



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

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

### Summary record of the 2132nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 February 2025, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Haidar  
*later:* Ms. Reddock (Vice-Chair)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

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

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Congo joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of the Congo**, introducing her country's eighth periodic report (CEDAW/C/COG/8), said that significant progress had been made in implementing the Convention and promoting women's rights. The National Programme to Promote Women's Leadership in Political Life had helped to build the capacity of over 3,000 women in politics, leadership, financial resource mobilization and communication.
3. Women's representation stood at 100 per cent in the Women's Advisory Council, 50 per cent in the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, 49 per cent in the civil service, 47 per cent in the judiciary, 40 per cent in the National Human Rights Commission, 33.3 per cent in the Constitutional Court, 30.55 per cent in the Senate, 25 per cent in the High Court of Justice, 25 per cent in the Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, 22 per cent in the Government, 20.85 per cent in the municipal councils, 19.44 per cent in the departmental councils and 16 per cent in the National Assembly.
4. Since the previous constructive dialogue, her country's normative and institutional framework had been strengthened to better protect women's rights through the adoption of numerous legal texts, including the Mouébara Act, Act No. 19-2022 of 4 May 2022, to combat violence against women; Act No. 1-2023 of 21 February 2023 establishing the creation of the Mouébara Centre for the reception and rehabilitation of women and girls who were victims of violence; Act No. 4-2021 of 29 September 2021 establishing the right of asylum and refugee status; Act No. 10-2022 of 20 April 2022 establishing the Correctional Code; and Act No. 22-2019 of 17 June 2019, to combat human trafficking.
5. The draft law on parity was in the process of being adopted. Activities carried out to promote and protect women's rights included the establishment of the National Committee of Women Mediators for Peace; the adoption of the 2021–2025 National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence; the training of magistrates on domestic violence and on the application of the Convention and the Mouébara Act; the training of social workers in the care of female victims of violence and the development of referral pathways; the development of training guides on the management of gender-based violence; and awareness-raising among civil society organizations regarding the need to protect widows from degrading practices. The Mouébara Centre for the care of victims of violence would be built in the centre of Brazzaville, with a budget of 2 billion CFA francs (CFAF) allocated for its construction in 2025.
6. The Brazzaville University Hospital and several other general hospitals had been renovated, and the Government had trained and recruited a considerable number of new medical staff. To combat maternal and infant mortality, the 2023–2026 National Health Development Plan included free medical care for complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, free antimalarial treatment for children up to the age of 15 and care for children with sickle cell anaemia. Over a three-year period, maternal mortality had decreased from 304 deaths to fewer than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births, and the infant and child mortality rate had dropped from 40.4 to 24.59 deaths per 1,000 live births.
7. The prevalence of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS had significantly declined and the percentage of pregnant women receiving antiretroviral therapy had increased from 10 per cent in 2019 to 43 per cent in 2023. To combat early pregnancy, awareness campaigns had been conducted in schools, among grassroots communities and through the media. Contraceptives were provided free of charge at comprehensive healthcare centres.
8. The State had adopted the 2022–2023 national policy for integrated early childhood development, the National Strategy for the Education of Girls in the Congo and the 2021–2030 Education Sector Strategy. Schooling was compulsory for all children until the

age of 16. Textbooks were free and uniforms had been made mandatory in order to combat psychological violence and discrimination against disadvantaged children. Disability-specific institutes had been established to support persons with disabilities.

9. Anonymous, toll-free hotlines had been set up to ensure that victims of domestic violence could safely file reports. A positive masculinity approach to combating violence against women and girls had been adopted, and around 4,000 students had been educated about issues related to family life, gender-based stereotypes and violence in the school environment.

10. The Government aimed to empower women by supporting an ambitious programme to develop protected agricultural zones and by providing conditional cash transfers to households under the Lisungi project. Furthermore, to strengthen financial inclusion, the Government had set up a public support structure for small and medium-sized enterprises. It had organized training opportunities for women in entrepreneurial leadership, provided financial and material support to women engaged in income-generating activities and created women's savings and credit cooperatives.

