



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Ninth periodic report submitted by the Bolivarian Republic
of Venezuela under article 18 of the Convention, due
in 2021*****

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present report are available on the Committee's web page.



I. Introduction

1. This is the ninth periodic report submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in accordance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
2. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (CEDAW/C/VEN/7-8) at its fifty-ninth session and specifically at its 1247th and 1248th meetings, held on 21 October 2014, and adopted its concluding observations (CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/7-8) on 14 November 2014.
3. In November 2017, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela submitted detailed information on its compliance with the recommendations made in paragraph 19 (a), (b) and (d) and paragraph 31 (a), (c) and (d) of the concluding observations (CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/7-8/Add.1).
4. The report covers the period from 2014 to 2020, with special attention paid to the issues flagged by the Committee in its concluding observations. The report therefore includes responses to the Committee's recommendations. It also includes information on some events that occurred after 2020.
5. The report was drafted in line with the harmonized guidelines on reporting (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6).
6. Preparations for the report included a referendum held in September and October 2020. The method chosen was to use social networks and the Internet and involved 11,962 people: 10,933 women (91.4 per cent) and 1,029 men (8.5 per cent). Another referendum involved the five national, public, state and municipal branches and 25 focus groups, with the participation of 356 spokeswomen representing various sectors of Venezuelan civil society from the country's 24 states, over 75 organizations and six universities. The respondents included female academics and scientists, disabled women or women caring for people with disabilities, rural women, female farm workers and workers in communities, women's and feminist movements, women from organizations concerned with sexual diversity, young people (18 to 30 years old), human rights organizations, indigenous women, women of African descent, women deprived of their liberty, older women, women workers and women producers.
7. The main concerns voiced in the referendum by citizens and nongovernmental organizations were: gender-based violence, effects of unilateral coercive measures on the human rights of women, gender-oriented education at all levels and improvement of gender-based national statistics.

II. Context

8. During the period covered by the report, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was subjected to numerous forms of aggression by the United States Government, which adversely affected the enjoyment of human rights by the Venezuelan population, including the rights recognized in the Convention¹

¹ Preliminary findings of the visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights of unilateral coercive measures, 12 February 2021: *"The Special Rapporteur concludes that sanctions imposed against Venezuela, its citizens and companies affect people in Venezuela and beyond its territory in both the public and private sectors, third-country nationals and employees of third-country companies affected by secondary sanctions or the fear of them; donors and international humanitarian NGOs, beneficiaries of assistance from international organizations traditionally financed by Venezuela; while low-income people, women, children and people with special needs or chronic or severe diseases are affected most with regard to the whole scope of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development."*

9. The types of aggression against Venezuela include the adoption of a series of unilateral coercive measures² whose impact has been documented by the Human Rights Council,³ by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights of unilateral coercive measures,⁴ by the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order⁵ and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁶

10. This aggression has affected the State's ability to obtain financial resources and goods and services needed to meet and fully cover the principal needs of its inhabitants, as well as its ability to ensure the proper functioning of the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the rights recognized in the Convention.⁷

11. As a result of this aggression, national income has declined by 99 per cent. In addition, in May 2019, US\$ 5,470,030,645.29 belonging to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were being illegally withheld in the international financial system. And the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been robbed of its assets located abroad worth over US\$ 30 billion.

12. In addition to all these external aggressive actions with serious impacts on the human rights of the population and especially of women and girls, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has faced a series of domestic challenges created by a violent opposition group that decided in recent years to endorse a series of insurrectionist agendas undermining the constitutional order.

13. In this unsettled situation, with major impacts on the quality of life of the population, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has made huge efforts to eradicate various types of discrimination against women, with the goal of protecting their fundamental freedoms and rights, which have been undermined by the various negative effects suffered by women and girls as a result of the detrimental unilateral coercive measures profoundly affecting human rights.

² The unilateral coercive measures adopted by the Government of the United States against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela include: Executive Order 13692 declaring that Venezuela constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States; Executive Order 13808 prohibiting the provision of financing for and other dealings with the firm Petróleos de Venezuela and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Executive Order 13827 prohibiting the use of the Venezuelan cryptocurrency Petro; Executive Order 13835 prohibiting transactions related to the financing and purchase of any debt of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Executive Order 13850 prohibiting participation in the gold sector or in any other sector of the Venezuelan economy; and Executive Order 13884 imposing additional sanctions on persons supplying goods or services to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

³ Resolution [A/HRC/RES/42/4](#) of 3 October 2019.

⁴ Report [A/HRC/42/46](#) of 5 July 2019, submitted to the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council, para. 6, and section C paras. 16-35.

⁵ Report [A/HRC//39/47/Add.1](#) of 3 August 2018 on the visit to Venezuela submitted to the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council.

⁶ Oral update by the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Venezuela to the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council, on 9 September 2019 “... on 8 August last year, I expressed my concern regarding the potentially severe impact on human rights of the new series of sanctions imposed by the Government of the United States of America.”

⁷ Preliminary findings of the visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, dated 12 February 2021: “*The Special Rapporteur notes with concern that sectoral sanctions on the oil, gold and mining industries, the economic blockade of Venezuela and the freezing of Central Bank assets have exacerbated pre-existing economic and humanitarian situations by preventing the earning of revenues and the use of resources to develop and maintain infrastructure and for social support programs, which has a devastating effect on the whole population of Venezuela, especially those in extreme poverty, women children, medical workers, people with disabilities or life-threatening or chronic diseases and the indigenous population.*”

14. According to the 2019 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Venezuela had a Gender Development Index of 1.013 and was included in the high human development category of the Human Development Index as regards equality between women and men.

III. Part I of the Convention

A. Legislative framework

15. In 2014, the National Assembly approved the revision of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence⁸, adding femicide and incitement to suicide as new crimes and listing a total of 21 forms of violence against women (articles 14, 15, 57, 58 and 59). A provision was also added to stipulate that any medical report from a public or private facility has the same evidential value as a forensic examination (article 35).

16. In 2018, the National Assembly⁹ promulgated the Decree for the Promotion and Protection of Childbirth and Humanized Birth¹⁰ with the aim of protecting and guaranteeing women's human right to humanized pregnancy and childbirth, as well as creating a legal framework designed to reduce maternal mortality. This Decree punishes obstetric violence in accordance with the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence and enumerates a series of women's rights during pregnancy, labour, childbirth and the puerperium.

17. The Supreme Court, as the country's highest legal body, has succeeded through its binding decisions in promoting action for the effective defence of women's human rights. During the period from 2014 to 2020, this included:

(a) Ruling No. 359 of 6 May 2014: the Supreme Court's Constitutional Division ordered the newspaper *Meridiano* to remove any images with explicit or implicit sexual allusions or content from advertising in printed media openly available to children and adolescents that advertise sexual stimulants promoting services commercially linked to the exploitation of sex or prostitution. This ruling is applicable to all printed media.

(b) Ruling No. 738 of 11 August 2016: the Constitutional Division repealed articles 394 and 395 of the Penal Code concerning adultery, because it considered that the wording discriminated against women and undermined their human dignity, being contrary to the values and principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity embodied in articles 2, 3 and 21 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

(c) Ruling No. 1187 of 15 December 2016: the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court recognized homoparental families, interpreting article 75 of the Constitution "*to mean that families may be headed by same-sex parents and that children born into these families enjoy the protection of the State in the same way as any other child in a traditional family.*"

(d) Ruling No. 91 of 15 March 2017: the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court prohibited procedural concessions for persons guilty of "*flagrant sexual crimes*", including the crime of persistent sexual violence, the crime of sexual

⁸ Official Gazette No. 40.548 dated 25 November 2014 (annexed).

⁹ Established in August 2017 in pursuance of articles 347, 348 and 349 of the Constitution. In accordance with the Constitution, the National Assembly includes among its goals "*transformation of the juridical order*".

