);

(b) The limited resources allocated for the implementation of the revised national action plan to combat trafficking;

(c) The low prosecution and conviction rates in cases concerning labour exploitation in domestic servitude and the absence of investigations into cases of sex trafficking for the second consecutive year;

(d) The absence of a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons; limited awareness among judges, police and other law enforcement officers, lawyers, health professionals and civil society actors of trafficking indicators, such as signs of coercion, including passport retention, debt bondage, non-payment of wages and forced confinement; and the lack of gender-sensitive procedures for dealing with victims of trafficking;

(e) The barriers faced by victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation in having access to shelters, legal assistance and reintegration support;

(f) The criminalization of women in prostitution, including victims of forced prostitution.



32. 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) Harmonize its national legislation on trafficking, including the Crimes Act (2009) and the Immigration Act (2003), with the Palermo Protocol;
- (b) Allocate sufficient financial, human and technical resources for the implementation of the revised national action plan to combat trafficking;
- (c) Ensure that all cases of trafficking, including sex trafficking and exploitation in domestic servitude, are effectively investigated and prosecuted and that traffickers and their accomplices receive sentences that are commensurate with the gravity of the crime;
- (d) Establish a national referral mechanism and provide capacity-building to the judiciary, lawyers, law enforcement officials, immigration officers, border guards, social workers, health professionals and members of civil society organizations on the strict application of legislation to combat trafficking in women and girls, on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods and on the early identification and referral to appropriate services of victims of trafficking; and ensure that victims of trafficking are not inadvertently placed in detention or subject to removal procedures;
- (e) Eliminate economic and other barriers that prevent women and girls who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation from having access to shelters and legal assistance, and strengthen victim support services and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes;
- (f) Decriminalize women in prostitution, discourage the demand for prostitution and provide exit strategies, including alternative income-generating opportunities, for women who wish to leave prostitution.

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

33. The Committee remains concerned that women remain significantly underrepresented in political and public life at all levels. In particular, it notes with concern:

- (a) The underrepresentation of Fijian women in decision-making positions, including in Parliament, senior government positions, local governance, the judiciary, the public service, the foreign service, the Fiji Police Force, the military, academia and international organizations, as well as in traditional community leadership structures, particularly within iTaukei communities;
- (b) The absence of statutory quotas to promote the equal representation of women in national and local governance and senior management positions, and the absence of requirements for political parties to ensure equal numbers of women and men on their candidate lists;
- (c) The lack of measures to protect women politicians and candidates from fake news, revenge porn and gendered hate speech, which have a chilling effect on the participation of women in political and public life, and of measures to provide them with redress for such attacks.

34. Recalling 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, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Introduce targeted measures, such as increased quotas and targeted campaign financing, to increase the representation of women in Parliament, national and local governments, the judiciary, the public service, the foreign service, the Fiji Police Force, the military, academia and international organizations, as well as in traditional community leadership structures, including within iTaukei communities, in particular at decision-making levels;**

(b) **Amend its electoral laws to require political parties to ensure equal numbers of women and men on their candidate lists for national and local elections, at equal ranks, subject to fines for non-compliance;**

(c) **Take targeted measures to protect women politicians and political candidates from sexism, fake news, revenge porn and gendered hate speech in public discourse, including online, as well as from harassment and threats, including by requiring political parties to adopt internal regulations on combating misogynist hate speech and harassment of women political candidates and activists and holding social media companies accountable for sexist user-generated content, and provide redress to victims.**

### **Nationality**

35. The Committee notes with concern the absence of laws and regulations establishing a statelessness determination procedure, which increases the risk of statelessness for asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women and girls, including pregnant women, and poses barriers to their access to education, healthcare and housing. It also notes with concern women's limited access to timely birth registration in remote areas and outer islands.

36. **With reference to its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt legislation to establish a statelessness determination procedure and ensure that it is accessible to all women and girls in the State Party at risk of statelessness;**

(b) **Facilitate affordable access to birth registration and identity documents for rural women and girls and those in remote areas and outer islands, including through online procedures and the deployment of mobile civil registration units;**

(c) **Accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

### **Education**

37. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party has introduced free education and transport assistance for children in primary and secondary schools. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The limited access to education for rural and Indigenous girls and those living in remote areas and outer islands; and their lower retention rates due to the excessive burden of domestic work, early pregnancy, a lack of digital skills and limited access to technology, and long distances to travel to schools and related safety concerns;

(b) That, despite the State Party's efforts to ensure inclusive education in mainstream schools, girls with disabilities face barriers such as the physical inaccessibility of buildings and a lack of adequately trained teachers;

(c) Harassment and bullying of girls and women, in particular lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, in educational environments, and the limited information on the number of complaints and investigations in such cases and on the penalties imposed;

(d) Limited access to comprehensive age-appropriate sexuality education, including on modern contraceptives, the concept of consent and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, which contributes to high rates of early pregnancy, the exclusion of pregnant students and the stigmatization of young mothers who wish to return to school.