11. The 2022–2026 National Development Plan reflected the vision of President Denis Sassou-N'Gesso to strengthen the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Government called for multifaceted support from the international community to better address issues related to the fight against all forms of discrimination against women and for the construction of the Mouébara Centre for the holistic care of victims of violence.

12. *Ms. Reddock (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.*

13. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that the Committee commended the extensive constitutional, legal and public policy reforms and strategic approaches adopted by the State party, including the adoption of the Mouébara Act, which specifically defined discrimination against women for the first time. However, women and girls were still threatened by structural and systemic discrimination and violence at all levels of society. She hoped that the constructive dialogue would help to identify key thematic areas for progress with a view to building a future where gender equality became tangible and accessible to all women and girls in the Congo.

#### *Articles 1–6*

14. **Ms. Akia** said that she would like to know whether the State party had conducted an assessment of existing laws to identify legal frameworks that contradicted the constitutional provisions on equality and represented legal barriers hindering women and girls' equal access to social, economic, cultural and political opportunities. She wondered what steps were being taken to ensure that laws that prohibited and criminalized discrimination against women and girls had a real-world effect; to build the capacity of justice and law enforcement actors to apply the Convention, including in court decisions; and to work with the informal justice actors presiding over customary courts to ensure the protection of and respect for women and girls' rights in the system of customary law.

15. The Committee would welcome an update on the situation of women and human rights defenders working to protect women and girls' rights. It had received reports that such individuals faced arbitrary and unlawful arrest and restrictions on their freedom of expression and assembly. She would be grateful for further information on the steps taken to enhance access to inclusive and quality justice, address corruption in the justice sector, strengthen witness and victim protection mechanisms and raise awareness of the women and girls' rights protected under the Convention and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol). She wished to know whether the parliament had passed a law criminalizing the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. If so, had there been any prosecutions or convictions under it?

16. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Mouébara Act had made it possible to penalize many behaviours that did not respect women's human rights. Training sessions for magistrates on the Mouébara Act had led to an increase in its application in criminal proceedings over the previous two years. Awareness-raising efforts for grassroots

communities and customary chiefs on the subject of women's rights had also helped to ensure that laws prohibiting discrimination against women were applied in practice. Networks for combating violence against women and girls, made up of institutional, civil society and local community stakeholders, had been set up in each of the country's departments.

17. Access to justice was guaranteed by existing laws, such as the Penal Code, and reinforced by the Mouébara Act, which required the State to take all possible steps to guarantee the holistic care of victims. Furthermore, access to justice was facilitated by gender-based violence focal points established in Government ministries, the High Court of Justice and the courts of first instance, as well as through the protection and support services offered by the National Programme to Combat Violence against Women.

18. **A representative of the Congo** said that judges and other judicial staff underwent regular training to ensure that they understood new and existing laws aimed at combating discrimination and violence against women and were able to apply them. In 2022 and 2023, more than 1,000 judicial staff from the country's five courts of appeal had undergone training on the application of the Convention and the Mouébara Act, which had been enacted with the aim of combating violence against women and providing comprehensive care to victims of violence against women.

19. The Government ensured that criminal hearings of cases involving violence against women were held regularly, with a view to making sure that all perpetrators would be punished. In 2024, special hearings of the juvenile court had been held in order to address cases of violence against young women and girls.

20. **A representative of the Congo** said that women's prisons were closely monitored and were visited every year by the Minister for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy, with the aim of ensuring inmates' well-being.

21. **Ms. Akia** said that she wished to know how the State party ensured that laws providing that women and girls were equal to men and boys and had access to equal opportunities were translated into reality and that gender gaps were closed.

22. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she wondered whether the State party had a programme for integrating gender and violence against women into the curriculum for trainee judges. She would be grateful to learn whether the State party provided legal aid to women who were unable to afford it. It would be helpful to hear what capacity-building training was provided to the legislature, what level of training its members currently had and what mechanisms it employed to ensure that laws that had been passed were implemented and that their implementation was monitored and funded.

23. **A representative of the Congo** said that parity was guaranteed under article 17 of the Constitution. Given the influence of traditional societal values, parity had to be achieved in a progressive manner. The draft law on parity provided for the establishment of a national parity observatory that would monitor parities and disparities in each department.