¹⁰ Official Gazette No. 41.376 dated 12 April 2018 (annexed).

intercourse with a particularly vulnerable victim, the crime of forced prostitution, the crime of sexual slavery, the crime of illicit trafficking in women, girls and adolescents, and the crime of selling women, girls and adolescents. Regarding trials of such crimes, the Division stated that, once the principle of presumption of innocence had been excluded by an unappealable judgment, the procedural concessions allowed by law could not be granted and no alternative sentencing would be allowed.

(e) Ruling No. 884 of 3 November 2017: the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court prohibited the Sociedad Mercantil El Heraldo and the Grupo Mercantil 6° Poder 60 C.A. from publishing any printed or digital copies of the weekly newspaper, including individual subscriptions, with images containing explicit or implicit material or content, including photos, and publicity and reference to the address of websites that can be freely visited by girls, boys and adolescents. This ruling applies to all communications media.

(f) Ruling No. 815 of 29 November 2018: the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court established that, for undecided pending cases, in municipalities where there are no courts for supervision of measures, hearings and sentencing that are competent to deal with crimes of violence against women, cases involving any crime covered by the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence may, exceptionally, be conducted by the local Municipal Court for the Supervision of Measures.

(g) Ruling No. 252 of 26 November 2019: the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court ruled that all decisions on related and separate crimes within the competence of the regular judge, including those referred to special judges in cases of gender-based violence, should be taken by a special court for cases of violence against women, because the existence of extrajurisdictional competence precludes trial by another special forum, except for those expressly mentioned in the Constitution and laws of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

18. Between 2016 and 2020, the National Assembly's defiance¹¹ of the decisions of the Supreme Court made it difficult to finally eliminate all the discriminatory provisions contained in national laws. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court did achieve progress through its rulings. This problem also made it impossible to pass the draft Act for Gender Equality and Equity. As a result, the Act on Equality of Opportunity for Women, amended in 1999, remained in force. It had essentially been designed to regulate the exercise of the rights and guarantees necessary to achieve equal opportunities for women, on the basis of the Act adopting the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

B. Access to justice

19. Access to comprehensive services guaranteeing justice and action to combat violence against women, girls and adolescents has during the period covered by this report been a permanent and constant goal. There are specialized institutions and improvements have been made in the training given to female and male civil servants. Venezuelan legislation requires several institutions to provide legal and psychological

¹¹ In 2016, the National Assembly included three deputies who had been suspended by the Supreme Court, thus failing to comply with the decision adopted by the Electoral Division of the Supreme Court on 30 December 2015. From that date, the National Assembly continued its defiance of the Supreme Court's decisions. For this reason, the Court's Constitutional Division declared that all proceedings of the National Assembly, including laws adopted, for the duration of the Electoral Division's defiance of the Supreme Court were unconstitutional and therefore lacking any validity and legal force.

assistance to women, girls and adolescents who are victims of violence or other types of discrimination.

20. In December 2020, the special jurisdiction for crimes of violence against women consisted of 22 judicial circuits in 19 states, with 106 special tribunals, and in all states the exceptional powers of the municipal criminal courts of first instance were established in Binding Ruling No. 815 of 29 November 2018 handed down by the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court. On 4 November 2020, the Plenary Division of the Supreme Court established criminal judicial circuits in the states of Carabobo, the port of Puerto Cabello extension, Portuguesa and Táchira, the San Antonio extension (frontier zone); it created specialized appeals courts in the states of Falcon, Trujillo and Yaracuy and expanded the courts of first instance for supervision, hearings and proceedings, judgements and enforcement by the judicial circuit with competence to try crimes of violence against women in the metropolitan area of Caracas.

21. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is thus introducing specialized gender justice throughout the country, by creating specialized judicial circuits (75 per cent) and confirming the exceptional competence of the municipal criminal courts (25 per cent) to deal with crimes of violence against women in places where no such court circuits have yet been established.

22. The National Commission for Gender Justice of the judiciary branch and the National School of Magistrates are ensuring that ongoing training in gender issues is provided to female and male judges and court staff working in the specialized judicial circuits and the municipal criminal courts. For 2020, the staffing (by gender) of the special courts dealing with crimes of violence against women was as follows: active judges totalling 128 (97 women and 31 men); 106 rotating and mobile judges totalling 106 (86 women and 20 men). This gives a total of 234 female and male judges dealing with cases of gender-based violence.

23. A Higher People's Organ for Gender Justice was created in all states of the country in 2019. This coordinating body comprises all the national, state, municipal and local agencies concerned with gender-based justice, as well as social and civil society organizations, and especially community ombudswomen, to guarantee access to justice and the right of women to a life free from violence.

24. In order to monitor judicial policy regarding violence against women, regular coordination and evaluation meetings have been held since 2019 with those involved in the National System for the Protection of Women (the Supreme Court, the Public Prosecution Service, the Ombudsman's Office, Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, the National Institute for Women, the National Ombudsman's Office for Women and the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace) in order to monitor the work of the organs processing complaints. The following agreements and arrangements have been adopted:

(a) Support by the Multidisciplinary Teams of the Judicial Circuits for police forces helping victims of gender-based violence. During the COVID-19 quarantine, this activity has been conducted remotely.

(b) Submissions, initial evidence and preliminary hearings organized remotely in order to guarantee access to justice with the physical distancing required by the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure immediate responses by the judicial body to requests.

(c) Gender training and awareness-raising for organs processing complaints. In 2020, the Supreme Court concluded an agreement for the National Experimental University for Security to provide training courses on this subject both for civil servants and serving police and for students.

(d) Starting in 2019, creation of the Single System of Statistics on Crimes of Violence against Women.

(e) Accreditation of women's defence lawyers by courts competent to judge crimes of violence against women, so that victims of gender-based violence can be assisted and legally represented in special criminal proceedings, as specified in article 36 of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence.

(f) Accreditation of the National Ombudsperson's Office for Women and other organizations defending women which are entitled to participate in criminal trials (defence counsel or defence counsel *ad litem*) to act on behalf of and represent the absent victim, for the purpose of safeguarding her rights.

25. Also noteworthy is the adoption by the Plenary Division of the Supreme Court of Resolution No. 0014 of 21 November 2018 creating the Electronic Official Record¹² to replace the existing paper records of all the courts dealing with crimes of violence against women and juvenile courts in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Implementation of this Resolution was prioritized in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a special measure to facilitate access to justice.

26. The Public Prosecution Service includes a Division for the Protection of Women which currently has:

(a) 72 offices throughout the country, four of which have national coverage: (1) Two specializing in the investigation of femicides and offences against the sexual freedom of women (Nos. 64 and 47); (2) One with broad competence (No. 82); and (3) One focused on combating the sale of women (No. 95).

(b) A service providing comprehensive care to victims of crimes involving gender-based violence.

27. The Service's Division for Comprehensive Protection of the Family currently deals with ordinary crimes involving children and adolescents through:

(a) 55 offices throughout the country, three of which have national coverage: (1) One focused on combating crime against children and adolescents (No. 96), and (2) Two with broad competence (Nos. 66 and 79).

(b) A section for families in the Public Prosecution Service that specializes in dealing with violence against women, girls and adolescents, providing psychological and social support to adolescent and child victims of sexual abuse and cruelty.

28. The Research Corps dealing with scientific, criminal and forensic topics has 93 municipal delegations throughout Venezuela and nine municipal delegations in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas. In addition, the Division for Investigation of Crimes against Women, Children and Adolescents focuses on investigation of the crime of violence against women.

29. With the assistance of the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace, special police brigades were created in 2014 for the protection of victims, witnesses and other participants in proceedings.

30. Between 2013 and 2015, 18 Centres providing assistance and comprehensive training to women were created in order to decentralize the services providing social, gynaecological, obstetric, legal and psychological assistance, together with training and empowerment. The goal is to prevent violence against women and help to eradicate this scourge by guaranteeing the full exercise of the rights of women in all

¹² Official Gazette No. 41.620 dated 25 April 2019.

their diversity. It proved difficult to obtain medicines and to maintain equipment and infrastructure for these Centres, because of the unilateral coercive measures taken against Venezuela, and so the specialized services provided under this programme have been reduced to the provision of social and legal services. In December 2020, nine new Centres were opened in the state of Anzoátegui, which are managed directly by the women in the communities.

