



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Gabon*

1. The Committee considered the seventh periodic report of Gabon (CEDAW/C/GAB/7) at its 1852nd and 1854th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1852 and 1854), held on 8 and 9 February 2022. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/GAB/Q/7 and the responses of Gabon are contained in CEDAW/C/GAB/RQ/7.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its seventh periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/GAB/CO/6/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party's high-level delegation which was headed by the Minister for Social Affairs and Women's Rights, Prisca Koho Nlend. The delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights, the Ministry of Justice and the Permanent Mission of Gabon to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2015 of the State party's sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/GAB/6) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of:

(a) Law No. 022/2021 of 19 November 2021, revising the Labour Code, approved by Parliament on 25 June 2021, affirming women's equal access to work, removing obstacles to gaining access to the labour market and penalizing sexual and psychological harassment;

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-first session (7–25 February 2022).



(b) Law No. 006/2021 of 6 September 2021, prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence against women, including marital rape and domestic violence, setting the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys at 18 years and punishing offenders and establishing the National Observatory for Women's Rights;

(c) Laws No. 042/2018 of 5 July 2019 and No. 11/2016 of 9 August 2016, amending the Penal Code to, inter alia, introduce harsher penalties for the offences of rape, incest, sexual and psychological harassment, and fetishist crimes;

(d) Law No. 1/2018 of 12 January 2018, revising the Constitution, article 2 (24), to promote equal access for women and men to elected office and decision-making positions in political and economic life;

(e) Law No. 028/2016 of 6 February 2017 establishing the Social Protection Code and providing for the social protection of workers in the informal economy, where women are overrepresented;

(f) Law No. 10/2016 of 16 September 2016, on combating harassment in the workplace;

(g) Law No. 09/2016 of 5 September 2016, setting 30 per cent quotas for women and young candidates for political posts and for women candidates for senior government positions;

(h) Law No. 002/2015 of 25 June 2015, amending the Civil Code, setting out non-discriminatory provisions on inheritance and providing protection for widows.

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, through, for example, the adoption and establishment of the following:

(a) National strategy to promote women's rights and reduce gender inequality (Gabon Egalité), adopted in 2020;

(b) National equal opportunity strategy (2020–2023), aimed at reducing social inequalities in all sectors, including inequalities between women and men;

(c) National strategy to combat gender-based violence, approved in December 2018.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the National Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary**

steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

General context

8. The Committee notes the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on women in the State party, given their overrepresentation in the informal economy, uneven access to social protection, absence of job security and increased burden of unpaid work in caring for their home and infected or quarantined family members. The Committee notes with concern the significant increase in cases of gender-based violence against women and girls, including physical and psychological violence, within the family home, exacerbated by prolonged periods of confinement and the inability to access emergency protection and assistance due to pandemic-related curfews.

9. **Recalling its guidance note on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and COVID-19, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen the solidarity fund (2020), created in response to the pandemic, by ensuring that it responds to the specific needs of women, particularly those who lost employment owing to the pandemic;**

(b) **Strengthen awareness-raising campaigns at the community level to dismantle prevailing norms that legitimize domestic violence and inform women and girls regarding available remedies and assistance;**

(c) **Support financially civil society organizations providing assistance and protection to victims of gender-based violence;**

(d) **Ensure that women across the country are able to benefit from the national programme on women's digital entrepreneurship (2021) to foster resilience in their income-generating activities, including by transitioning their operations online;**

(e) **Promote the effective participation of women in policymaking, planning and decision-making at all levels in all crisis responses and recovery efforts.**

Definition of discrimination against women and legislative framework

10. The Committee commends the State party for the legislative progress made, the consolidation of the legal framework for the promotion of women's rights and the establishment in 2019 of a steering committee to review discriminatory legislation. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned about the absence of inclusion in the civil law framework of a legal definition of discrimination against women, which explicitly prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination. It also remains concerned about the absence of a specific legal framework addressing the rights of women.

11. **Recalling paragraph 12 of its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/GAB/CO/6) and 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 recommends that the State party adopt, under the administrative and civil law framework, a definition of discrimination against women, in accordance with**

article 1 of the Convention, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in both the public and private spheres. It also recommends that the State party adopt specific and comprehensive legislation to combat all forms of discrimination against women in all areas covered by the Convention.