24. The electoral law, which also provided that parity was to be achieved progressively, specified that at least 30 per cent of candidates for the National Assembly and the Senate had to be women, as did half of all candidates for municipal and departmental council places. The percentage of women in the National Assembly had risen with each legislature.

25. **A representative of the Congo** said that reception and counselling centres for women operated in several departments. The Government worked with civil society organizations, such as the Association of Women Lawyers of the Congo, which formed part of departmental networks for combating violence. Such organizations supported and assisted women and their families in obtaining access to justice and understanding legal proceedings when a Government-appointed lawyer was unavailable.

26. **A representative of the Congo** said that training for judges formed part of the annual programme of activities of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples and was provided for under its training plan. The selection of topics for the training took into account the problems encountered by legal actors.

27. **A representative of the Congo** said that, in accordance with the Mouébara Act, gender desks run by a police colonel had been established at police stations for the protection of women detainees. Police officers staffing those desks received annual training and reported on arrests made in application of the Act. The Association of Women Lawyers of the Congo and other organizations were provided with spaces at police stations and at the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous People, where they could give legal advice to women who needed it. The Government prioritized awareness-raising efforts aimed at encouraging women who were reluctant to report crimes due to traditional societal values to come forward. In accordance with the Mouébara Act, even if a victim withdrew her complaint, civil society organizations and the Ministry could continue legal proceedings, with a view to upholding women's rights and preventing out-of-court settlements.

28. **Ms. Rana** said that she would be interested to learn how civil society and women's organizations would be engaged in the implementation and monitoring of the National Action P for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, how the security sector would be involved and how the plan would be funded. She wondered how the plan aligned with the Government's national development priorities and the establishment of an inclusive security architecture.

29. It would be useful to learn what steps the State party was taking to validate the legal framework of the National Human Rights Commission, ensure that it was fully operational and independent and strengthen its autonomy, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), so that it could effectively carry out its mandate.

30. She would welcome information on steps taken to bridge the funding gap faced by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy and on measures taken to address resource gaps in the action plan of the National Gender Policy. She wondered what efforts were being made to establish and operationalize the gender observatory and to strengthen data collection. It would be helpful to hear what steps the State party was taking to adopt a legal framework for gender-responsive budgeting and to improve monitoring of gender mainstreaming. What measures was the Government taking to enact legal protections for women human right defenders and ensure accountability for violence and threats against them? How did it plan to strengthen civil society participation in advancing gender equality?

31. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would welcome an update on the status of the draft law on parity and its provisions penalizing non-compliance and on the status of the various acts amending the electoral law.

32. She would be grateful if the State party could provide specific indicators on the effectiveness of maternity protection measures that it had taken, which included establishing a national programme for the management of caesarean sections, ectopic pregnancies, emergency care for caesarean babies and other major obstetric procedures. She wondered how many women had benefited from that programme and whether its scope extended to rural areas.

33. It would be useful to hear whether any officials or public leaders had been made responsible for the application and oversight of temporary special measures and whether any studies on the impact on economic and social development of such measures were currently available or had been planned. The Committee would be interested to hear about concrete and measurable examples of temporary special measures and other redress mechanisms.

34. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Government was making extensive efforts through awareness-raising campaigns to encourage women to have enough confidence in the fairness of the political system to seek greater representation in decision-making bodies. More than 3,000 women had been provided with training to prepare them to stand for election at all levels. As a result, 99 per cent of women candidates for the National Assembly had been successful, which was higher than the percentage of successful male candidates. The quota of 30 per cent for female members of the Senate had been achieved. The draft law on parity would ban political parties from taking part in elections if they failed to comply with its provisions.

35. The establishment of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples had been a significant step in efforts to uphold the rights of Indigenous women. The Government met with representatives from Indigenous communities with a view to encouraging Indigenous persons to register in the country's healthcare system and to improving their relations with Bantu persons.

36. **A representative of the Congo** said that the legal framework of the National Human Rights Commission had been strengthened and that its budget had been increased to approximately CFAF 1.6 million, with the aim of enabling it to operate in line with the Paris Principles.

