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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women****Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth
periodic reports of Morocco***

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic report of Morocco (CEDAW/C/MAR/5-6) at its 1892nd and 1894th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1892 and CEDAW/C/SR.1894), held on 21 and 22 June 2022. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/MAR/Q/5-6, and the responses of Morocco are contained in CEDAW/C/MAR/RQ/5-6.

A. Introduction

2. While the Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined fifth and sixth periodic report, it regrets the delay of six years in submitting the report. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by Ms. Aawatif Hayar, Minister of Solidarity, Social Insertion and Family and included representatives from the Head of Government, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Residing Abroad, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Delegate-Ministry to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, the Presidency of the Public Ministry, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights, the High Commissariat for Planning, the High Authority of Audio-visual Communication, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests, the Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social and Solidarity Economy, the Directorate General of National Security, the Royal Gendarmerie, the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration and the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-second session (13 June -1 July 2022).



B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since its consideration in 2008 of the fourth periodic report in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of a new Constitution (July 2011) and the adoption of the following legislation:

- (a) Law 9-21 on social protection (March 2021);
- (b) Law 19-20 modifying and completing law 17-95 related to public limited companies and setting mandatory quotas for women on the boards of publicly traded companies (July 2021);
- (c) Law No. 19-12 concerning the conditions of work and employment for female and male domestic workers (August 2016);
- (d) Law 50-21 on reform of public establishments and enterprises (July 2021);
- (e) Law No.103-13 concerning violence against women (March 2018);
- (f) Law No. 79-14 establishing the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority (APALD) (December 2017);
- (g) Law No.27-14 on human trafficking (August 2016) and Implementing Decree 2.17.740 for article 7 of Act 27-14 establishing the National Committee for Preventing Human Trafficking and Coordinating Anti-Trafficking Measures (July 2018);
- (h) Law No.83-13 (August 2015) supplementing Law no. 77-03 on audiovisual communication, with the aim of promoting a culture of gender equality, combatting gender-based discrimination and preventing gender stereotyping in advertising;
- (i) Law No.88-13 (August 2016) on the press and publishing;
- (j) Organic Law 130-13 on finance (June 2015);
- (k) Regulatory Act), 04-21 (April 2021) Regulatory Act 05-21(April 2021), Regulatory Act 06-21 (April 2021), and Regulatory 07-21 (April 2021) providing proportional lists and quotas for political representation of women.

5. The Committee also 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. In this regard, it welcomes the development or establishment of the following:

- (a) The National Commission for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in June 2022;
- (b) The 2030 National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and Girls;
- (c) The National Integrated Program for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls " Maghreb Attamkine wa Arryada", aimed at increasing women's economic activity by 30%;
- (d) The Green Generation (2020-2030) agricultural strategy;
- (e) The National Action Plan 2021-2024 on women and peace and security for implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in March 2022;
- (f) An advisory committee to coordinated measures to combat and prevent human trafficking in 2019;
- (g) The 2018-2021 National Administrative Reform Plan, which contains a strategy to institutionalize gender equality in public service in its management transformation component;
- (h) The 2018-2022 National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights;
- (i) The Government Plan for Equality (ICRAM 2) 2017-2021;
- (j) The health reform program, Plan Santé 2025, aimed at improving access to health services particularly through strengthening primary health systems in rural areas;

- (k) The Parity and Vigilance Committee in 2017;
- (l) The strategic plan and sector action plan (2017-2021), which aims to improve access and study in higher education to achieve parity and equal opportunity;
- (m) The National strategy for institutionalisation of Gender Equality in Public Service (2016);
- (n) The parity charter drafted in 2017 by the National Radio and Television Company, affirming respect for the principles of equality provided for in the Constitution;
- (o) The “Wadhiyati” (my situation) 2015-2017 programme aimed at improving the prospects and employability of women entering the labour market;
- (p) The National Observatory for the Image of Women in the Media in 2014;
- (q) The road map to combat illiteracy among women (2014-2020);
- (r) The Centre of Excellence for Gender-Responsive Budgeting established in 2013;
- (s) The code of ethics drafted by the National Radio and Television Company in 2013 committing it to adhering to a gender approach in its programmes and professional practices;
- (t) The 2011-2020 National Reproductive Health Strategy which provides greater access to family planning.