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

(a) **Finalize the ongoing revision of the Education Act to ensure that girls and women, including rural and Indigenous girls and women and those living in remote areas and outer islands, have adequate access to high-quality education at all levels; increase their retention rates, in particular at the secondary and tertiary levels; and provide free and safe transportation to schools in rural and remote areas;**

(b) **Strengthen access to and the accessibility of inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities, including by ensuring that educational facilities are physically accessible and equipped with the necessary learning materials and assistive devices, by providing reasonable accommodations for all types of disabilities and by ensuring that distance learning platforms and materials are fully accessible to girls and women with disabilities, including during emergency situations;**

(c) **Develop a national anti-bullying policy to provide safe and inclusive educational environments free from discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence against women and girls; and raise awareness of the policy and train all relevant stakeholders with a view to investigating, prosecuting and adequately punishing all cases of harassment and gender-based violence against girls and women in educational institutions, including lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(d) **Finalize the ongoing revision of comprehensive sexuality education at all levels of education and ensure that it includes: (i) inclusive and accessible content on gender equality, including on women's rights and the harmful effects of gender-based violence against women and girls; (ii) age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health, with a particular focus on the concept of consent, responsible sexual behaviour, modern forms of contraception and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases; and (iii) education on human rights and peace; and ensure its effective implementation.**

### **Employment**

39. The Committee remains concerned that women continue to be overrepresented in low-paid and insecure employment, primarily in the informal economy, with limited access to labour and social protections. It also notes with concern that:

(a) Despite the prohibition of discrimination under the Employment Relations Act (2007), women continue to face workplace discrimination, a persistent gender pay gap, and vertical and horizontal segregation in both the public and private sectors;

(b) Women carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work and have limited access to affordable childcare facilities and family-friendly workplace policies, which constitutes a significant barrier to the participation of women in the labour force;

(c) Mechanisms aimed at protecting women from sexual harassment are not being applied despite the State Party's ratification of the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 190, on violence and harassment in the workplace, and section 76 of the Employment Relations Act (2007).

**40. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Accelerate the review and adoption of the Employment Relations Act amendment bill to extend protection to women in the informal economy, facilitate their transition to formal employment, address vertical and horizontal segregation and effectively enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in order to narrow and eventually close the gender pay gap by conducting regular labour inspections and regular pay surveys;**

(b) **Recognize, reduce and redistribute the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work placed on women by providing affordable childcare facilities and care services for older persons, enable women and men to balance work and family responsibilities, and conduct awareness-raising campaigns to promote the equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between women and men;**

(c) **Ensure that victims of sexual harassment have access to independent and confidential complaint mechanisms and are protected from retaliation, that complaints are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished.**

**Health**

41. The Committee notes the progress made by the State Party to improve women's access to healthcare and family planning services at community nursing stations. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The criminalization of abortion under the Crimes Act (2009), in which only limited grounds for legal abortion are set out;

(b) The limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and mental health services for rural women and girls, iTaukei women and girls, women and girls with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women due to geographical disparities and economic and cultural barriers;

(c) That, despite the State Party's efforts to provide human papillomavirus vaccinations and develop a policy for cervical cancer screening, cervical cancer remains one of the leading causes of death among women due to a lack of awareness of, and limited access to, screening and treatment, particularly in remote areas and outer islands;

(d) The significant increase in the number of women living with HIV/AIDS, due mainly to drug use; and the stigmatization and social exclusion of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, and their limited access to HIV testing and treatment.

**42. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Amend the Crimes Act (2009) to legalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the life or health of the pregnant woman, and severe fetal**

impairment; and decriminalize abortion in all cases, with a view to legalizing voluntary, safe and accessible abortion;

(b) Take measures to ensure that all women and girls, in particular rural women and girls, iTaukei women and girls, women and girls with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, have affordable access, free from discrimination, to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including family planning, modern forms of contraception and safe abortion and post-abortion services, as well as to mental health services, including in remote areas and outer islands;

(c) Adopt the national policy for cervical cancer screening and expand the cervical cancer screening campaign to cover all women concerned, collect disaggregated data on the prevalence of cervical and breast cancers, and provide training to medical doctors and health professionals on early detection, including in remote areas and outer islands;

(d) Strengthen the implementation of the HIV Surge Strategy for the period 2024–2027; ensure access to free HIV testing and continue to provide free antiretroviral treatment to all women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, including pregnant women in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission; and address the stigmatization and social exclusion of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and women who use drugs.

