



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 combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ghana*

1. The Committee considered the combined 6th and 7th periodic reports of Ghana (CEDAW/C/GHA/6-7) at its 1253rd and 1254th meetings, on 24 October 2014 (see CEDAW/C/SR. 1253 and 1254). The Committee's list of issues and questions are contained in CEDAW/C/GHA/Q/6-7 and the responses of Ghana are contained in CEDAW/C/GHA/Q/6-7/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates that the State party submitted its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports, which generally followed the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports, although they lacked references to the Committee's general recommendations and to some specific sex disaggregated data. The Committee also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by its pre-sessional working group. It welcomes the oral presentation of 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 for its high-level delegation, headed by Her Excellency Ms. Nana Oye Lithur, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection. The delegation also included three Members of Parliament, a Deputy Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and officials from government agencies responsible for health, food, agriculture, education, foreign affairs, local government as well as representatives from civil society and the media.

B. Positive Aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2006 of the State party's combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/GHA/3-5) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of:

- a) The Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694);
- b) The Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715);

* Adopted by the Committee at its fifty-ninth session (20 October – 7 November 2014).

- c) The Criminal Offences (Amendments) Act, 2007, (Act 741), which widens the scope of persons responsible for the practice of FGM and increases sanctions for this offence;
 - d) The deletion of section 42 (g) of the Criminal Offences Act, 1960, (Act 29) which had permitted non-consensual sex within marriage;
 - e) The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 (Act 732);
 - f) The Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846).
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 equality of women and men, including the following:
- a) The "re-engineering" of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs;
 - b) The National Policy and Plan of Action to cover the period 2009 to 2019 on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, 2007.
6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified the following international and regional instruments:
- a) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, in 2012;
 - b) The Optional Protocol to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 2011; and
 - c) The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, in 2007.

C. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.**

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

8. The Committee welcomes the use of the Convention by the State party in the design and implementation of policies and guidelines. However, it is concerned at the general lack of awareness of the Convention and its Optional Protocol at all levels of the Government and that women themselves are not aware of their rights under the Convention and the complaints procedure under the Optional Protocol.

9. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Take the necessary steps to ensure the adequate dissemination and understanding of the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations among all Government ministries, parliamentarians, the judiciary, law enforcement officers, and community leaders, and use them as the basis for measures aiming at the elimination of discrimination against women;**

(b) Take all appropriate measures to enhance women's awareness of their rights and the means to enforce them, including through providing women with information on the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Legislative framework and harmonization of laws

10. The Committee notes the current process aimed at reviewing the Constitution and the harmonization of laws of the State party. However, it is concerned about the delay in completing these legislative reforms and in adopting regulations necessary for the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, the Human Trafficking Act and the Disability Act.

11. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Finalizes, within a clear time frame, the ongoing Constitutional review with a view to bringing its legislation in conformity with the Convention and ensuring that all discriminatory provisions are repealed;

(b) Honours its commitment to swiftly enact the regulations required for the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, 2007, the Human Trafficking Act, 2005, and the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006.

Definition of discrimination against women

12. The Committee notes that article 17 (3) of the Constitution was not amended to bring the definition of discrimination in conformity with the definition in article 1 of the Convention despite the recommendations to that effect by the Constitutional Review Commission. The Committee however welcomes the information provided by the State party that the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill contains a definition of discrimination in conformity with the definition in article 1 of the Convention.

13. The Committee requests the State party to expeditiously adopt its Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill and ensure that it includes a definition of discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres.

Access to Justice

14. The Committee notes the measures taken with a view to increasing women's access to justice, including the establishment of two Gender-based and Sexual Offences Courts as well as Family and Juvenile Courts in the District Courts. It also notes the information provided that the legal aid scheme has been given constitutional rank resulting in increased resources. The Committee nonetheless remains concerned at:

(a) The fact admitted by the State party that judicial processes remain cumbersome and that most women living in poverty have limited or no access to the formal channels for obtaining access to justice;

(b) The continued lack of legal literacy, especially among rural women, unaffordable legal costs, and the stigmatization of women who bring cases to court; and

(c) The increased use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms to settle cases in the Family Courts, which also have jurisdiction to deal with criminal cases and civil protection orders under the Domestic Violence Act.

15. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Conduct awareness-raising programmes to increase women's legal literacy, with specific attention to rural and poor women, and eliminate the stigmatization of women who claim their rights;

(b) Enhance its efforts to ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are widely known and used by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Government and that they are made an integral part of the capacity-building programmes for judges, lawyers and prosecutors;

(c) Undertake targeted awareness-raising to ensure that customary court officials are familiar with the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations;

(d) Ensure that women have access to affordable legal assistance throughout the State party;

(e) Raise awareness among women about criminal law provisions on sexual violence and encourage them to opt for criminal complaints rather than mediation whenever justified; monitor the use of mediation to ensure that it is implemented in a way that respects women's rights and does not lead to impunity for perpetrators;

(f) Provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence, by strengthening the capacity of shelters and crisis centres, especially in rural and remote areas, working towards the decentralisation of Domestic Violence and Victim Support units, and strengthening cooperation with NGOs providing shelter and rehabilitation to victims.

National machinery for the advancement of women

16. The Committee takes note of the fact that, in order to facilitate sustainable national development, the mandate of the newly restructured Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has been expanded to include equality of women and men, the promotion of the welfare and protection of children, and the empowerment of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, including older and disabled women. However, the Committee is concerned that the expansion of the mandate may dilute the focus on women's rights and that it has not been matched with a corresponding increase in budget allocations, remaining at less than one per cent of the national budget.

17. **In accordance with its General Recommendation No. 6 (1988) on effective national machinery and publicity and the guidance provided in the Beijing Platform for Action on the necessary conditions for the effective functioning of national mechanisms, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Ensure that a sharp focus on women's rights is maintained in the mandate of the newly restructured entity;

(b) Significantly increase the financial resources of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and allocate a higher percentage of the national budget to gender equality issues;

(c) Provide the national machinery for the advancement of women with the necessary human and technical resources for its effective functioning.

18. The Committee notes that the State party is currently transitioning to a lower middle income country, although it still relies on foreign aid for numerous policies and programmes, including those aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women and the advancement of women's rights. The Committee is concerned that this dependency may endanger the sustainability of these measures due to the gradual pulling out of external aid on which a number of these programmes seem to rely.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to ensure the sustainability of policies, programmes and activities aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women and the advancement of women's rights despite the**

gradual decrease in external funding through an increased mobilization of domestic resources. It further recommends that the State party ensure that equality of women and men remains one of the central pillars of its development and strategic plans.

Temporary special measures

20. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party in the area of education as well as the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill establishing a 40-per-cent quota for the representation of women in Parliament and in the public administration. However, it is concerned that no other temporary special measures have been introduced or are being planned as part of a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged.

21. The Committee encourages the State party to use temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention, as interpreted in the Committee's General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged. To that end, it recommends that the State party:

(a) Expedite the enactment of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill;

(b) Implement temporary special measures in various forms, such as outreach and support programmes, quotas and other proactive and results-oriented measures aimed at achieving substantive equality of women with men in all areas and encourage their use both in the public and private spheres.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

22. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party to eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices, e.g. the criminalisation of female genital mutilation and efforts to secure the release of women and girls in servitude in trokosi shrines. However, the Committee is deeply concerned at the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions, as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which contribute to the persistence of violence against women and harmful practices. It is equally concerned at the harmful, albeit decreasing, practice of enslaving young girls in trokosi shrines.