31. The telephone hot line 0800-Mujeres (0800-6853737) provides legal advice and general information especially designed for female victims of violence. In the period from 2014 to 2018, 42,240 calls were received. In 2019 and 2020, the service was affected by serious damage to the national electrical grid caused by terrorist activities and the unilateral coercive measures made it impossible to obtain spare parts. The service managed to recover in November 2020.

32. In 2017, under the Framework Convention for Cooperation between the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace and the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, a series of actions were taken to protect the rights of women. They include:

(a) A gender-focused training programme for male and female civil servants working in offices receiving complaints of violence against women, focusing on the Experimental University for Security.

(b) Incorporation of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and the National Institute for Women into the Research Committee of the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace and the Venezuelan Security Monitoring Centre.

(c) Incorporation of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality into the Council for Gender Equality of the Civic Security Bodies, in order to allow supervision, training, strengthening and technical assistance in the process of creation, activation and full operation of the Gender Equality and Equity Secretariats in civic security organs, as required by the standards for the rights of women to gender equality and equity promulgated by the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace.¹³ By 2020, 121 Gender Equality and Equity Secretariats had been included in police forces (national, regional and municipal).

33. The National Office for Comprehensive Care of Victims of Violence¹⁴ was created in 2016. It provides legal and psychological assistance without charge to victims of violence and trafficking of women, girls and adolescents, as well as awareness-raising and training in the prevention and treatment of violence against women and girls.

34. The National Human Rights Council was established in 2014 to coordinate and promote the official human rights policy.¹⁵ Following a referendum,¹⁶ the Council drafted the 2016-2019 National Human Rights Plan,¹⁷ which among its principles strives for gender equality and equity and includes in its programme activities the development of a national plan for training and consciousness-raising regarding the rights of women, to be implemented by the organs that process complaints specified in the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence. Under the National Human Rights Plan, State institutions will perform over 1,290 activities involving training,

¹³ Resolution No. 160 of 11 November 2016. Official Gazette No. 41.080 dated 23 January 2017.

¹⁴ Decree No. 2.531, Official Gazette No. 41.023 dated 3 November 2016.

¹⁵ Decree No. 876, Official Gazette No. 40.386 dated 4 April 2014.

¹⁶ The Council was discussed widely throughout the national territory in consultations involving 258,096 people. The consultations received support and technical assistance provided by United Nations agencies and programmes operating in Venezuela.

¹⁷ Official Gazette No. 6.218 (special issue) dated 2 March 2016.

forums and workshops, at which human rights will be explained to 82,800 civil servants, including public sector employees, judicial staff, police, members of the military and judges.

35. As far as training is concerned, in 2013 the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality launched the Argelia Laya Feminist National Centre for Feminist Training, which offers a variety of training programmes designed to eradicate social practices responsible for exclusion, discrimination, exploitation and violence against women. The Argelia Laya Feminist Foundation School of the South (FEMSUR) was founded in 2018.¹⁸ In the period from 2014 to 2020. It trained a total of 180,363 women from various social and nongovernmental organizations provided training on the human rights of women to a total of 180,363 women from various social and non-governmental organizations

36. Between 2014 and 2019, the Ombudsman's Office spoke about women's human rights at lectures, workshops, discussions, forums, awareness-raising and other academic activities to a total of 15,866 people, including 11,237 women.

37. Between 2015 and 2020, the National Institute for Women provided counselling and care to 79,191 people (70,888 women and 8,303 men), focusing on the prevention of violence. In addition, various specific informational activities concerning the prevention of violence against women were aimed at the population in general, reaching a total of 119,000 people (102,000 women and 17,000 men).

C. National mechanisms for the advancement of women

38. The main national mechanism for the advancement of women is the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, created in 2009. It comprises three deputy ministries: (a) gender equality and non-discrimination; (b) protection of women's rights; and (c) women's work. It also has 24 Directorates in states throughout the country. Its subsidiary bodies are (a) the National Institute for Women, including the Public Prosecutor's Office for Women and (b) the Women's Development Bank. These agencies are active in all states in the country.

39. The plan for this sector is the "*Mamá Rosa*" Plan for Gender Equality and Equity, which describes the actions to be taken by the State to mainstream gender in public policies. The Plan involved over 13,000 women throughout the country and in the various social sectors, who attended working groups, meetings and discussions. The plan was revised, updated and expanded in 2018, with a view to implementation in the period between 2019 and 2025.

40. This Plan is monitored by the social accountability Oversight Office, by the institutional mechanisms of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and Executive Branch oversight of the plans, programmes and projects.

41. The Presidential Council of the People's Government for Women, established on 25 November 2014, is composed of spokespersons from over 500 women's and feminist organizations from various sectors of civil society. It provides access to the executive branch of government, for the formulation of public policies promoting gender equality in a participatory and democratic manner. Its establishment was ratified by the Decree with force of law of the Presidential Councils of People's Government.¹⁹

42. The State Council for Gender Equality and Equity was created in 2015. All State authorities are involved, working to include gender in the State's public policies and

¹⁸ Decree No. 3.253, Official Gazette No. 41.327 dated 24 January 2018.

¹⁹ Decree No. 2.161, Special Official Gazette No. 6.209 dated 29 December 2015.

actions, by selecting contact people or persons responsible for gender equality and equity in all public institutions. A network of gender contacts was thus created in State institutions.

43. In addition, in 2015 the Ministry of People's Power for Defence established the Gender Equity and Equality Council of the Bolivian National Armed Forces,²⁰ in order to incorporate a gender perspective in each of the components and territories of the military. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Defence and is composed of the Commander-in-Chief of each branch of the military and representatives of the Inspector-General of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces, the Military Criminal Justice Circuit, the Military Public Prosecutor's Office, the Military Ombudsperson and the People's Ombudsperson. The Council has an Executive Secretariat and Executive Secretaries of the Committees on Gender Equality and Equity of Members and the Liaison Network of the Operational Strategic Command of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces. Since 2017, the Ministry has supported the Military Forces' Gender-Based Security and Defence Diploma and the Humanized Childbirth Diploma, working with the Bolivarian Military Academy of Venezuela. In 2019, it also drafted the "*Guidelines for victims of gender violence in the Bolivarian National Armed Forces*".

44. As regards geographical coverage of public gender equality policies, in 2020 there were 20 Regional Institutes and 170 Municipal Institutes dealing with the advancement of women and gender equality.

D. Special temporary measures

45. As far as political rights are concerned, in the period from 2014 to 2020 the National Electoral Council adopted a series of special temporary measures to ensure the participation of women in decision-making organs and their political representation. Through resolution No. 150605, adopted in 2015, it ordered political organizations to ensure that their methods for selecting candidates for membership in deliberative bodies resulted in equal representation for women and men. If parity was not feasible, as an exception there should be a minimum of 40 per cent and a maximum of 60 per cent for either gender. This formula was used for candidates for election to the National Assembly (listed by name, by list and as alternates) in 2015.

46. For the 2018 Municipal Council elections, the National Electoral Council adopted a special temporary measure described in the Handbook concerning Candidacies for Parity and Alternating Membership, which required a 50 per cent quota for women or, failing that, a threshold of 40 per cent or 60 per cent for either gender, with candidates listed sequentially and alternately, in order to avoid under-representation.

47. For the 2020 elections to the National Assembly, the National Electoral Council agreed on the parity and alternating formula to guarantee the right to political participation in elections, requiring gender parity among the candidates or, if parity was not feasible, a minimum quota of 40 per cent and a maximum quota of 60 per cent for either gender, for all electoral arrangements: listing by name, listing by region and listing for national office.