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

- (a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, acceded to on 22 Apr 2022;
- (b) The Optional Protocol on The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights acceded to on 22 April 2022;
- (b) Acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 31 Mar 2010;
- (c) The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, acceded to on 25 Apr 2011;
- (d) The ratification of Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 13 April 2011.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

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

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the coronavirus disease pandemic and recovery efforts

9. The Committee notes with appreciation that measures were taken, including through the adaptation of the National Programme for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls ("Maghrib al-Tamkin"), to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on women and that measures such as awareness-raising initiatives and courses, were also taken to mitigate the impact of the virus on rural women and girls. It regrets, nevertheless, the lack of information on specific measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women in other areas, despite research carried out by High Commission for Planning having demonstrated that COVID-19 has exacerbated gender disparities in employment, domestic work and access to health and education.

10. **The Committee, in line with its guidance note on the obligations of States parties to the Convention in the context of COVID-19, issued on 22 April 2020, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Implement institutional, legislative and policy measures to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men and to give renewed impetus to the achievement of gender equality by placing women at the centre of COVID-19 recovery strategies as a strategic priority for sustainable change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals;**

(b) **Promote and facilitate the equal participation of women and girls, including disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women, in the State party's official national recovery programmes and strategies;**

(c) **Ensure that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care work, aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.**

Reservations, Declarations and the Optional Protocol to the Convention

11. The Committee welcomes the accession by the State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 22 April 2022. It further welcomes the withdrawal of the State party's reservations to articles 9 (2) and 16 on 8 April 2011. The Committee notes that the State party maintains its declarations to the Convention regarding article 2, on the principle of equality, and article 15, paragraph 4, but acknowledges the State party's explanation that these declarations no longer have an impact on the situation of women in Morocco since national legislation took precedence.

12. **The Committee encourages the State party to withdraw its declarations under articles 2 and 15 of the Convention in order to ensure clarity vis-à-vis their application.**

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

13. The Committee takes note with appreciation of the State party's indication that the principle of equality between women and men has been integrated into its 2011 Constitution and that the Penal Code defines discrimination in conformity with article 1 of the Convention. It expresses concern, however, that contradictions between certain legislative provisions, particularly in the Penal Code and the Family Code, and the 2011 Constitution remain an obstacle to ensuring the practical realisation of the principle of equality of men and women.

14. **Recalling the links between articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, the Committee calls upon the State party to expeditiously carry out a comprehensive legislative review with a view to amending or repealing all laws that discriminate against women directly or indirectly.**

Women's access to justice

15. The Committee notes with appreciation that Law No. 103.13, which entered into force in September 2018, has helped to ensure that women victims of violence enjoy a certain level of protection, including through the National Commission for the Care of Women Victims of Violence and regional and local committees that were established in order to give effect to section IV of the Law. However, the Committee also expresses concern at reports that police are not sensitised regarding human rights, including women's rights, and that, particularly in rural areas where the Amazigh language is spoken, women are not aware of their rights because information is not as available in their language. The Committee is further concerned at reports that the burden of proof in cases of gender-based violence is on the women victims.

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

(a) **Build the capacity of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and police officers, including by making training on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations a mandatory part of their professional training;**

(b) **Disseminate information in both Arabic and Amazigh languages, particularly to women and girls in rural areas on the mechanisms and procedures available to women and girls for seeking redress for violations of their rights;**

(c) **Ensure that its national courts adopt international standards on the burden of proof in cases involving gender-based violence.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

17. The Committee welcomes the efforts by the State party to integrate gender equality into sectoral policies through, inter alia, the integration of gender into the budgetary programming of ministerial departments. It notes with appreciation the adoption in 2017 of Law No. 79.14 establishing the Authority on Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination also the adoption of the Government Plan for Equality 2017-2021 ("Initiative Concertée pour le Renforcement des Acquis des Marocaines – ICRAM 2"). The Committee remains concerned however, that information received by the Committee indicates that the Directorate for Women's Affairs, Equity and Gender, which is the national entity responsible for the promotion of gender equality, receives only 5.1% of its ministry's budget. The Committee is also concerned that to date the Authority on Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination as well as the Advisory Council for Family and Children (CCFE), have not been established. It is further concerned at reports that civil society was not sufficiently included in ICRAM 1 development and monitoring/assessment processes and that their participation in the development of ICRAM 2 has been also not been sufficient.