Access to justice

12. The Committee welcomes the establishment of mobile courts aimed at facilitating access to justice for women living in rural and remote areas. It is concerned, however, that women are unable to gain access to legal remedies for rights violations owing to their limited awareness of their rights and limited knowledge among judges and law enforcement officials regarding the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations. It notes with concern that fear of stigmatization for filing complaints, complex legal procedures, inaccessibility of legal aid and geographical inaccessibility of courts impede women's access to justice.

13. In line with its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Strengthen women's access to justice, including through complaint mechanisms, legal aid clinics, telephone hotlines and the *cellules d'écoute* of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights, and ensure that the legal aid system is adequately resourced and affordable and accessible to all women, especially disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women;**

(b) **Strengthen the justice system, including by increasing the human, technical and financial resources allocated to it, especially in rural areas, ensuring that it is gender-sensitive and provides procedural and age-appropriate accommodations;**

(c) **Raise awareness among women and girls, in particular rural women and women with disabilities, of their rights under the Convention and the remedies available to them for claiming those rights, in cooperation with civil society organizations;**

(d) **Ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are made an integral part of legal education and professional training for judges, prosecutors and lawyers, with a view to enabling them to apply or invoke the Convention directly and/or to interpret national law in line with the Convention.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee welcomes the progress made in the consolidation of the legal framework for the promotion of equality and congratulates the State party on the implementation of the Decade of Equality (2015–2025). The Committee is concerned, however, that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights, which acts as the national machinery for the advancement of women, lacks guaranteed sustainable funding. It notes with concern the lack of systematic gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting across all government departments and regrets the lack of data disaggregated by sex and other related variables to enable adequate monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the various strategies promoting women's rights. The Committee is also concerned that the enabling legislation of the National Commission on Human Rights is not compliant with international standards. It also regrets the lack of information on implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

15. Recalling the guidance provided in the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular regarding the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of national machineries, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Increase the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights and enhance the gender-specific expertise among its staff to enable it to coordinate efforts to promote gender equality, mainstream gender across government policies and introduce gender-responsive budgeting;

(b) Define indicators for all gender equality objectives, including those of the Gabon Egalit  strategy and its action plan; strengthen the national capacity to systematically collect data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, region and socioeconomic background, to evaluate progress towards realizing those objectives; and provide an assessment of progress made in its next periodic report. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from relevant United Nations agencies;

(c) Amend the legislation governing the National Commission on Human Rights to bring it into compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) (see General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, annex), in line with commitments made during the universal periodic review (see A/HRC/37/6, para. 119.15), and ensure that it has a strong mandate for the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights;

(d) Provide in the next periodic report information on the progress made in the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to implement Security Council resolution No. 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, in cooperation with representatives of women's organizations.

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

16. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the Penal Code to criminalize female genital mutilation, widowhood practices and levirate and sororate marriages. It is nevertheless concerned that discriminatory gender stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society persist and that the State party has not taken sufficient, sustained and systematic action to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes, which contribute to the persistence of gender-based violence and harmful practices directed against women, including sexual violence, child marriage and polygamy, and ritual crimes.

17. In line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Put into place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices against women, allocate sufficient resources to it and ensure monitoring and evaluation of its implementation;

(b) Collaborate with Parliament, civil society, the school system, health professionals, the media and traditional leaders, and women's civil society organizations in the implementation of the strategy and raise awareness among women and girls and men and boys regarding the negative impact of discriminatory gender stereotypes.

Gender-based violence against women

18. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Law No. 006/2021 of 6 September 2021, addressing all forms of gender-based violence against women, as well as the amendments to the Penal Code, broadening the definition of rape and criminalizing marital rape as well as sexual harassment. The Committee is concerned, however, about the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls, including physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. The Committee is also concerned about the low level of reporting of violence against women, owing to a culture of silence and impunity, and about the lack of data on the number of reported cases of gender-based violence against women, investigations, prosecutions and sentences imposed on perpetrators. The Committee notes with concern the limited victim protection and support services in the State party, including the lack of shelters and legal and psychosocial services.