²⁰ Official Gazette No. 40.687 dated 22 June 2015.

E. Stereotypes

48. The Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and the Ministry of the People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace dealt with the design, execution and periodic evaluation of a sensitization, training and education plan covering all levels and procedures, concerning gender equality in their institutions and bodies concerned. Under this Agreement, the Experimental University for Security added to its curriculum compulsory courses on gender equality and the right of women to a life free from violence, as well as ongoing and permanent training for male and female civil servants from both Ministries and for the public in general.

49. With the goal of eliminating gender stereotypes, the Supreme Court adopted Resolution No. 2017-0014²¹ advocating the use of inclusive and non-sexist language in all documents and resolutions of the Supreme Court and courts in the judicial system, without any kind of discrimination. For its part, in 2019 the Ministry of People's Power for Defence issued Resolution No. 029635 concerning the use of non-sexist language in the Bolivarian Armed Forces.

50. In June 2014, the Carmen Clemente Travieso Media Observatory, which is part of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, published "How to produce gender-neutral content". The main goal was to promote more inclusive communication and increased awareness among journalists so as to end discriminatory practices.

51. As regards measures to combat sexist stereotypes, the Supreme Court of Justice adopted rulings No. 359 of 2014 and No. 884 of 2017, which prohibit the publication of images containing implicit or explicit images or content that promote prostitution or consumption of pornography, whether in images, photos or advertising, and contain links to websites that can be freely accessed by children and adolescents.

52. The public radio station "National Radio of Venezuela" has aired five programmes supporting the advancement of women and the feminist agenda, including "Your Rights are Speaking" and "More than Just Breasts". In addition, the public radio station "Radio Miraflores" has a programme entitled "*Women Never Give Up*". These programmes have content relating to the advancement of women, protection of their rights and promotion of their empowerment.

53. In 2016, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality inaugurated the *Yulimar Reyes y Raquel Reyes* Centre for Women's Documentation and Information, providing a facility specializing in women, gender and feminism that will assist researchers and inform the general public.

F. Violence against women

54. In 2014, the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence was expanded to include the crimes of femicide and incitement to suicide. In ruling No. 91 of 2017, the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court decided that the procedural concessions specified by law could not be granted and alternative arrangements for serving a sentence could not be allowed specifically in cases of: sexual assault, sex with a particularly vulnerable victim; forced prostitution; sexual enslavement; illicit trafficking in women, girls and adolescents; and sale of women, girls and adolescents.

55. During the period covered by this report, the courts and prosecutors' offices dealing with violence against women were expanded and strengthened. All parts of

²¹ Official Gazette No. 41.421 dated 18 June 2018.

the country have courts specializing in gender issues, consisting of specialized judicial circuits (75 per cent) and exceptional authority to deal with crimes of violence against women has been granted to Municipal Criminal Courts (25 per cent) where the above-mentioned Judicial Circuits have not yet been established. In addition, there are 120 prosecutors' offices specializing in nation-wide cases of gender-based violence against women, adolescents and girls throughout the country.

56. Between January 2014 and September 2020, the Public Prosecutor's General Office for the Protection of the Family and Women dealt with a total of 399,742 cases of gender-based violence covered by various laws. The main complaints of crimes specified in the Act were:

Table I

Cases involving crimes specified in the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence

Office of the Public Prosecutor

<i>Crime/Year</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Stalking or harassment	11 582	11 201	8 758	8 127	5 387	5 052	2 928
Obscene acts	1 439	1 017	700	565	473	545	311
Threats	16 574	15 177	13 042	9 654	6 549	5 941	3 540
Trafficking in women	4	29	32	34	36	42	31
Physical violence	28 711	28 490	28 594	27 198	16 797	13 497	7 096
Violence involving property and money	366	424	371	313	227	190	119
Psychological violence	14 667	14 198	14 572	15 385	8 425	7 372	4 904
Sexual violence	1 276	1 141	877	775	593	517	334
Total	74 619	71 677	66 946	62 051	38 487	33 156	19 263

57. The Public Prosecution Service and the Unit for Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation enacted 57,727 protection and safety measures between January 2014 and September 2020 for crimes of gender-based violence. Of this total, 35 per cent were for physical violence, 29 per cent for psychological violence, 18 per cent for threats and 13 per cent for stalking or harassment.

58. The Ombudsman's Office for the Rights of Women provides support, counselling and legal aid to female victims of violence in judicial and extrajudicial proceedings, with a special focus on the most vulnerable women. Between 2014 and 2020, 133,329 women were assisted.

59. In 2013, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality created the programme for Community Defenders of Women's Rights, with the aim of encouraging community participation in prevention, training, involvement and support for victims of gender-based violence. During the period from 2013 to 2019, awareness and training activities involved a total of 54,272 women, including 5,817 Community Defenders specializing in cases of obstetric violence.

60. Between 2015 and 2020, 180 persons (65 women, 61 girls and 54 boys) sought protection and safety in shelters of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality. These confidential and secure shelters provide temporary accommodation, protection, care and support to female victims and survivors of gender-based violence and their sons and daughters under 12 years of age. In 2016, Guidelines for the shelters set standards for programme evaluation, activities,

protection, safety, confidentiality and psychological and legal assistance for victims of violence against women in its extreme manifestations. During this period, there were four shelters. In December 2020, there was one active centre and others were in the pipeline.

61. The psychological, psychiatric and social services provided through the National Institute for Women help female victims to deal with the aftermath of violence and between 2015 and August 2020 helped 10,110 women. With technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund, a booklet entitled “*Ending Violence Against Women: Group strategies*” was published to help mental health professionals and communities devise strategies for ending violence against women.

62. In 2016, in order to improve services for female victims of violence, the Public Prosecution Service created the Comprehensive Care Service for victims of the crime of gender-based violence.²² In 2017, the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Ministry of People’s Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace and the Ministry of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality reported:

(a) Expansion of the telephone hot line for female victims of violence by linking VEN911 and 800MUJERES, plus design and implementation of a single protocol for assisting female victims of gender-based violence, in order to guarantee and optimize care and actions efficiently and effectively.

(b) Development and adoption of indicators for quantifying crimes of violence against women; development of methodological and statistical instruments, such as the Single Register of cases of violence against women; development of areas of joint research with a gender focus, and transfer of the National Civic Safety Research Committee and its subsidiaries to the Ministry of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality, with the goal of devising policies and strategies to reduce violence against women.

63. In February 2021, the Ministry of People’s Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace issued *Performance Standards for members of the police force and crime investigators to ensure the provision of early and timely assistance to victims of gender-based violence, processing of the relevant complaints and police involvement in investigations*,²³ in order to ensure successful application of the Act on Women’s Right to a Life Free from Violence.

64. The Ombudsman’s Office and the Ministry of People’s Power for Health, working with the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and UNICEF, have developed ways of dealing with cases of sexual violence against women, girls and adolescents. Examples are: (a) the institutions dealing with sexual abuse of children and adolescents (2016) and the Protocol for dealing with cases of sexual violence.

65. The National School for Public Prosecutors regularly provides training in women’s rights and gender parity for female and male lawyers, prosecutors and other legal staff, as well as for male and female members of the police force and crime investigators. Between August 2017 and August 2020, the School trained 95,525 students (60 per cent male and 40 per cent female), 70.8 per cent of whom participate in civic safety patrols.

66. Between 2014 and 2020, the Ministry of People’s Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace organized eight training courses for police on the subject of violence against women and girls, which were attended by 49,777 female and male staff. In addition, 21 research projects or studies were conducted on violence against

²² Resolution No. 665, Official Gazette No. 40.906 dated 18 May 2016.

²³ Resolution No. 0026, Official Gazette No. 42.076 dated 26 February 2021.

women and girls, plus 22 campaigns to raise awareness of the need to prevent and deal with violence against women, girls and adolescents. During the same period, various training strategies were used at the community level in order to reduce the incidence of crimes against women and to promote peaceful coexistence. These involved 485,000 people (343,000 women and 142,000 men).