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

(a) **Establish, without delay, the Gender Parity and Anti-Discrimination Authority and the Advisory Council for Family and Children, and provide adequate human, technical and financial resources for these bodies to carry out their work;**

(b) **Ensure the meaningful and full participation of civil society in monitoring and evaluation processes regarding ICRAM 1 and ICRAM 2 as well as in the development, monitoring and evaluation processes of any future Government Plan for Equality.**

Temporary special measures

19. The Committee notes with appreciation that temporary special measures, including quotas, have been adopted for the political participation of women. However, the Committee remains concerned that there has been limited use of temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality between women and men in other areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as employment and healthcare.

20. **In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt and further strengthen relevant temporary special measures to promote**

the participation of women in all areas under the Convention where they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in political participation, education, employment and health care, with time-bound targets and benchmarks, accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance, to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men, especially in decision-making positions in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

21. The Committee welcomes the steps taken to project positive images of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in society in school curricula and in the media. The Committee remains concerned, nevertheless, that stereotypical attitudes persist about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family and society, as well as stereotypical portrayals of women in the media and the continuing disparity in the presence of women in decision-making positions in media.

22. Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO.4, paragraph 19), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including the stereotypical cultural patterns and norms that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives;**

(b) **Increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men at all levels of society with a view to changing stereotypical attitudes and negative cultural norms about the responsibilities and roles of women and men in the family and society, in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention;**

(c) **Continue raising awareness on women's rights and gender equality among journalists and media workers, and integrate education on women's rights in professional training for media workers.**

Gender-based violence against women

23. The Committee notes with appreciation that new provisions were introduced to Act 103-13, against all form of violence against women, creating new offences relating to the violation of privacy and providing increased penalties if the violation was due to gender. It notes with interest that a draft criminal act strengthening legal protections for women and children, particularly against violence, is before parliament. The Committee also notes the State party's indication that marital rape is covered under article 486 of the Penal Code. However, the Committee expresses its concern over reports that:

(a) Women may be reticent to make a complaint of sexual harassment or other sexual violence out of fear of being charged with a violation of article 490 of the penal code which sanctions sexual relations outside of marriage;

(b) Article 489 of the Penal Code puts lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women at risk of penal sanctions, which can result in stigmatisation and instances of violence;

(c) Child and forced marriages continue to take place in the form of Al-Fatiha marriages;

(d) Domestic violence has increased since 2009 and there is insufficient due diligence given to ensuring privacy of victims and for providing an adequate number of shelters.

24. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and in line with target 5.2 of the Sustainable Developments Goals, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) **Take the necessary measures to repeal article 490 of the Penal Code, in particular to ensure that women victims of gender-based violence are no longer at risk of being charged under this article;**
- (b) **Take the necessary steps to repeal article 489 of the Penal Code;**
- (c) **Put in place policy measures to prohibit Al-Fatiha marriage of minors;**
- (d) **Strengthen support services for women victims of gender-based violence, including by ensuring sufficient availability and accessibility of shelters and psychological support for victims and survivors of violence, as well as setting up treatment centres for aggressors, allocating sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the effective functioning of these services, and ensure that the privacy of women victims of gender-based violence is respected at every stage of the process from the lodging of the complaint to the provision of support services;**
- (e) **Set up a system to allow civil society organisations to act as civil parties in cases of violence against women and girls.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

25. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts of the State party to raise awareness regarding combating trafficking, including through the dissemination to legal officials at prosecutors' offices of information on legal provisions for the protection of victims of human trafficking, awareness-raising campaigns and training programmes for judges and judicial staff and the police, as well as for staff of the General Directorate for National Security on identifying and assisting trafficking victims. It remains concerned however, that there is insufficient protection for trafficking victims, including the availability of specific shelters for victims of trafficking. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of information on identification and registration of migrant victims, specifically women and girls smuggled from the trafficking and exploitation of the Sub-Saharan region.

26. **In line with 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) **Ensure that there is awareness and knowledge to identify and register trafficking victims among migrant women and girls smuggled into the country from the Sub-Sahara region;**
- (b) **Ensure the provision of adequate protection and support to victims of trafficking, including shelters providing services specific to their needs, as well as medical treatment, psychosocial support, and legal assistance.**

Equal participation of women in political and public life

27. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to ensure equal political and public representation of women at national and local level, including through the adoption of legislative provisions establishing proportional lists and quotas for the representation of women in politics, the judiciary and public administration, the establishment of a system of incentives for political parties to add seats for their female candidates in legislative, regional and local elections and the provision of financial assistance and technical support to support gender diversity in public service. The Committee also welcomes the information that the number of women serving in diplomatic and consular missions as well as in international organisations has increased. However, the Committee notes with concern that despite these positive efforts, the representation of women in public office, particularly at communal and regional level, has not reached satisfactory levels. The Committee is further concerned at reports that the representation of women in senior posts in public administration remains low.