19. **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) **Ensure that the prevention of gender-based sexual violence, ending impunity for perpetrators of such violence and provision of reparations to survivors be given priority in the national strategy to combat gender-based violence against women (2018) and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the strategy;**

(b) **Raise awareness among women of their rights under the recently adopted Law No. 006/2021 of 6 September 2021, addressing all forms of gender-based violence against women, and how to pursue remedies for violations of those rights;**

(c) **Address stigmatization of victims, which deters them from reporting cases of violence, through awareness-raising campaigns on the criminal nature and gravity of all forms of gender-based violence against women;**

(d) **Ensure that women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence against women have access to effective remedies and protection and support services, including through emergency protection orders for urgent protection of women at risk and victims, issuance of medical examination certificates free of charge, shelters, specialized assistance and rehabilitation;**

(e) **Provide financial support to non-governmental organizations providing victim support services and shelters;**

(f) **Ensure that complaints are effectively investigated and that punishment of perpetrators is commensurate with the gravity of the offence in order to address the culture of impunity.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

20. The Committee welcomes the bilateral agreements concluded with Togo and Benin, in 2018, to combat and prevent trafficking in persons. It notes with concern that:

(a) The Penal Code provision for punishing trafficking is not in line with international standards;

(b) The State party continues to be a country of transit and destination for trafficked women and girls, mainly for purposes of labour and sexual exploitation, including in mines, disproportionately affecting migrant women and girls;

(c) There is a lack of data on the extent of trafficking in persons and an absence of specific procedures in place for the early identification of victims and national referral mechanisms for protection and assistance;

(d) There is an absence of a national anti-trafficking plan and of a functioning interministerial committee to coordinate the national anti-trafficking response;

(e) There is an absence of information on exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution.

21. 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) Revise the Penal Code provisions prohibiting trafficking to comply with international standards;

(b) Provide training for first responders, including law enforcement officers, border control personnel and health-care providers, on the early identification of victims and their referral to appropriate services for their protection and rehabilitation;

(c) Expedite the adoption of a multisectoral national plan of action and establishment of a coordinating committee to implement the national response to combating trafficking, including the development of systemized early identification guidelines and a referral mechanism;

(d) Systematically investigate all allegations of exploitation, abuse and violence against migrant women and girl workers, both documented and undocumented, and ensure that abusive employers are held accountable and that their punishment is commensurate with the gravity of the offence;

(e) Undertake a comprehensive study with a view to collecting data on the extent and forms of trafficking in women and girls, disaggregated by age, disability, region and country of origin;

(f) Amend the Penal Code to decriminalize women exploited in prostitution;

(g) Allocate sufficient resources for exit programmes for women wishing to leave prostitution, including by providing alternative income-generating opportunities, and make efforts to reduce demand.

Equal participation in political and public life

22. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Law No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016, setting a quota of 30 per cent for women's representation as candidates in elections and in senior government positions, as well as article 2 (24) of the revised Constitution of 10 January 2018, promoting equal participation of women and men in political and public life. It also welcomes the increase in the number of women in decision-making positions, including that of Prime Minister, Minister of the Economy, Minister of Justice, President of the Senate and President of the Constitutional Court. The Committee is concerned, however, that women remain underrepresented in the National Assembly and the Senate and in decision-making positions in government and the private sector.

23. Recalling its general recommendations No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measure, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention:

(a) **Effectively implement the relevant provisions of the quota law, including by strengthening training and mentorship programmes to encourage women to participate in political and public life;**

(b) **Provide incentives for political parties to nominate an equal number of women and men as candidates for elections and increase fines for non-compliance with the minimum quota of 30 per cent;**

(c) **Provide for special recruitment programmes for women, including preferential recruitment of women, where needed, to the civil service, paying particular attention to women belonging to disadvantaged groups;**

(d) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for politicians, community and religious leaders, the media and the general public to enhance the understanding that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full implementation of the human rights of women and for achieving political stability and economic development in the State party.**

Nationality

24. The Committee is concerned that approximately 11 per cent of children born in Gabon are not registered at birth or thereafter, thereby increasing their risk of being denied access to basic services, such as health care and education. It is also concerned that, in practice, the issuance of a birth certificate is made conditional upon payment of the costs of childbirth, thereby presenting an obstacle for poor women.