67. In 2015, in accordance with Joint Instruction No. 026 issued by the Ministry of People's Power for Education and the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, 8,412 teachers were trained in the prevention of violence against women.

68. The following national mass media campaigns were conducted in 2017 for prevention and extensive awareness-raising: "*Words can kill; Ill-treatment is not a sign of love*" in 2014 and "*Peace begins at home - No more violence against Women*" in 2017. In addition, symbolic events were held at historic, tourist and public sites with the motto "*Venezuela is painted pink to condemn violence against women*".

69. During the COVID-19 pandemic, various institutions joined forces to campaign against gender-based violence. They posted on social media, with emphasis on the joint efforts made by the United Nations Population Fund, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and VEN911 and on the campaigns of the Ombudsman's Office and the Supreme Court's National Commission for Gender Justice.

G. Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

70. Article 15.19 of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence lists trafficking in women, girls and adolescents as one of the 21 forms of violence and article 56 categorizes it as a crime, representing one of the most aberrant forms of human rights violations. Article 41 of the Act against Organized Crime and Financing of Terrorism specifies a more severe penalty than the one envisaged in the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence.

71. In its Ruling No. 1378 of 7 March 2014, the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court ruled that judges specializing in crimes of violence against women will also try cases of trafficking in persons, as described in article 41 of the Act, when the victims are women, children and adolescents of either sex. On the other hand, when only adult men are the crime victims, the crime of trafficking in persons will be tried by judges competent to hear ordinary criminal cases.

72. The Public Prosecution Service, the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace, and the Ombudsman's Office have scheduled various workshops to improve prevention, focus broad attention and ensure criminal investigation of the crime of trafficking in persons. The workshops are aimed at male and female members of security forces, prosecutors in the Public Prosecution Service, judges in the Judiciary and counsellors for the protection of children and adolescents. Between 2014 and 2019, 1,405 male and female civil servants were trained to deal with trafficking of persons and illegal smuggling of migrants.

73. Under an agreement between the Ombudsman's Office and UNHCR, 9,000 pamphlets on the prevention of human trafficking were distributed with the aim of preventing trafficking of persons by prosecuting ensnarement and deceitful propaganda on social networks and identifying possible fake offers made to potential migrants.

74. Under the 2017 Agreement between the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace, an interagency commission was created consisting of the National

Office to Combat Organized Crime and Financing of Terrorism and the National Institute for Women to focus on trafficking in women, children and adolescents and smuggling of migrants, with the aim of standardizing criteria for prevention, recruitment and solutions, by designing a single care protocol focused on gender and human rights and including frontier patrols.

75. In 2020, the Ombudsman's Office added a Special Division with nation-wide competence for the protection of migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking in persons.²⁴

76. Between 2019 and 2020, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela adopted the following additional measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women, girls and adolescents:

(a) Creation of the National Council to Combat Human Trafficking, which streamlines and coordinates national efforts to prevent, address, investigate and punish that crime.

(b) The campaign "*This is about people, not goods. Trafficking is not negotiable*".

(c) An inter-agency round table to draft a protocol for the care of trafficked women and girls.

(d) An Inter-agency Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which works with the Ombudsman's Office, the National Office for Comprehensive Care of Victims of Violence and the Ministries of People's Power for Labour and for Foreign Relations.

77. When trafficking occurs abroad, the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations forwards to the competent authority the requests and reports submitted by diplomatic missions and consular offices concerning trafficking of Venezuelans. Between March 2017 and June 2019, there was a total of 11 cases. In five cases, the victims were successfully repatriated to Venezuela from Panama, Italy, Equatorial Guinea, and Brazil.

78. The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations created the Homecoming Plan as an initiative to promote and facilitate the voluntary return of Venezuelans who find themselves in conditions of extreme vulnerability abroad. By October 2020, a total of 117,088 people had been repatriated; 48 per cent of them were women. As regards age groups, 56 per cent of the repatriated persons were women between 18 and 59 years of age and 61 per cent were women 60 or older.

79. The roll-out of the Homecoming Plan was affected by the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on CONVIASA (the Venezuelan Consortium of Aeronautical Industries and Airline Services, S.A).²⁵ On 7 February 2020, the United States Treasury Department included the airline in the list of Specially Designated Nationals compiled by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, in application of Executive Order 13.884.

80. These measures prohibit trade with and provision of services to CONVIASA by firms and persons anywhere in the world. They therefore create problems for the Homecoming Plan, such as inability to obtain fuel and airport services for aircraft in countries where the Venezuelan migrants protected by the Plan are located.

²⁴ Resolution 2020-063. Official Gazette No. 42.007 dated 13 November 2020.

²⁵ The State airline CONVIASA flies migrants registered in the Homecoming Plan from other countries to Venezuela. Prior to February 2020, it had made 97 flights, bringing 5,513 Venezuelan migrants home without charge on a voluntary basis.

IV. Part II of the Convention

A. Participation in political and public life

81. In elections held between 2014 and 2020, the electoral roll consisted mainly of women (51.22 per cent on average). In addition, there was an improvement in political parity, following the adoption by the National Electoral Council of resolutions on parity for candidacies in electoral processes.

82. Women accounted for 35.34 per cent of the candidates for the 2015 parliamentary elections; 46.88 per cent for the 2018 elections to Municipal Councils and 47.23 per cent for the 2020 parliamentary elections. The temporary measures put in place had a positive effect on the political participation and leadership of women in posts to be filled by popular vote.

83. During the 2010-2015 parliamentary term, 17 per cent of National Assembly seats were won by women (28 women for a total of 165 seats). Between 2015 and 2020, the figure rose to 20 per cent (34 women for a total of 167 seats). The proportion of women elected to the National Assembly in 2020 rose to 31 per cent.

84. In elections to the Legislative Councils, women won 35 per cent of the seats and 46 per cent in the elections to the Municipal Councils. In 2020, following elections to individual posts in the Executive Branch at the state and municipal levels, 17 per cent of the elected Governors and 23 per cent of the elected Mayors were women.

85. In the Executive Branch, more women are playing leadership roles in decision-making and occupying senior posts as Ministers, Deputy Ministers, presidents of institutions, directors and rectors of universities. The period between 2013 and 2020 saw the appointment of Delcy Rodríguez to the post of Executive Vice-President of the Republic in June 2018 and in October 2020 Carmen Meléndez was reappointed to the post of Minister of the Interior, Justice and Peace. In 2020, 33 per cent of ministerial posts were occupied by women (11 Ministries). The Ministries are Interior; Justice and Peace; Economy and Finance; Trade; Science and Technology; Women and Gender Equality; Indigenous Peoples; Communities; Urban Agriculture; Ecological Mining Development; Prisons; and Water.

86. Between 2015 and 2019, the representation of women in the Bolivarian Armed Forces increased from 11 to 15 per cent, thanks to the policy encouraging the admission of women to the various military schools. The breakdown for the different branches shows an increase from 14 to 21 per cent for the Army, from 16 to 22 per cent for the Air Force; from 15 to 26 per cent for the Navy and from 6 to 8 per cent for the National Guard. In 2020, a female Admiral occupied the post of Deputy Minister and there were five female Vice-Admirals and one female General of Division, all of which are high-level posts.

87. In 2020, the Supreme Court, the highest body in the Judiciary, had 15 female judges, which represents 47 per cent of the total of 32 posts.

88. The National Electoral Council, which is the highest electoral body, has been headed by a woman since 2005. As regards its composition, in the period between 2014 and 2020 four of the five posts of Rector and Principal Rector were occupied by women. Since 2020, the Council continues to have a female majority: three women and two men.

89. With regard to the membership of subsidiary bodies, for the 2020 National Assembly elections 67 per cent of the members of the Regional Electoral Boards were women. And 71 per cent of the Electoral Boards were chaired by women.