23. The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Put in place, without delay and within a clear time frame, a comprehensive strategy, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention, to eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices that discriminate against women, such as polygamy, forced and early marriage, the stigmatization of widows and widowhood rites, female genital mutilation, denial of inheritance rights to women, enslavement of young girls in trokosi shrines and violence against girls and older women believed to be witches;

(b) Strengthen measures aimed at securing the release and preventing further enslavement of young girls in trokosi shrines;

(c) Ensure the full implementation of the laws criminalising female genital mutilation and other harmful practices including by bringing perpetrators to justice.

24. The Committee is concerned by the persisting phenomenon of women being accused of witchcraft, especially in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions of the country. The Committee indeed notes the high number of cases of violence against girls and older women alleged to be witches causing several of them to seek refuge in so-called witch

camps often under difficult living conditions including lack of access to adequate housing, sufficient food and water and sanitation.

25. **The Committee calls on the State party to ensure the swift closure of all remaining “witch camps” and that alleged witches are provided with adequate rehabilitation and safe reinsertion into their communities or with alternative housing and livelihood options. Concrete steps should also be taken to protect the rights of all girls who have been growing up in these camps including through ensuring that they are provided with rehabilitation, safely reintegrated into their families and communities and given access to quality education and vocational training.**

Violence against women

26. The Committee notes the State party’s efforts to combat violence against women, in particular the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) and the National Policy and Plan of Action on Domestic Violence (2009-2019). It also notes the repeal of section 42(g) of the Criminal Offences Act, 1960, Act 29 which failed to criminalize non-consensual sex within marriage. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned about:

(a) The delays in adopting the Legislative Instrument required to fully implement the Domestic Violence Act as well as the insufficient resources allocated to implement the National Policy;

(b) The persistence of violence against women, including rape, sexual harassment in school, in the workplace and in the public sphere, early and forced marriages, domestic violence and female genital mutilation;

(c) The remaining obstacles faced by women in bringing cases of sexual violence to court owing to cultural taboos, the low number of investigations and convictions, and the increased use of mediation in cases of domestic violence; and

(d) The absence of State-run operational shelters and the heavy reliance on NGO-run shelters.

27. **The Committee calls on the State party to:**

(a) **Ensure the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (2007), including by expeditiously adopting enabling legislation and increase the human and financial resources for the implementation of the National Policy;**

(b) **Intensify efforts to prevent and systematically punish all forms of violence against women and girls by ensuring that complaints are fully and effectively investigated and that perpetrators are brought to justice;**

(c) **Provide systematic and mandatory capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and health-care providers, to ensure that victims of violence are dealt with in a gender-sensitive manner;**

(d) **Ensure that women victims of domestic violence have full access to protection orders and legal remedies rather than mediation;**

(e) **Strengthen victim assistance and rehabilitation by establishing a comprehensive care system for women victims of violence, including free legal aid, medical and psychological support, counselling and rehabilitation services, throughout the territory of the State party; and**

(f) **Ensure that a sufficient number of adequately equipped shelters are available to women victims of violence in each district, staffed by trained personnel.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

28. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to prevent trafficking in women and girls and protect and rehabilitate victims, including the creation of a trafficking database and collaboration with local authorities. However, it notes with concern that the State party remains a source, transit and destination country for women and children trafficked mainly for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. The Committee is also concerned about the reported high incidence of internal trafficking of women and girls from rural areas. It is particularly concerned about the limited number of convictions under the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), partly due to the low level of reporting and inadequate identification of victims of trafficking. While noting the State party's efforts to ensure the protection of women in prostitution, the Committee is concerned that women in prostitution are disproportionately affected by the criminalization of prostitution in comparison to their clients. The Committee is further concerned at the absence of information on the impact of existing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for women wishing to leave prostitution.