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

(a) **Strengthen the citizenship and social protection programme (2020) to encourage the timely registration of births and issuance of birth certificates, prioritizing the registration of births of girls with disabilities;**

(b) **Expedite the planned opening of civil status offices in hospitals to facilitate birth registration within the deadlines set out in article 169 of the Civil Code;**

(c) **Raise awareness among both civil registry staff and the general public of article 169 of the Civil Code which provides that birth registration in the civil registry is free of charge in all circumstances;**

(d) **Ensure that all women receive national identity cards, prioritizing disadvantaged groups of women;**

(e) **Expedite the process of acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

Education

26. The Committee notes the adoption of the strategy to combat early pregnancies in schools by the Ministry of Education in 2018. It remains deeply concerned, however, about the high pregnancy rates among school-age girls and the resulting non-completion of secondary schooling. The Committee regrets the lack of recent data, disaggregated by age and other relevant factors, on the dropout rate among pregnant girls and their re-entry rate following childbirth. It is also concerned about the high levels of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, against girls in the school environment. The Committee notes the limited access to vocational and higher education for girls graduating from secondary schools.

27. **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 at all levels as a basis for their empowerment and:**

(a) **Ensure the effective retention and reintegration of pregnant girls and young mothers in the school system, including by providing out-of-school educational and parenting support for young mothers;**

(b) **Provide, in its next periodic report, data, disaggregated by age and other relevant factors, on school dropout rates among adolescent girls and young women owing to early pregnancy and their re-entry rates following childbirth;**

(c) **Strengthen the delivery of age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights in school curricula, including comprehensive sexuality education for adolescent girls and boys covering responsible sexual behaviour;**

(d) **Establish effective procedures to investigate cases of sexual abuse and harassment of girls in school environments, prosecute perpetrators, especially teachers and school administrators, and provide victims with medical care, psychosocial counselling and rehabilitation;**

(e) **Establish compulsory awareness-raising programmes for teachers and all school administration personnel on their criminal liability for any acts of rape and sexual harassment;**

(f) **Continue and enhance temporary special measures, including financial incentives and scholarships, to promote enrolment of women and girls in non-traditional fields of study, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology (ICT).**

Employment

28. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the revised Labour Code in 2021, affirming women's equal access to work, removing barriers to accessing the labour market and punishing sexual and psychological harassment. The Committee is concerned about the continued occupational segregation of women and men in the labour market and the fact that women are concentrated in low-paid jobs in the informal economy without labour and social protection.

29. **The Committee draws attention to its general recommendation No. 13 (1989) on equal remuneration for work of equal value and to target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase women's access to full-time employment in the formal sector, including by providing affordable public elder-care and childcare facilities to enable both caregivers and parents to reconcile work and family life;**

(b) **Facilitate access to the social security system for disadvantaged women, in particular those employed in the agricultural sector and domestic work;**

(c) **Implement the revised Labour Code to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;**

(d) **Implement provisions on sexual and psychological harassment and ensure that victims of such harassment in the workplace have access to effective, independent and confidential complaint procedures and that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished and victims are protected from retaliation;**

(e) **Provide information in its next periodic report on the numbers and outcomes of labour inspections in the State party, including in agriculture and private households where women and girls are employed as domestic workers;**

(f) **Ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization.**

Health

30. The Committee acknowledges the State party's efforts to enhance access to health care for women, including through the adoption of mandatory health insurance for low-income persons as well as the 2017 presidential measures to make childbirth, pre- and post-natal consultations free of charge. However, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) Availability and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health and family planning services for women and girls, especially rural women and girls, are inadequate;

(b) Maternal mortality rates, including among adolescent girls, are persistently high and basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care is inadequate;

(c) Prevalence of unsafe abortions remains high given that legal abortions may be carried out only before the tenth week and may be performed only by a doctor in a hospital;

(d) A disproportionately high number of women and girls in the State party are infected with HIV/AIDS and face stigmatization and social exclusion based on their HIV/AIDS status and the limited availability of antiretroviral treatment.