90. Women have played a significant role in public life and particularly in direct management of local affairs. For 2020, it was reported that 2,997,755 women (56.77 per cent) were involved in Community Councils.²⁶ The leadership roles played by women in this area are illustrated by their participation in the working committees: for instance 56.63 per cent in the Executive Unit, 56.87 per cent in the Administration and Finance Unit; 96.61 per cent in the Women and Gender Equality Committee; 80.31 per cent in the Health Committee; 75.96 per cent in the Nutrition Committee; and 79.40 per cent in the Committee on the Protection of Children and Adolescents.

91. Nation-wide, 57.97 per cent of the projects uploaded to the Community Integration System of the Federal Council of Government are headed by women, illustrating female leadership in the management of projects spearheaded by community organizations. In 2020, out of a total of 112,748 spokespersons of Community Councils 53.37 per cent were women.

92. Out of a total of 42,145 people involved in the Local Supply and Production Committees, 79 per cent are women working in the food distribution process in the territories.

93. The environment in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela favours the participation of women and girls in public life, including as Ombudspersons for Women's Rights. The right to political activity, freedom of expression and peaceful and unarmed demonstration is guaranteed by the Constitution.

B. Education

94. Education as a human right is guaranteed by the State. For 2018, the Gender Parity Index at the three levels of education was 0.97 for the initial level, 0.92 for the primary level and 1.04 for the middle and diversified level. School enrolment is basically egalitarian and equitable.

95. Following the 2014 national referendum on education quality, the middle school curriculum was overhauled. In 2015, the Ministry of People's Power for Education included "*gender equality*" as an essential topic for mainstreaming in the education process.

96. In order to eliminate gender inequalities, the Canaima Education Project²⁷ has provided digital resources on subjects such as equality, sexual and reproductive rights and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, textbooks for the initial, primary and middle levels and Bicentenary Collection Media²⁸ deal with the topics "*We are not the same people, but we have the same rights*"; "*My body is my new friend*"; "*These new feelings: sexual identity and gender*" and "*Your sexual and reproductive rights*".

97. The ongoing and growing inclusion of women in the subsystem of university education has yielded positive results. Between 2014 and 2020, 1,280,451 women pursued studies in various areas and academic disciplines. Their participation averaged: 71 per cent in health; 74 per cent in education; 62 per cent in social sciences; 62.7 per cent in agriculture and marine sciences; 50 per cent in basic sciences; 58.96 per cent in humanities, literature and arts; and 44 per cent in

²⁶ The Community Councils are groups involved with community participation and government, whose spokespersons are elected directly by the communities. Each Community Council has working committees that deal with issues of particular relevance to the community.

²⁷ Under the Canaima Education Project, the State provides lap-top computers or tablets to male and female students, in order to improve the learning process and provide access to information technology.

²⁸ The Bicentennial Collection is an education initiative enabling textbooks published by the State to be distributed at no charge.

engineering, architecture and technology. The figure for women attending public university education centres is 57.9 per cent. Women account for 57.9 per cent of enrolment at public universities.

98. Women account for 50.47 per cent of research workers at the Ministry of People's Power for Science and Technology (a gender parity index of 1.02).

99. Between 2014 and 2020, 9,070,791 women benefited from the cultural education policy, with easy access to books on various topics. Similarly, 147,941 female artists and creators benefited from programs of accreditation, training, promotion, circulation and distribution of artistic and cultural works, as well as traditional, popular and ancestral knowledge.

C. Employment

100. As regards access to jobs, of the 6,514,338 women of working age 8 per cent were unemployed in 2018. Of the total number of employed women, 65.5 per cent were working in the formal sector and 34.5 per cent were performing informal activities. The Chamba Juvenil Mission was an attempt to improve access to jobs in the formal sector and reduce unemployment. A total of 1,040,320 women participated, representing 57 per cent of all beneficiaries.

101. In 2020, according to the National Register of Trade Unions, a total of 2,566,192 people including 1,223,166 women (48 per cent) were members of trade unions.

102. In 2018, the Act on Workers' Councils²⁹ was adopted, with the goal of giving the working class a say in the management of productive activity. For 2020, 2,236 Workers' Councils were created. Female workers have 32.46 per cent of the votes in these participatory bodies.

103. Between January 2014 and September 2020, the National Training Programme for Correction Staff trained 52,485 people, including 22,974 women. During 2019 and 2020, a total of 1,484 participants, including 849 women, attended the Intensive Programme of Comprehensive Training

104. Between 2015 and 2020, the National Workers' Training and Recreation Institute trained a total of 15,101 workers (of whom 7,778 or 52 per cent were women) in topics connected with recreation and use of leisure time. Between 2018 and 2020, this Institute trained a total of 2,439,714 workers, including 1,250,252 women.

105. Articles 343 and 344 of the Act on Work and Workers requires every workplace to have an initial education centre that includes a breastfeeding room or to pay the enrolment cost and monthly fees for workers' children between three months and six years of age to attend an initial education centre. Between 2015 and 2020, 12 per cent of workplaces met these requirements. 17 per cent had their own initial education centres, 10 per cent arranged for initial education centres to admit their workers' children and 73 per cent provided this benefit by paying the fees for the initial education centres caring for the children.

106. Between 2014 and 2020, the Labour Inspectorates assisted 101,384 female workers with applications for re-employment (56,941), complaints of deteriorating work conditions (5,283), transfers refused (1,951), individual complaints (30,202) and family welfare complaints (5,590). The Inspectorates were also involved in 1,417 cases brought by female domestic workers. In 2020, cases relating to job security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were brought by a total of 258,187 workers and 40 per cent of these cases were brought by women.

²⁹ Official Gazette No. 41.336 dated 8 February 2018.

107. In addition, between 2014 and 2020, the National Institute for Accident Prevention and Occupational Health and Safety certified a total of 177,853 work accidents, of which 40 per cent affected women. As regards occupational diseases, women accounted for 42 per cent of the 9,063 certified cases. Out of a total of 162,573 prevention delegates on Occupational Safety and Health Committees, 56,861 (35 per cent) are women.

108. Between 2014 and 2020, the number of women receiving long-term financial benefits (pensions) from the Venezuelan Social Security Institute increased from 1,545,044 to 2,752,825, representing 59.9 per cent of the total number of recipients. In the same period, short-term benefits (compensation and involuntary separation from employment) were paid to 724,838 women and 483,224 men.

109. According to social security enrolment lists, 1,640,137 women were enrolled between 2014 and 2020, representing 60.1 per cent of the total work force covered by social security.

110. In order to alleviate poverty and assist women, the Great Housing Mission was created in 2014 and by 2020 had helped 5,466,758 families throughout the nation. Women account for 78 per cent (4,272,194) of the heads of household registered and enjoying the benefits of the various programmes offered by the Great Mission.

111. In 2020, a total of 28,638 people, including 17,182 women, received a stimulus payment in addition to their salary as cultural workers. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 3,000 women found formal employment in culture and the arts.

112. On the subject of sexual harassment in the workplace, the Act on Precautions, Conditions and Work Environment requires employers to adopt the necessary measures to prevent any form of sexual harassment and to pursue a policy designed to eliminate harassment in the workplace (article 56). The Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence considers sexual harassment to be a form of violence against women and specifies consequences including compensation (article 63) for victims, and prison sentences and fines for perpetrators. The Act on Work and Workers defines sexual harassment and allows the victim to leave the workplace and the firm to dismiss the offender, provided that proof exists. The implementing regulations of the Act prohibit sexual harassment as gender discrimination in the workplace.

D. Health

113. Thanks to the country's social welfare policies, women's life expectancy has continued to improve, increasing from 76.58 years in 2014 to 78 years in 2020.

114. In 2014, a participatory and democratic approach was adopted for the first National Plan for the Protection of Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights of Women in Venezuela, 2014-2019. This was followed by the National Plan for Humanized Childbirth and the National Plan for the Prevention of Early and Teenage Pregnancy. In 2020, another referendum was held to decide on the future contents of the Plan.