37. A number of instruments related to Indigenous Peoples had been adopted since the adoption of Act No. 5/2011 on the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Government had issued decrees setting out special measures for issuing civil registry documents to Indigenous Peoples, protecting their cultural property, sacred sites and spiritual sites, providing for consultation and their participation in socioeconomic development projects and programmes and setting out the composition and operating procedures of the Interministerial Committee for Monitoring and Evaluating the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With the support of expert and financial partners, the Government was developing national strategies for improving the quality of life of Indigenous Peoples, which would hopefully lead to the adoption of a national plan of action.

38. **A representative of the Congo** said that the budget of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy had increased as a result of various laws and initiatives. It had stepped up its advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting, and it was anticipated that the Ministry's budget would increase further in 2026. A national agency for the transformation of the informal economy had been established in 2025 with a view to combating poverty, and a strategy for formalization of employment from the informal to the formal economy had been implemented, *inter alia* with the aim of enabling women to gain access to loans.

39. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know when the gender observatory would be operationalized. It would be helpful to learn what steps the State party would take to strengthen civil society, including by defending the rights of women human rights defenders.

40. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that, while appreciating that it took a long time for cultural attitudes to evolve, she wished to know what specific measures had been taken to accelerate the rate of behavioural and cultural change in the State party. In particular, she would like to know what incentives and sanctions had been put in place for political parties in order to encourage progress towards gender parity in politics.

41. She would welcome further information on the activities of the national agency for the informal economy. It would also be useful to hear more about the role played by civil society, particularly women's organizations, both in the preparation of the State party's report and in holding political parties and the Government to account.

42. **A representative of the Congo** said that, in the recent context of uncertainty caused by economic instability, women had shown strong leadership in the areas of peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Women were actively involved in such activities thanks to the measures taken under the National Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and a national committee of female mediators had been established.

43. Civil society organizations had actively participated in the drafting of the Mouébara Act. Indeed, when preparing new legislation, the Government always relied heavily on the information provided by its multilateral and bilateral partners and by civil society.

44. Although efforts were being made to implement gender-responsive budgeting, progress in that area had been limited because of the budgetary restrictions facing the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy. However, the Government was putting in place reforms to combat poverty and boost the economy, which, in turn, would enable it to increase the Ministry's funding. They included the measures taken under the National Strategy for the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, such as the plans to establish a new fund to

provide women who sold goods at markets and on the street with loans at preferential rates to enable them to develop self-sufficient businesses. That project had been approved by the Cabinet and would soon be submitted to the Council of Ministers.

45. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she would be interested to know to what extent implementation of the Mouébara Act had strengthened progress towards eliminating gender stereotypes and whether there had been any relevant criminal prosecutions under that law. It would also be useful to know what additional steps had been taken to address harmful stereotypes, including by raising awareness of the provisions in the Act and by reviewing existing legislation with a view to repealing discriminatory provisions.

46. She would like to know what specific measures had been taken to ensure the absolute prohibition of child marriage. The Committee would like to find out what further steps the Government intended to take to eliminate harmful practices for women and girls, including through the collection of reliable gender-disaggregated data. The Committee would welcome statistical data for the previous two years on female genital mutilation, polygamy, forced marriage and the payment of bride prices. It would also be interesting to hear what innovative strategies had been implemented to strengthen protection against stigmatization for women and girls who had been subjected to child marriage or female genital mutilation, particularly Indigenous women and women with disabilities.

47. The Committee would like to know what measures the Government planned to take to raise awareness of the provisions on gender-based violence in the Mouébara Act, as well as other sources of legal protection against violence, among women, the general public, law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary and community leaders. It would also be useful to know what mechanisms would be put in place to facilitate the reporting of gender-based violence and to provide women victims with support. She wished to know what progress had been achieved under the Mouébara Act, the National Programme to Combat Violence against Women and the 2021–2025 Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence to ensure that cases of violence against women – particularly women with disabilities and migrant and Indigenous women – were investigated and that perpetrators were prosecuted and punished. The Committee would welcome information on the number of protection orders that had been issued and the numbers of prosecutions brought and convictions secured under the Mouébara Act. It would also be helpful to know what level of State funding was allocated for victim compensation, implementation of the Act and activities to address gender-based violence.