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

(a) Ensure the effective implementation of the Human Trafficking Act, 2005, including through the swift adoption of enabling legislation;

(b) Carry out a study to investigate the scope, extent and causes of forced prostitution and trafficking in human beings, particularly in women and girls;

(c) Address the root causes of trafficking by increasing prevention efforts through poverty reduction strategies;

(d) Take effective measures to provide assistance and support to women and girls victims of trafficking, through for instance increasing the number of available shelters including with support from civil society;

(e) Ensure the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of human trafficking;

(f) Increase international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking, through information exchange, and harmonize legal procedures aimed at the prosecution and punishment of traffickers;

(g) Address the root causes of prostitution; provide women wishing to leave prostitution with alternative income opportunities, and intensify efforts to provide access to assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for women and girls in prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

30. The Committee notes that the Affirmative Action Policy Guideline formulated in 1998 set a target of 40 percent representation of women at all levels of the government. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to ensure the participation of Queen-mothers in Traditional Councils and Houses of Chiefs and the increasing participation of women within the two major political parties. The Committee is nevertheless concerned at the delay in adopting the Affirmative Action Bill and that women are still under-represented in decision making positions. It also notes the lack of targeted measures to address the underlying causes, including prevailing social and cultural attitudes and limited access by women to campaign funding. In this regard, the Committee also regrets that the Women in Local Government Fund established in 2006 has not become operational.

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

(a) **Promote women's equal representation in political and public life at the national, regional and district levels, including in the government and in decision-making positions, parliament, the judiciary and the civil service;**

(b) **Adopt temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and with the Committee's General Recommendation No. 25, such as a law establishing statutory quotas to promote women's equal participation in political and public life;**

(c) **Expediently adopt the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill establishing a quota of 40 per cent for women's representation in elected and appointed political positions, and at all levels of the judiciary;**

(d) **Pending the adoption of the Affirmative Action Bill, ensure that the 40 per cent quota in the Affirmative Action Policy Guideline is applied;**

(e) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for the general public, and in particular for rural women, about the importance of women's effective political participation, and develop targeted training and mentoring programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for present and potential women candidates and women holding public office;**

(f) **Adequately finance the Women in Local Government Fund to financially support women standing for election, including in the upcoming district level elections.**

Education

32. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party to promote girls' education at all levels and that the budget for education represents an important percentage (30%) of the national budget. It also notes with appreciation the launch by the University of Ghana of a sexual harassment policy in March 2011 and the new policy to integrate girls and boys with disabilities into the regular school system. However, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The continued low enrolment and completion rates of girls, at all levels of education, and the regional disparities in access to quality education owing to economic and cultural barriers;

(b) The high dropout rate among girls, owing, inter alia, to child marriage and the high number of teenage pregnancies;

(c) Urban/rural disparities with regard to the number of girls who are able to transition from junior high to senior high school due to the lower quality of education in rural and deprived areas;

(d) The persistence of sexual abuse and harassment of girls in schools and the negative impact of harmful practices, such as early and forced marriage, on girls' education, especially in rural areas; and

(e) The lack of education facilities and of qualified teaching professionals, especially in rural areas, and the trend towards privatisation of education and the priority given to schooling of boys over girls, especially in rural areas.

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

(a) **Ensure that girls and young women have de facto equal access to all levels of education, including by eliminating the direct and indirect costs of schooling, providing incentives for parents to send their daughters to school and building appropriate sanitary facilities in schools;**

(b) Set up adequate monitoring mechanisms to ensure that girls in rural areas and in public schools have equal access to quality education, and intensify efforts to reduce disparities in access to education and in terms of quality of education between urban and rural areas as well as public and private schools;

(c) Improve the educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas, as well as the number of teachers and the quality of teacher training, in particular in rural schools;

(d) Ensure that sexual abuse and harassment in school are adequately addressed and punished;

(e) Integrate age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into primary and secondary school curricula, including comprehensive sex education for adolescent girls and boys covering responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Employment

34. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to improve women's employment in such sectors as the oil industry and the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. It also notes that, according to the State party, the definition of sexual harassment included in the Labour Act, 2003, Act 651 must be expanded to address hostile environment situations. However, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The absence of information on the extent of the gender wage gap and on how the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is being implemented as well as the low number of women employed in the public sector and lack of information on women's employment in the private sector;

(b) The concentration of women in the informal sector, especially in rural areas, with limited basic safety services, social protection coverage or other benefits;

(c) The absence of legislation specifically protecting domestic workers.