1. Measures to reduce maternal mortality

115. The Official Guidelines on a Comprehensive Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health, first issued in 2003, were updated in 2013 and will in the future be reproduced, circulated and used to train staff. In 2014, Protocols were issued concerning prenatal care and emergency obstetrics, with the goal of expanding education in obstetric health, identifying preconception maternal risk and suggesting behaviour to reverse or decrease it, improving the quality of prenatal and perinatal

care, ensuring appropriate staffing geared to needs at each level of care and at the various stages of the therapeutic process.

116. The unilateral coercive measures adopted against Venezuela since 2014 adversely affected maternal mortality, which had previously been stable.³⁰ Starting in 2016, maternal mortality declined, as a result of action by the State, including the adoption in 2018 of the *Concerted Strategy for the Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Mortality*.³¹ The Strategy described and coordinated the activities of the Ministries of People's Power for Health and for Women and Gender Equality with those of the international cooperation agencies (PAHO, UNFPA and UNICEF) and nongovernmental organizations.

117. Analysis of the data shows that the prevalence of hypertension, bleeding complications and symptoms of sepsis affecting pregnancy, birth and puerperium are among the leading causes of maternal mortality, which for September 2020 was showing signs of declining.

Table II
Causes of maternal mortality

Ministry of People's Power for Health

<i>Cause/Year</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Hypertensive edema and proteinuria during pregnancy, birth and puerperium	109	133	231	141	149	145	63
Termination of pregnancy by abortion	42	32	78	48	68	41	17
Delivery and birth complications	52	64	123	152	127	84	44
Principal postpartum complications	43	49	100	131	91	50	28
Other problems connected with the fetus and the amniotic cavity and with possible delivery problems	172	143	184	227	163	239	136
Maternal problems connected with the fetus and the amniotic cavity and possible delivery problems	28	45	51	35	39	36	18
Other maternal conditions basically connected with pregnancy	14	12	14	22	42	7	13
Total	460	478	781	756	679	602	319

118. Staff training is part of the current Concerted Strategy for the Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Mortality, using the life course approach: health of women, children and adolescents. In particular, improvements have been made in the training of teams working in *delivery rooms for low-risk pregnancies*.

³⁰ Preliminary findings of the visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, 12 February 2021: "*The Special Rapporteur also notes the reported growth of neonatal and maternal mortality since 2013, with a slight improvement in 2019, when humanitarian cooperation with UNICEF, PAHO, church and other humanitarian organizations was activated.*"

³¹ The Concerted Strategy is based on (a) improved information and organization; (b) improvements to Ruta Materna; (c) spaces and inputs; (d) measures to improve sexual and reproductive health; and (e) safe and timely contraception.

119. In addition, between 2016 and 2019, 25,473 health workers were trained in subjects such as: obstetric emergencies, normal delivery, resuscitation, prenatal monitoring, contraception updates, clinical management of sexual violence, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, syndromic diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, and diagnosis and management of HIV in pregnant women.

120. In addition, workshops were held, between 2018 and 2019 on topics such as: breastfeeding, warning signs during pregnancy and postpartum, sexual and reproductive rights, importance of prenatal monitoring, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, and nutrition; attendees included 184,413 community leaders, advocates of humanized childbirth and members of health committees.

121. Measures to optimize care during and after pregnancy, with a view to providing better and more compassionate care for women and decreasing maternal mortality in Venezuela, include the 2015 Ruta Materna plan and the programme of comprehensive care for states which had the largest number of maternal deaths in 2016 and 2017.

122. In 2020, when progress with the Concerted Strategy was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic and with a view to continuing the progress made, the strategy entitled “*Health for women, children and adolescents, 2020*” was launched with the aim of changing the serious pattern of maternal disease and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

123. Between 2014 and 2019, 2,209,856 pregnant women received prenatal care. In September 2020, 206,888 pregnant women were registered. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 17,431 pregnant women received care at home.

124. With the help of international cooperation agencies and bodies, social organizations and women’s groups, the programme “*Wanted, safe and happy motherhood*” provided advice about pregnancy and humanized childbirth. In 2016, a “*Guide to wanted, safe and happy motherhood*” was published and Joint Resolution No. 378 and 043/2016³² of the Ministries of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality and for Health was adopted to protect pregnant women from action that could be described as obstetric violence.

125. In addition, since 2016 the new System of Maternal and Child Vigilance requires immediate reporting, investigation and analysis of maternal deaths. Since 2017, a new unified methodology allows reclassification and classification of maternal deaths in each region of the country and a new system for identifying maternal deaths allows all deaths among women of child-bearing age to be investigated.

126. Since 2018, the Health Information System of the Ministry of People’s Power for Health has been improved by using the record of users covered by the Maternal and Child Tracking and Monitoring System. This requires standardization of the format for tracking expectant mothers in the territories, formats for registering contraception users, the format for registering high-risk pregnancies and creation of a specific module for the registry in the new system.

127. The solution adopted included the creation in 2018 of the Oversight, Analysis and Response Committee for the prevention and control of serious disease, maternal mortality and neonatal mortality. It encourages states to establish institutional committees (hospital and maternity wards), regional committees (state authorities) and local committees to oversee complicated and high-risk pregnancies and analyse cases in order to develop appropriate strategies and recommendations. The year 2018 saw the adoption of Resolution No. 007³³ ordering the organization, linkage and georeferencing of each state’s maternal and childcare networks and of Resolution

³² Official Gazette No. 40.988 dated 14 September 2016.

³³ Official Gazette No. 41.553 dated 27 December 2018.

No. 041³⁴ requiring public and private establishments to provide care, evaluation and reliable referral for all pregnant or postpartum women and children in need of care, in order to strengthen the Ruta Materna strategy as a system of coordination, linkage and management to optimize maternal and childcare.

128. Under Ruta Materna, 16 Maternal Shelters were opened. These provide warm and humanized care to mothers and children. Also noteworthy is the existence of 497 *birthing rooms for low-risk pregnancies*. These are part of a plan to provide training, supplies and support and this has increased the number of uncomplicated or vaginal births and reduced the number of Caesarean sections. The number of low-risk deliveries and pregnancies (vaginal delivery) has increased by 25 per cent compared with Ruta Materna figures for the first half of 2019 and for 2020 in the network of community specialized outpatient services.

129. In 2018 and 2019, the number of uncomplicated births increased by 31 per cent if we consider only hospital births and by 71 per cent if specialized community outpatient births are included. In 2019 and 2020, the percentage of normal births remained above 70 per cent, including those which occurred in the network of birthing rooms used for low-risk pregnancies.

130. A policy of supplying high-technology equipment to hospital centres has been pursued in recent years. By 2020, 998 items of equipment (fetal monitors, ultrasound machines, surgical instruments for deliveries and Caesarean sections, multiparameter scales) had been delivered to 75 obstetric units in Venezuela, hospitals and networks for local outpatient care. The unilateral coercive measures adopted against the country have prevented or complicated the acquisition and repair of specialized equipment, adversely affecting services to the public.³⁵

131. Between 2014 and 2019, 4,867,386 women of child-bearing age received family planning counselling. Among these women, 60 per cent were given free contraceptives, 51 per cent of which were oral contraceptives. These are distributed under two plans: 1. The network of local care and specialized outpatient care, prioritizing vulnerable territories and people, and 2. Post-partum contraception, provided in the main maternity and obstetric centres.

132. Because of the unilateral coercive measures against the country, in 2015 and 2016 there was a considerable decline in the availability of contraceptives, affecting births in the year 2016.³⁶ Thanks to the measures adopted to offset the economic

³⁴ Official Gazette No. 41.584 dated 12 February 2019.