48. **Ms. Toledo Vásquez** said that she wished to know whether the Government had considered making slavery a criminal offence. It would be useful to learn if any official data was available on the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions brought and convictions secured in relation to trafficking in persons and, if so, which form of trafficking had been revealed to be most prevalent in the State party. The delegation might also like to indicate whether any steps were being taken to strengthen coordination between law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations in the response to trafficking.

49. She would like to know what measures had been taken to ensure that victims of sexual exploitation were not treated as criminals, in accordance with the principle of non-punishment. It would also be helpful to hear what action was taken to ensure that all trafficking victims in the country, including Indigenous and refugee women and those located in rural and remote areas, were provided with comprehensive protection and support services. What steps were taken to ensure the accessibility and cultural appropriateness of those services? Why had the Government not yet deposited the country's instrument of ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime?

50. The Committee would like to know whether women who engaged in prostitution risked being penalized under vagrancy laws or other regulations and, if so, what steps the Government envisaged to decriminalize sex workers. She wished to know what exit programmes had been put in place for women and girls who wished to leave prostitution and whether they were adequately resourced. What educational and alternative income opportunities had been made available for at-risk women and girls?

51. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy was required by law to submit an annual report on the implementation of the Mouébara Act. The Act provided for widespread protections for women in a variety of areas. It prohibited the practice of revenge pornography, which was defined as the dissemination of images of a sexual nature without the victim's consent, establishing severe punishments for such offences. It also prohibited the dissemination or distribution of images and false or misleading information with a view to violating a woman's privacy or defaming her. Additionally, the Act included specific provisions to address the actions of members of the police or gendarmerie who tried to prevent women victims of violence from lodging formal complaints or who accepted bribes from a perpetrator of gender-based violence.

52. As part of the Government's efforts to change outdated cultural attitudes, a government department had been made responsible for the specific task of promoting Indigenous women. The vice-chair of the Women's Advisory Council was an Indigenous woman, and all delegations sent by the Government to United Nations events included at least one Indigenous woman.

53. The practice of female genital mutilation did not form part of the culture of the Congo. However, the authorities remained alert to the possibility of such harmful customs being practised by foreigners. Regular awareness-raising campaigns were organized for non-nationals and, particularly, for the Muslim community. The Government had also taken a number of measures to prevent forced marriage. The border authorities interviewed all teenage girls entering the country who did not speak French and carried out the necessary checks on the person or persons accompanying them to ensure that they were not being brought to the Congo against their will for the purpose of a forced marriage. A specific programme had also been put in place to address the situation of girls who arrived in the country to work in prostitution. The authorities had detected a number of Congolese nationals under the age of 16 returning to the country in such circumstances and, under the programme, the Ministry of Social Affairs had made arrangements for them to be placed with foster families so that they could complete their compulsory education.

54. The practice of forced marriage had all but been eradicated in Brazzaville and the most developed areas of the country. The Government continued to take steps to address outdated cultural attitudes in more rural and isolated areas, particularly Indigenous villages, where forced marriage was still considered normal. The Portella Act on the protection of children contained strict provisions on forced marriage and on other harmful practices.

55. Although prostitution was not explicitly prohibited by law, such practices were considered to be inconsistent with the country's cultural values. The Government had no plans to legalize prostitution, since it did not wish to risk increasing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Many more women than men lived with HIV/AIDS in the Congo, not least because a single man could transmit the disease to several women.

56. Concerning the budget of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy for 2025, CFAF 1.1 billion had been allocated for measures to combat violence against women, and CFAF 2 billion had been allocated for the development of the Mouébara Centre. An urban plot of 2 hectares had already been designated for the construction of that facility.

57. **A representative of the Congo** said that various measures had been implemented during the reporting period to ensure progress in eliminating trafficking in persons. In addition to enacting the law to combat human trafficking in 2019, the country had continued to ratify international legal instruments providing protections against trafficking. The Government also held training sessions on trafficking for the judiciary, in partnership with its development partners. In March 2018, three police officers had been convicted of trafficking offences. They had received sentences of 20 years of hard labour, 5 years in prison and 6 months of deprivation of liberty.