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

(a) Provide sex-disaggregated data on women's position in the labour market and reduce and close the gender wage gap, including by addressing the occupational sex-segregation and enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

(b) Provide a regulatory framework for the informal sector, with a view to providing women with access to social security and other benefits as well as with basic safety services in different markets, as foreseen by the State party;

(c) Ensure that the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651), is amended with a view to extending the definition of sexual harassment to explicitly cover sexual harassment by means of creating a hostile environment.

(d) Consider ratifying International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 (2011) concerning decent work for domestic workers.

Health

36. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party as a result of the Health Sector Gender Policy of 2009 as well as the revised National HIV and AIDS, STI Policy published in February 2013. It also notes with appreciation the adoption of the Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846) as well as projects aimed at promoting the National Health Insurance Scheme. The Committee nonetheless remains concerned about:

(a) The maternal mortality ratios which have remained high, due in part to teenage pregnancies and lack of access to health-care services, including essential obstetric care, particularly in rural areas;

(b) The lack of comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including on responsible sexual behaviour, and of family planning services, and the disproportionate level of unmet contraception needs among poor women and women living in rural areas;

(c) Regional and socioeconomic disparities in women's and girl's access to sexual and reproductive health services, including skilled birth attendance and adequate antenatal and postnatal care;

(d) The general lack of awareness about the conditions under which abortion is legally available and the stigma attached to it, resulting in numerous women resorting to unsafe abortion; and

(e) The lack of information on the mental health status of women in the State party and on the implementation of the Mental Health Act.

37. In line with its General Recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee calls upon the State party to:

(a) Increase access for women and girls, in particular rural women, to basic health-care services, by increasing the number of health-care facilities and of trained health-care providers;

(b) Intensify education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, through widespread dissemination of information about available contraceptive methods and family planning in order to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and teenage pregnancies;

(c) Adopt strategies to eliminate abortion-related stigma, raise awareness among women and girls about the conditions under which abortion is legally available, and ensure that safe abortion is affordable for all women under such conditions;

(d) Collect disaggregated data on the situation of women's mental health, and include in its next periodic report information on the progress made in implementing the Mental Health Act;

(e) Ensure that the National Health Insurance Scheme is fully operationalised and effectively implemented to be able to care for the health needs of poor women, and by including obstetric emergencies in the list of services offered.

Rural women

38. The Committee remains concerned about the widespread poverty and illiteracy among rural women and the lack of sufficient targeted strategies and measures in place to address discrimination against rural women in access to justice, education, health and housing, economic opportunities and social benefits, adequate water and sanitation, as well as about their exclusion from decision-making processes. The Committee is also concerned about the prevalence of harmful practices such as early marriages in rural areas and about the persistence of traditional customs limiting women's access to inheritance and land.

39. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that rural women have access to basic services and infrastructure, including health services and education, as well as economic

opportunities, on an equal basis with men and with their urban counterparts, including through the adoption of temporary special measures;

(b) Ensure that obstacles to women's land ownership are removed, and that domestic courts, including customary courts, enforce women's land and property rights, in line with the provisions of the Convention;

(c) Eliminate harmful practices and discrimination against rural women and address customs and traditions that perpetuate them;

(d) Ensure that all discriminatory customary laws are repealed or amended and brought into full compliance with the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations.

Marriage and family relations

40. The Committee notes the current process of harmonization of marriage laws and that the Intestate Succession Bill 2009 will be adopted by the end of 2014. However, it is concerned about the delays in adopting the Property Rights of Spouses Bill 2009 due to disagreement as to whether de facto unions (or cohabitees) should be covered by the Bill. The Committee is also concerned about the increase in polygamous marriages and at the lack of registration of customary marriages, as well as by the diverging levels of protection against discrimination afforded to women in view of the many regulations applying to marriage and family relations depending on one's personal status. The Committee is further concerned that the National House of Chiefs has yet to take action to codify customary laws and eliminate customs and usages that are "outmoded and socially harmful" as mandated by article 272 b) and c) of the Constitution. Lastly, the Committee is concerned at the lack of progress in curbing the high prevalence of force, early, and child marriage.