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

43. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party has incorporated a gender dimension into its social protection schemes, such as the poverty benefit scheme and care and protection allowance. It notes with concern, however, that women, particularly those working in the informal economy, continue to face structural and systemic barriers to their full economic empowerment, and that:

(a) Women, in particular rural and iTaukei women, have limited access to financial credit due to collateral requirements and a lack of financial literacy;

(b) Only 19 per cent of all micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the State Party are owned by women and that they face an unmet credit demand of \$111 million and lack sustainability and market access;

(c) There is limited participation and inclusion of women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in economic and cultural life and recreational activities.

44. The Committee recommends that the State Party finalize and fully operationalize the national action plan on the economic empowerment of women for the period 2024–2029, including by allocating the required financial, human and technical resources for its implementation, and:

(a) Increase financial literacy among women and expand and diversify access to credit by supporting collateral-free lending schemes through partnerships with banks and credit unions, reduce financial risks for women and ensure that women entrepreneurs are included in all aspects of economic life on an equal basis with men, especially targeting women in the informal sector and rural and iTaukei women;

(b) Ensure that women have equal access to economic resources, financial products and services, competitive markets and income-generating opportunities; and provide targeted support and capacity-building for women

entrepreneurs, including on digital business skills and technology, available subsidies, credit and financing, and sustainable market access;

(c) **Develop inclusive strategies to promote the participation of women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in economic and cultural life and recreational activities, in particular in remote areas and outer islands.**

#### **Rural women and women in maritime industries**

45. The Committee acknowledges the critical role played by rural women and women who work in maritime industries in agriculture, fisheries, food security and local economies. However, it remains concerned that they continue to face structural barriers in having access to land ownership, marine resources, finance, training and technology, and that they are excluded from leadership and local decision-making processes due to gender stereotypes, the often informal and unrecognized nature of their work, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work placed on them.

46. **In line with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, the Committee recommends that the State Party integrate and mainstream a gender perspective into all agricultural and rural development strategies, plans and programmes, and in particular:**

(a) **Ensure that rural women and women in maritime industries have access equal to that of men to land ownership and use, including by conducting awareness-raising campaigns aimed at dismantling patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes that impede equal access;**

(b) **Ensure that rural women and women in maritime industries have adequate access to education; employment; healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services; social protection; housing and adequate water and sanitation; and modern farming technologies, including knowledge on food harvesting techniques, preservation, storage, processing, packaging, marketing and entrepreneurship;**

(c) **Ensure that rural women and women in maritime industries are meaningfully represented in planning and decision-making related to rural and maritime infrastructure and services, as well as in the planning, adoption, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural and rural development and maritime policies.**

#### **Women facing intersecting forms of discrimination**

##### *Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women*

47. The Committee remains concerned that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women continue to face high rates of gender-based violence in both the private and public spheres. It also remains concerned about their legal exclusion under binary frameworks and their limited access to education, employment, housing and healthcare services, in particular sexual and reproductive health services.

48. **The Committee recommends that the State Party protect the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in all areas covered by the Convention; protect them from gender-based violence; conduct awareness-raising campaigns to address their stigmatization in society; and ensure that they have equal access to education, employment, housing and healthcare services, in particular sexual and reproductive health services.**

*Women and girls with disabilities*

49. The Committee notes with concern that women and girls with disabilities face intersecting forms of discrimination in the State Party, which limits their access to justice, education, employment and health services, their rights to marry and in marriage, and their parental rights. It is also concerned that the national domestic violence helpline remains inaccessible to women with hearing or speech impairments. It is further concerned about reports that women with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities have been placed in prisons along with persons convicted for committing crimes.

**50. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 18 (1991) on disabled women, the Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that women and girls with disabilities are able to have access to justice, inclusive education, employment and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services; and that they can exercise their rights to marry and in marriage, as well as their parental rights, on an equal basis with other rights holders, and access information about their rights and helplines and services in accessible formats that are adapted to their particular needs. It also recommends that the State Party refrain from imprisoning persons, including women and girls, on the basis of disability, and release immediately those imprisoned on that basis.**

*Older women*

51. The Committee notes with concern the lack of care services to meet the needs of older women, especially single older women and those without family support. It is also concerned that older women are rarely consulted in the development or review of policies that directly affect their rights, and that the outdated national policy on ageing (2011–2015) fails to reflect their needs.

**52. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party address the precarious health, economic and emotional situation of many older women in order to prevent poverty and isolation; adopt a new national policy on older women and ensure that they are involved in its development and implementation; and ensure that affordable care services are available to meet the needs of older women, especially single older women and those without family support.**

**Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

53. The Committee notes with appreciation the State Party's international and national commitments to addressing climate change, and the adoption of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2018–2030) and the revised national humanitarian policy (2024). However, it is concerned:

(a) That the State Party's low-lying islands are particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, flooding and droughts resulting from intense weather variability and a rise in temperatures, and that these impacts are likely to threaten food security and result in public health crises and massive displacement;

(b) That, despite the heightened risks of gender-based violence in the context of climate change and disasters being recognized in the State Party's national climate change policy and the national disaster management plan, climate-induced fragility, exacerbated by cyclones and heavy rainfall, has led to a demonstrable increase in gender-based violence against women and girls;

(c) About the very limited participation of women in decision-making related to climate change and disaster risk management, and the lack of gender-responsive budgeting in climate-related sectors.