28. **Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, paragraph 25) and in line with its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all**

levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee urges the State party to

(a) Continue and strengthen its efforts to increase the political and judicial representation of women at all levels, particularly at communal, regional and international levels, including through the use of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention;

(b) Strengthen measures, including awareness raising measures, childcare services and parental leave provisions to ensure gender parity in appointed public positions, including in public administration, particularly at decision-making level.

Nationality

29. The Committee welcomes the withdrawal by the State party of its reservations with respect to article 9 paragraph 2 of the Convention. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) A bill amending and supplementing article 10 of the Nationality Act was introduced in December 2017 with the objective of allowing Moroccan women to confer Moroccan citizenship on their foreign spouse in the same way Moroccan men can do so for their foreign wives; however, to date, this bill has not been adopted;

(b) The State party has not acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

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

(a) Expedite the adoption of the 2017 bill amending and supplementing article 10 of the Nationality Act.

(b) Consider ratifying the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Education

31. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's indication that education for girls is prioritised in the State party's programmes and plans to reform the education system. The Committee welcomes the increase in enrolment rates of girls in primary and secondary education and in the fields of science, technology, technical and informatics. It also notes with interest the drafting of a road map to combat illiteracy among women (2014-2020). However, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Dropouts of girls, often because of pregnancy, persist;

(b) Illiteracy, which primarily affects women, continues to be a problem;

(c) Primary school textbooks have been revised to counter stereotypes and support gender equality; but such revisions need to be carried out on educational material at all levels.

32. **In line with its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education and target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure by 2030 that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Take targeted and comprehensive measures to prevent dropouts, especially of girls in rural areas, and to promote and facilitate the return of girls to school;

(b) Continue and strengthen its efforts, including through the work of the National Agency to combat illiteracy, to address illiteracy rates among women and girls, particularly in rural areas and among women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups;

(c) **Broaden its efforts to review school curricula and textbooks at all educational levels in order to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes, portray an equal balance of females and males and an even distribution of social roles, and promote a culture of gender equality.**

Employment and economic empowerment of women

33. The Committee notes with appreciation information provided by the State party that a financial package is offered to support the projects of associations working in the field of promotion of women's right to work. The Committee also takes note of the State party's indication that a strategic study is being prepared on women's economic empowerment to lay the ground work for the development of a national integrated economic empowerment programme for women by 2030. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned that:

(a) Progress in the field of education for women and girls has not translated into progress in the area of employment and the participation of women in economic activity remains low;

(b) Gender disparities persist in access to the labour market;

(c) Women in the formal and informal sector, in urban and rural areas alike have limited access to social protection in form of a work contract, medical insurance, or pension system.

34. **Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MAR/4, paragraph 29), the Committee draws attention to target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve by 2030 full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value, and recommends that the State party take measures to:**

(a) **Promote access of women to the formal sector after completion of their education, including by increasing the availability of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and introducing flexible working arrangements that would allow the reconciliation of family and professional life;**

(b) **Eliminate horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market and to promote access for women to the formal sector;**

(c) **Provide in its next report updated information on the outcome of the strategic study on women's economic empowerment to lay the ground work for the development of a national integrated economic empowerment programme for women by 2030;**

(d) **Take measures to prevent and monitor sexual harassment in the workplace, especially of young women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex women;**

(e) **Provide in its next report updated data on women's access to social security and information on the efficiency of Decree 2.18.686, Decree No. 2.20.659, and Decree 2.20.658.**

Health

35. The Committee welcomes the decrease in infant and maternal mortality rates between 2010 and 2017. It also notes with appreciation the increase in mobile medical units to serve populations in remote areas and the national campaigns to motivate pregnant women to use health services to monitor pregnancy and childbirth. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) Access to healthcare is largely determined by social and geographical origin;

(b) There is a lack of awareness and education of youth on sexual and reproductive health;

(c) Despite the amendment of article 453 of the Penal Code to allow abortion in specific cases, most abortions remain illegal which may push women and girls to continue to seek out clandestine abortions, putting their health and life at risk;

(d) The consent of the husband, parents or tutor is still required for abortion in cases where the woman suffers from mental health problems;

(e) Information on the number of clandestine abortions taking place in the State party is lacking.

36. Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, paragraph 31), and in light of its general recommendation 24, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Continue and further strengthen its efforts to ensure equitable and effective access to healthcare for all women and girls, including women and girls in rural areas and from disadvantaged groups;**

(b) **Take steps to ensure that sexual and reproductive health information is widely available to young people, including through adding comprehensive sexuality education to the school curricula;**

(c) **Consider amending article 453 of the Penal Code to decriminalise abortion when it is necessary to protect the woman's health as defined in accordance with the 1948 definition of the World Health Organization to cover physical, mental and social well-being;**

(d) **Put in place measures to ensure access of women and girls, including rural women and girls, to safe abortion and post abortion services without needing the consent of the husband or parents;**

(e) **Provide information, in its next periodic report, on the number of clandestine abortions taking place in the State party.**

Rural women and girls

37. The Committee welcomes initiatives put in place by the State party that improve the situation in rural areas and impact positively on women and girls in those areas, including the national programmes to improve access in rural areas to water and electricity and the expansion of the scope of social services of social welfare institutions, including through the provision of nutrition, shelter, support classes, summer camps and cultural and sports activities and psychological support services, to promote access of girls in rural areas to education. The Committee is concerned, nevertheless, at the high rate of illiteracy among women in rural areas despite the focus of the State party's illiteracy programmes on rural women, and at the lack of healthcare coverage for women and girls in rural areas.

38. In line with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, paragraph 33), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Evaluate the lacunae of its literacy programmes for rural women and revise the programmes accordingly;**

(b) **Continue and strengthen measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to ensure that rural women and girls enjoy their political, social, economic and cultural rights without any discrimination, especially with regard to access to education and health care facilities.**

Marriage and women's property rights

39. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party is considering repealing article 20 of the Family Code in order to eliminate exceptions to the minimum age of marriage and takes note of the State party's efforts to encourage the judiciary to make marriage under the age of 18 an exception rather than the rule and to raise awareness of the risks of early marriage. The Committee further notes the State party's indication that polygamous

marriages represent only a small percentage of the total number of marriages in the State party and that it is possible for a wife to indicate in the marriage contract that she does not accept a polygamous marriage. With regard to property rights, the Committee notes that the Plan of Action on Democracy and Human Rights envisages redrafting the section of the law concerning the division of property after divorce. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned, that:

(a) Under current legislation, there is no legal minimum age under which a marriage cannot be approved by judicial authority;

(b) Polygamy has not been legally prohibited, and that the principle of free and informed consent does not always apply to the termination of a marriage contract since legislation provides for the automatic commencement of divorce proceedings on the grounds of discord if a wife does not accept her husband's decision to marry another woman;

(c) Unmarried mothers, when asserting their rights and the rights of their children, are at risk of being prosecuted for having sexual relations outside of marriage;

(d) Certain discriminatory provisions remain in legislation, affecting women's equal rights in matters relating to property acquired during marriage, divorce, custody and child custody and inheritance.

40. **In light of its general recommendation 21, and recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MAR/CO/4, para. 39), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Repeal without delay article 20 of the Family Code so that exceptions to the minimum age of marriage are no longer allowed;**

(b) **Abolish polygamy and ensure that the principle of free and informed consent is applied also to the termination of marriage contracts;**

(c) **Recognise the right of unmarried mothers to assert their rights and the rights of their children without fear of any form of prosecution and stigmatisation;**

(d) **Enact legal provisions to ensure that, upon dissolution of marriage, women have equal rights to property acquired during marriage, in line with article 16 paragraph 1 (h) of the Convention;**

(e) **Amend without delay, and in consultation with civil society, particularly women's organizations, all remaining discriminatory provisions including provisions relating to divorce, custody, child custody and inheritance.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

41. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in the context of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Declaration and Platform in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Dissemination

42. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the de facto 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.**

Technical assistance

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

Follow-up to the concluding observations

44. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 24(e), 40(a), 40(c) and 40(d) above.

Preparation of the next report

45. The Committee requests the State party to submit its seventh periodic report, which is due in June 2026. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

46. 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).