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

(a) Accelerate and expand its efforts towards the harmonization of marriage and family laws in line with articles 2 and 16 of the Convention;

(b) Expeditiously adopt the Property of Spouses Bill, 2009, in its current version so that equal distribution of property rights covers women in the three types of marriage as well as women in de facto unions;

(c) Expeditiously adopt the Intestate Succession Bill, 2009, and ensure its effective implementation throughout the State party;

(d) Ensure the wide dissemination of the Supreme Court decision in *Mensah vs. Mensah*, in particular in the district courts and ensure that women married under religious or customary law who apply for divorce to a court will receive the better protection arising from the Matrimonial Causes Act for all aspects of the divorce consequences;

(e) Sensitize traditional leaders on the importance of ensuring that women seeking divorce outside of the court system may benefit from property sharing and further rights;

(f) Take systematic, proactive measures to discourage polygamy with a view to prohibiting, it in accordance with the Joint General Recommendation/General Comment No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014);

(g) Ensure that all Muslim and customary marriages are systematically registered;

(h) Provide assistance to the National House of Chiefs and ensure that it complies with its constitutional mandate to undertake “the progressive study, interpretation and codification of customary law with a view to evolving, in appropriate cases, a unified system of rules of customary law” and “an evaluation of traditional customs and usages with a view to eliminating those customs and usages that are outmoded and socially harmful” (article 272 b) and c) of the Constitution);

(i) Ensure maximum visibility to the national dialogue involving traditional leaders, National House of Chiefs, Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs and UNICEF to sensitize the population on the high risks for girls linked to early and forced marriage (for their life, health, education and future economic chances) in addition to representing a violation of the CEDAW and CRC Conventions.

Data collection and analysis

42. The Committee notes with concern the general lack of updated sex-disaggregated data. It recalls that data disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location and socioeconomic background are necessary for an accurate assessment of the situation of all women, to determine whether they suffer from discrimination, for the development of informed and targeted policymaking and for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved towards the realization of women’s substantive equality in all areas covered by the Convention.

43. The Committee calls upon the State party to develop a gender indicator system to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming gender equality and enhancing women’s enjoyment of their human rights. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party’s attention to the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 9 on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to enhance its collaboration with women’s associations that could assist in securing the collection of accurate data.

Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

44. The Committee encourages the State party to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

45. The Committee calls upon the State party to utilize the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.

Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development framework

46. The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, into all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and into the post-2015 development framework.

Dissemination

47. The Committee recalls the obligation of the State party to systematically and continuously implement the provisions of the Convention. It urges the State party to give priority attention to the implementation of the present concluding observations and recommendations between now and the submission of the next periodic report. The Committee therefore requests the timely dissemination of the concluding observations, in the official language(s) of the State party, to the relevant state institutions at all levels (national, regional, local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, the Parliament and to the judiciary, to enable their full implementation. It

encourages the State party to collaborate with all stakeholders concerned, such as employers' associations, trade unions, human rights and women's organisations, universities and research institutions, media, etc. It further recommends that its concluding observations be disseminated in an appropriate form at the local community level, to enable their implementation. In addition, the Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate the CEDAW Convention, its Optional Protocol and jurisprudence, and the Committee's General Recommendations to all stakeholders.

Technical Assistance

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

Ratification of other treaties

49. 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 consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which it has signed but not ratified yet.

Follow-up to concluding observations

50. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 25 and 27 a), b) and c) above.

Preparation of the next report

51. The Committee invites the State party to submit its eighth periodic report in November 2018.

52. 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/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1).

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.