31. **In line with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase its health expenditure and improve coverage of and access to health services throughout its territory by allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the establishment of adequately equipped hospitals, in particular in rural and remote areas, ensuring, in particular, the provision of free pre- and postnatal care for all women and girls, without exceptions;**

(b) **Amend the relevant provisions of the Penal Code on abortion to remove the requirement for the procedure to be performed before the tenth week in a hospital by a doctor and to remove the criminal liability for women who attempt or procure an abortion;**

(c) **Ensure that women and girls have access to accurate information relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights and that all women, including rural women and women with disabilities, have access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and safe abortion and emergency post-abortion services;**

(d) **Effectively implement HIV/AIDS response strategies, especially preventive strategies, and continue to provide free antiretroviral treatment to all women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, including pregnant women, to prevent mother-to-child transmission and develop a strategy to combat the stigmatization and social exclusion of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.**

Economic and social benefits and economic empowerment of women

32. The Committee welcomes the initiatives of the State party to promote the advancement of women in its growth and poverty reduction strategies, including the

2015 human investment strategy and the 2018 Comprehensive National Programme on the Economic Empowerment of Women. It notes the efforts to increase women's access to social protection schemes. Nevertheless, the Committee is deeply concerned that women continue to have limited access to economic resources, face discrimination in access to financial services and are not involved in the elaboration and implementation of national development strategies. It regrets the lack of data on low-income households headed by women and the lack of information on the concrete impact of social programmes to improve the economic situation of women with low incomes.

33. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Address feminization of poverty and mainstream gender in the planned updates to the national strategy for gender equality and equity and in all relevant national and local development plans or poverty reduction strategies, ensuring that women, especially women from marginalized groups, and relevant women's organizations and networks are involved at every stage of their adoption and implementation;

(b) Accelerate efforts to register women in the universal health insurance scheme (CNAMGS) and the National Social Security Fund, prioritizing rural women, self-employed women and women heads of households, to ensure their access to social and economic benefits;

(c) Ensure the systematic participation of women in the development of strategies to facilitate women's access to financial credit, including access to loans with low interest rates and to entrepreneurship and independent business opportunities, applied without discrimination to migrant women;

(d) Increase the role and participation of women as a resource for a green economy at all levels, including by increasing knowledge and training opportunities;

(e) Ensure that unpaid work of women is recognized, reduced and redistributed, including through investment in infrastructure and social services, such as childcare facilities, and by promoting the participation of men in domestic and family responsibilities.

Rural women and climate change

34. The Committee notes the efforts of the State party to foster equal access to land under the national land allocation plan and the GRAINE programme. The Committee remains concerned, however, that:

(a) Agricultural projects do not address the needs of women, despite the fact that they are the main beneficiaries, given their high representation (80 per cent) in the agricultural workforce;

(b) Rural women lack funding for their agricultural activities, have limited access to agricultural credits and to modern farming techniques and face patriarchal attitudes which prevent them from owning land and participating in decision-making on matters of rural development and policy;

(c) Rural women experience the effects of climate change disproportionately owing to their reliance on agricultural outputs;

(d) Rural women have limited access to education and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, including affordable modern contraceptives, as well as to education, adequate water and sanitation, and experience isolation owing to poor road network and Internet connectivity.

35. In line with general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Integrate a gender perspective into agricultural policies, programmes and projects, including the national land allocation plan, the GRAINE programme and the national food security and nutritional investment programme, to effectively address the needs of rural women and ensure that they are meaningfully involved in the development and implementation of agricultural policies, including with regard to decisions on land use;

(b) Address traditional attitudes that impede rural women's equal access to land and establish a clear legislative framework to protect their rights to land-ownership;

(c) Strengthen the equal participation of rural women and girls in decision-making on disaster mitigation and climate change, in line with general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, including in the National Climate Council and the implementation of the national climate plan;

(d) Intensify efforts to ensure that rural women have effective access to health care, education, employment, housing, adequate water and sanitation and family planning services, including by identifying women as a priority group in the implementation of the National Health Development Plan (2017–2021);

(e) Accelerate the implementation of the Gabon digital sector plan to extend Internet availability to rural areas and encourage the use of new technologies by rural women.

Disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women

36. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the situation of disadvantaged groups of women in the State party, including poor women and single mothers, women with disabilities, and refugee, migrant and indigenous women. It is concerned about reports that refugee women have no health-care coverage. The Committee is also concerned about the high number of women detainees awaiting trial, in some cases, for many years, and reports of severe overcrowding in female prisons and the absence of separation of male and female detainees, as well as of women detainees awaiting trial and convicted women.

37. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Provide information, in its next periodic report, on the outcome of the planned survey to determine the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated against indigenous women;

(b) Raise awareness among health-care providers as well as refugee women and girls on their coverage by the CNAMGS health insurance scheme, including the costs related to pregnancy and free childbirth;

(c) Allocate specific and adequate resources to women with disabilities in the national gender equality and equity strategy and in the women's Decade of Equality;

(d) Guarantee access to justice for women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence, ensuring that such cases are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished;

(e) Provide effective protection to lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women from gender-based violence and discrimination and ensure their

access to justice through the appropriate investigation of their complaints, punishment of perpetrators and provision of compensation to survivors;

(f) Ensure that detained women are brought before a judge within 48 hours following their apprehension;

(g) Improve the conditions in detention facilities where women are deprived of their liberty and ensure the provision of adequate access to health care and personal hygiene items for women in detention, in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) (General Assembly resolution 65/229 of 21 December 2010, annex).

Marriage and family relations

38. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the Civil Code and Penal Code, aimed at ensuring the equality of spouses and eliminating discrimination against women, inter alia, with respect to joint administration of marital property, dissolution of marriage, inheritance rights and widowhood practices. It is concerned, however, about the implementation of these provisions in practice, including limited awareness of women and law enforcement actors regarding the legislative changes. It notes with concern:

(a) That, notwithstanding the provisions of Law No. 006/2021 on combating violence against women, setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men, child marriage remains legal under article 203 of Law No. 41/2018 of 11 June 2019 amending the Civil Code, and the practice remains prevalent in rural areas;

(b) That polygamy is permitted in certain circumstances under the Civil Code;

(c) That acts of adultery and abandonment of the marital domicile carry criminal law penalties, including imprisonment.

39. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen awareness-raising campaigns to disseminate the revised Civil Code, targeting, in particular, women from rural areas and indigenous women and girls, as well as traditional chiefs and parents;**

(b) **Eliminate customary practices that impede women's rights to inheritance and landownership and intensify efforts to enable women and girls to exercise their right to inheritance on an equal basis with men and boys;**

(c) **Revise Civil Code provisions on the minimum age of marriage to ensure that it is set at 18 years for both women and men;**

(d) **Further sensitize traditional and religious leaders and parents on the minimum age of marriage and the importance of eliminating harmful practices, such as child marriage, polygamy and sororate and levirate marriage, in close collaboration with women's organizations and relevant United Nations agencies;**

(e) **Prosecute and adequately punish persons who are engaged in facilitating child marriages and adults married to children;**

(f) **Amend the Civil Code to prohibit polygamy and ensure the protection of the economic rights of women in existing polygamous marriages;**

(g) **Review the Penal Code to decriminalize adultery and abandonment of the marital domicile;**

(h) **Strengthen and consolidate the various family law provisions into one unified, comprehensive family code to ensure equality of women and men in matters of marriage, family relations, divorce, inheritance and child custody.**

Data collection and analysis

40. The Committee is concerned about the general lack of statistical data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, geographical location and socioeconomic background, which are necessary to accurately assess the situation of women, determine the magnitude and nature of discrimination, develop informed and targeted policies and systematically monitor and evaluate progress achieved towards the realization of substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, migration status, disability and other relevant factors, and use measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and progress towards the realization by women of substantive equality in all areas covered by the Convention and the gender-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

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

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

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

43. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the implementation of 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

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

Technical assistance

45. **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.**

Ratification of other treaties

46. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments¹ would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

47. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11, 31 (a), 31 (b) and 39 (f) above.**

Preparation of the next report

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

49. **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).**

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.