58. **A representative of the Congo** said that, under the Family Code, a man had the right to have up to four wives at the same time, so long as each of the wives consented to formally register their union as a polygamous marriage. Unfortunately, the Ministry for the

Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy regularly received complaints from women in supposedly monogamous marriages who had found out that their husbands had other wives. The Mouébara Act granted public prosecutors the power to take immediate measures against the husband in such situations. Furthermore, a wife could now file for divorce on the basis of her husband's actions. Traditionally, it had not been possible to establish that the fault for a divorce had lain with the husband.

59. **Ms. Akia** said that she would be interested to know whether the authorities had investigated any cases of female genital mutilation perpetrated by foreign nationals and whether such investigations had resulted in prosecutions. She also wished to know whether a law had been passed to criminalize genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. If so, it would be useful for the delegation to inform the Committee whether any foreign nationals who had entered the State party from a neighbouring country had been prosecuted under that law in relation to gender-based violence.

60. **Ms. Toledo Vásquez** said that her question did not relate to the legalization of prostitution. Rather, she would be interested to know whether women in prostitution were at risk of being penalized under laws that, while not explicitly referring to prostitution, might apply to people engaged in sex work. If so, she would like to know whether the Government would consider repealing the provisions in question.

61. **Ms. Tisheva** said that there was a strong risk that the use of reconciliation and mediation in cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence might hinder women's access to justice. She would therefore like to know whether the Government would consider reviewing the provisions on mediation and reconciliation in the Mouébara Act. She would also be interested to know whether the Government would consider amending the Act to increase the maximum period of protection granted to women victims of violence and to reduce the time taken to implement urgent protection measures in particularly serious cases.

62. **A representative of the Congo** said that the establishment of the Mouébara Centre would provide women victims of violence with a facility offering ongoing accommodation and support until their predicament was resolved. That support would include psychological and legal services, access to the police and gendarmerie and healthcare services. The Centre would organize mediation sessions for female victims of conjugal violence who wished to reconcile with their husbands, and it would also work directly with repeat male offenders to help them understand the seriousness of their actions.

63. No laws had been adopted to criminalize genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, it was her understanding that the Constitution called for those crimes to be prohibited under the national legislation. She was unaware whether the Congo had yet ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

64. **A representative of the Congo** said that all suspected cases of female genital mutilation were investigated by the police, but that there were relatively few convictions because it was difficult to obtain testimony and other evidence in such cases. Awareness-raising campaigns to protect girls from female genital mutilation were run in cooperation with social workers and the police. Those campaigns – which were aimed at migrant communities in particular, since female genital mutilation was not a traditional Congolese practice – appeared to be having a positive impact. Early marriage was also the subject of awareness-raising campaigns. Congolese law was strict on the matter, as illustrated by the fact that many migrant girls returned to their countries of origin at around 15 years old, presumably to be married.

#### *Articles 7–9*

65. **Ms. Draz** said that she would welcome more information on any measures taken to increase the representation of women in political and public life. She would like to know what had been achieved through the National Programme to Promote Women's Leadership in Political and Public Life for 2017–2021 and whether that programme had been renewed. She wondered whether the State party had identified the causes of the underrepresentation of

Congolese women in the diplomatic and international spheres; whether awareness-raising on the opportunities available and the importance of women's participation in those areas had been carried out; and what efforts had been made to disseminate the Committee's general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. She welcomed the State party's efforts to combat gender stereotypes through awareness-raising campaigns and would like to know more about the content, financing, reach and impact of those campaigns. In particular, she would be interested to know whether any of the campaigns had been aimed at young people.

66. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Women's Advisory Council was composed exclusively of women and included former members of the parliament and former government ministers. The Council issued recommendations to the President and the Prime Minister once a year and was the only non-governmental body entitled to advise the President directly. In its 2024 report, the Council had noted the underrepresentation of women in the Government and the National Assembly. The Government was hoping to address the issue by adjusting the quota established in the Electoral Act. While women were still underrepresented in the diplomatic service, some progress had been made, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs held an annual meeting on the issue. The majority of mayors were women, and the number of women serving as village or district chiefs had increased.