**54. In line with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State Party review its climate change and disaster response strategies, taking into account the impact of climate change on the livelihoods of women; and ensure that women are equally represented in the development, adoption and implementation of legislation, policies and programmes on climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster response and disaster risk reduction, in particular by:**

(a) Ensuring the incorporation of a gender perspective into climate change and disaster risk reduction legislation, policies, financing and programmes, in particular in the National Disaster Risk Management Bill (2024), including economic infrastructure sectors and the green economy, renewable energy and clean technology; and empowering women by equipping them with knowledge to participate effectively in climate change-related decision-making and the development of adaptation strategies and actions that build women's and girls' resilience to the impacts of climate change;

(b) Introducing effective gender budgeting for climate financing and climate change adaptation activities, including those aimed at financing and encouraging a sustainable blue economy, to ensure that such initiatives are fully inclusive of women, promote the empowerment of women and support the climate change agenda to help women and girls to adapt effectively to climate change and disasters;

(c) Strengthen the implementation of the national climate change policy and the national disaster management plan and ensure the systematic integration of a gender perspective and gender-based violence prevention and response mechanisms into climate change, disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness strategies; allocate sufficient resources; strengthen data collection on the gendered impacts of climate change; and ensure the meaningful participation of women, in particular women belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in the design and implementation of climate change and disaster-related policies and programmes;

(d) Promoting the active participation of women in the creation and implementation of new funding arrangements for responding to environmental damage, as decided during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in 2022.

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

55. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That, although the legal minimum age of marriage is 18 years for both women and men, child marriage remains prevalent due to the lack of enforcement of the existing legislation that criminalizes child and forced marriage, to light penalties for those who marry minors and to the practice of registering marriages after the age of 18 years to avoid sanctions, often following unplanned pregnancies;

(b) The persistence of gender stereotypes and customary practices that limit women's land and property rights, including with regard to joint marital property; the lack of sex-disaggregated data and analysis on inheritance practices and equal access



of spouses to land ownership, particularly in rural areas and outer islands; and the lack of mandatory and regular training for family court judges, lawyers, mediators and other legal professionals on the equal rights of women in marriage under the Convention;

(c) The lack of economic support mechanisms for women seeking divorce, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence who are economically dependent on their husbands, and the lack of statistics on the impact of divorce on poverty among women;

(d) The absence of gender-responsive criteria for granting child custody in the Family Law Act (2003) and its amendments and of a timeline for conducting a comprehensive gender impact assessment of family law;

(e) The lack of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, such as through civil unions or registered partnerships, which limits the legal and economic protection of women in such unions, as well as their right to adopt children.

**56. Recalling its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations, general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, and joint general recommendation No. 31/general comment No. 18 (2019) on harmful practices, as revised, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strictly enforce the minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both women and men in section 29 of the Marriage Act (1968), without exceptions; increase penalties for those who marry minors or administer or consent to early unions; and require the civil registration of all marriages at the time of their conclusion;**

(b) **Take concrete steps to eliminate discriminatory customary practices and gender stereotypes that limit the equal inheritance and property rights of women in marriage, including through legal reforms to ensure that statutory laws take precedence over customary laws and by engaging with traditional and religious leaders, in particular in rural and iTaukei communities; and provide mandatory and regular training to family court judges, lawyers, mediators and other legal professionals on the equal rights of women in marriage under the Convention;**

(c) **Collect data on the impact of divorce on poverty among women; provide financial support to women seeking divorce, especially victims of intimate partner violence; and ensure that they have access to affordable housing, legal aid and employment in order to reduce their economic dependence on their husbands and strengthen their autonomy;**

(d) **Conduct a comprehensive gender impact assessment of the Family Law Act (2003), within a specified time frame; and ensure that it includes gender-responsive criteria for decisions on child custody, including previous labour division between parents and records of domestic violence;**

(e) **Establish a legal framework for the recognition of same-sex partnerships, such as civil unions or registered partnerships, to ensure the legal and economic protection of women in such unions, as well as their non-discriminatory access to adoption.**

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

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

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

58. In view of the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Committee calls upon the State Party to reaffirm its implementation and to re-evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

**Dissemination**

59. 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 ministries, the Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation, as well as to civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in particular women's organizations, to raise full awareness within the State Party.

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

60. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 34 (b), 38 (d), 40 (a) and 42 (d) above.

**Preparation of the next report**

61. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the seventh periodic report of the State Party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by States Parties (see General Assembly resolution [79/165](#), para. 6) 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.

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