67. **Ms. Draz** said that she would welcome some examples of the implementation of recommendations made by the Women's Advisory Council.

68. **A representative of the Congo** said that, after the Women's Advisory Council had drawn attention to the lack of women prefects, two women had been appointed to such posts and had been in office for at least two terms. The Council's recommendations had led to the creation of a programme to encourage girls and women to pursue careers in science and to the adoption of measures to address specific issues faced by girls in schools, such as period bullying, and a requirement for all schools to appoint social workers to support girls by the end of 2025.

69. **A representative of the Congo**, addressing a question raised by Ms. Eghobanien-Mshelia, said that the principle of gender parity in access to political, elected and administrative roles was enshrined in article 7 of the Constitution. Gender parity in the civil service had largely been achieved. To increase women's access to elected office, a national observatory for gender parity was being set up and political campaign training had been provided to women wishing to run for election. A total of 3,000 women had received such training, and the majority of those who had subsequently run for office had been elected. Thanks to the training, political parties had greater confidence in women candidates and were more likely to nominate them.

70. **Ms. Schläppi** said that she would like to know whether there were plans to amend the Nationality Law to allow Congolese women to transfer their nationality to their foreign spouses on an equal basis with Congolese men; whether non-Congolese women married to Congolese men were permitted by law to adopt their spouse's nationality without losing their own; and whether such women could transfer their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. The Committee would welcome data on birth registration disaggregated by sex, as well as information on the outcomes of the campaigns to increase birth registration and the lessons learned from those campaigns. She wondered what measures would be taken to further increase birth registration, particularly in rural areas and among Indigenous children; what stage had been reached in the implementation of the national policy to modernize the civil registry; and whether there were plans to digitize birth registration procedures. It would be helpful if the State party could provide more information on the strategic priorities, activities, budget and achievements of the inter-institutional technical committee for the eradication of statelessness.

71. **A representative of the Congo** said that certain articles of the Family Code were being reviewed by a special committee established by the Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples, as well as by senior judges selected by the Supreme Court. The provisions on nationality were likely to be amended following that review.

72. **A representative of the Congo** said that violations of the Electoral Act gave rise to sanctions. For example, if a political party submitted a list of candidates that did not meet the

Act's requirements for women's representation, the entire list was rejected by the relevant authority. There was a shortage of data in many areas because the national census was not conducted annually. The data gathered through the most recent census were being analysed and disaggregated by age, sex and social situation. Under the national policy to modernize the civil registry, a project for the creation of a centralized digital register of births was being piloted in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville. In addition, mobile court hearings had been held in various rural areas to facilitate birth registration, particularly among Indigenous and stateless persons. The inter-institutional technical committee for the eradication of statelessness, which reported to the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples, was working actively to fulfil its mandate and had been the driving force behind the mobile court hearing initiative.

73. **A representative of the Congo** said that the Government had set itself the challenge of fully digitizing every area of public administration in 2025, under the guidance of the government ministry responsible for the digital economy. Local government services in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville, including birth registration, had already been digitized.

*Articles 10–14*

74. **Ms. Barriteau** said that she would be interested to know whether the action plan for 2021–2023 that formed part of the Education Sector Strategy had been extended and what resources had been allocated for the implementation of the action plan and of the Strategy as a whole. It would be helpful if the delegation could clarify why Indigenous girls, children with disabilities and orphans could not be enrolled in regular schools and describe any measures taken to ensure access to mainstream schooling for all children. The Committee would like to know what strategies had been adopted to increase the enrolment and retention of girls, especially Indigenous girls, in secondary education; to promote the enrolment of girls in mathematics and sciences throughout the education system; and to combat gender stereotyping in order to increase the number of girls pursuing industrial studies. She wondered what measures were being taken and what resources had been allocated to eliminate the indirect costs of schooling, expand school feeding programmes, improve school infrastructure and provide adequate menstrual hygiene facilities in schools. The Committee would welcome clarification as to whether the aim of literacy programmes for women was limited to functional literacy and whether there were remedial and reimmersion programmes for women and girls who dropped out of school.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*