³⁵ Preliminary findings of the visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, 12 February 2021: “*Venezuela has been almost entirely dependent upon medicine imported from abroad, while the majority of public medical services were provided by the state free of charge before 2016. Impediments to health care include a lack or severe insufficiency of medicines and vaccines; price growth; electricity shortages to supply equipment, water shortages and sanitation problems that affect hygiene; decaying infrastructure because of a lack of maintenance, the absence of spare parts, the unavailability of new equipment due to the lack of resources or refusals to sell or deliver; degraded working conditions and a lack of protective equipment against infectious diseases; a loss of staff in all medical areas because of low salaries; and the termination of construction of hospitals and primary health care centers.*”

³⁶ *Ibid.*, “The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that the lack of doctors and nurses and of sufficient medicines, medical equipment, spare parts, relevant software updates, vaccines, tests, reagents and contraceptives initially covered mostly by the Government results in the violation of the right to the highest attainable state of health; rising rates of maternal, neo-natal and infant mortality, and mortality from severe diseases (oncology, HIV, hemophilia, Guillain-Barré syndrome, cardiologic problems and many others); the deterioration of living conditions for people with special needs and chronic diseases; and more adolescent pregnancies. The unavailability of resources, including the frozen assets, for buying vaccines and supporting family planning programs has resulted in outbreaks of malaria, measles and yellow fever and opportunistic infections.”

aggression against the country, it was possible in 2020 to expand the distribution and prescription of contraceptives, which increased from 174,966 in the first half of 2019 to 439,002 in the first half of 2020.

133. In 2018 and 2019, as part of the strategy of safe and timely contraception implemented under the Concerted Strategy for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality, protection was provided under the public system for one year to 1,532,243 women

134. In 2018 and 2019, the Plan for immediate post-partum contraception using endouterine manual aspiration was launched in 14 priority states and 35 establishments. There were 52 sessions of the training workshop, with a total of 1,476 trained staff monitoring free and informed contraception for 25,362 women immediately after delivery.

135. Between 2019 and 2020, 1,105,702 women were given medication and protection under the Plan implemented in the network of specialized local outpatient care. This activity was monitored by regional coordinators from Ruta Materna.

136. the National Humanized Childbirth Plan was approved on 11 July 2017 as a coordinated strategy of the Ministries of People's Power for Health and for Women and Gender Equality and the National Institute for Women, in order to promote community support for women and their families during pregnancy, childbirth, puerperium, breast-feeding and responsible parenting.

137. Between 2017 and August 2020, a total of 18,101 Local Women Advocates for Humanized Childbirth were trained to provide breastfeeding support to future mothers and breastfeeding mothers in 54 per cent of parishes and 77 per cent of municipalities. "*Pregnancy and breast-feeding support groups*" were formed, in which the Local Advocate for Humanized Childbirth acts as a local trainer, counselling pregnant women and providing information on a healthy and responsible pregnancy and responsible parenting.

138. Under the National Humanized Childbirth Plan, 10,848 active Advocates received:

(a) Written material including the *log of the Local Advocate for Humanized Childbirth*, the *Advocate's ABC* and guides to the National Humanized Childbirth Plan.

(b) ipads to facilitate reporting by Advocates on the counselling of pregnant and breastfeeding women in their communities.

139. The Governing Body of the National Plan for Humanized Childbirth and Breastfeeding was created in 2019 to coordinate and harmonize public policies for the comprehensive care and protection of pregnant, breastfeeding or post-partum women, in order to protect their human rights.

140. The strategies used to combat maternal mortality and promote breastfeeding include monthly financial incentives provided through the Patria System to pregnant and breastfeeding women. In 2019, 600,822 pregnant women and 342,119 breastfeeding women received help in the form of monthly financial incentives. In addition, for the first half of 2020, the *Nutrition Protection Plan for pregnant and breastfeeding women*, implemented by the National Nutrition Institute, provided nutrition protection for 126,553 pregnant and breastfeeding women.

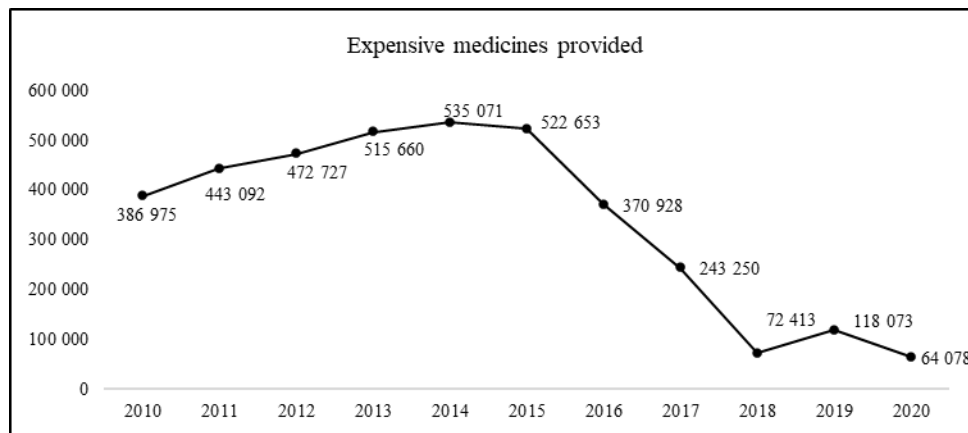
141. In 2020, there are 13 Women's Comprehensive Care Units. These facilities protect women's right to a life free from violence, focusing on humanized delivery and childbirth, breastfeeding and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, in close coordination with hospital centres. Since 2018, these Units have provided care and support to 18,755 people (17,745 women and 1,010 men).

2. Access to medical care

142. The policies followed to ensure that women have access to medical care have been affected by the unilateral coercive measures adopted against Venezuela, which make it difficult to obtain specialized equipment and medicines, to maintain infrastructure and to hire health workers.

143. The number of instances in which women received medical care from the Venezuelan Social Security Institute decreased from 11,953,339 in 2014 (before the adoption of the unilateral coercive measures) to 3,700,097 in 2020 (after the unilateral coercive measures).

144. Serious problems occurred with the Institute's programme to provide *expensive medicines* without cost to persons suffering from chronic diseases or requiring prolonged treatment, including treatment for breast and cervical cancer. However, between 2014 and 2020, the programme helped a total of 1,926,466 women. Before the adoption of the unilateral coercive measures, the programme distributed 515,660 medicines in 2013 and 535,075 medicines in 2014. After the "sanctions" were imposed against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, this figure dropped to 370,928 in 2016, 243,250 in 2017 and 72,413 in 2018. There was a slight improvement in 2019 but the figure then fell to its lowest point in the second decade of the twenty-first century (64,078 medicines provided).



145. Regular screening and testing for the 39-60 age group are included in the programme for the control and prevention of cervical cancer led by the Ministry of People's Power for Health and are organized by 24 state coordinators. There are 21 centres providing advanced diagnoses using colposcopy at all nation-wide facilities in the Primary Care Network and the Specialized Outpatient Network. As a result, until 2018, there was a significant decrease in cervical cancer and an improvement in the detection of precancerous lesions and carcinoma in situ; cell collection kits were provided under the Agreement between Cuba and Venezuela.

146. Adjuvant external radiation therapy to treat breast cancer and brachytherapy or internal radiation for cervical cancer are provided at a technology park which has 52 machines (24 linear accelerators, 9 cobalt units and 19 brachytherapy devices) in various parts of the country. The Ministry of People's Power for Health is working on acquiring more modern mammography machines to produce digitized images instead of the unreliable diagnoses provided by the old machines. However, the unilateral coercive measures have made it difficult to acquire the latest machines, so that few people can benefit from oncology equipment, resulting in more false negatives and more cases of advanced breast cancer.

147. The unilateral coercive measures have seriously aggravated the shortage of reagents and supplies for cytology testing at care centres, resulting in a 70 per cent reduction in scheduled testing in 2018 and 2019. This resulted in an increase in cervical cancer and a decrease in the life expectancy of patients suffering from that disease. In 2020, there were 1,550 deaths from cervical cancer and only 5 per cent of the goal of 100,000 tests could be met in the first half of the year.

148. In 2015, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality launched the programme "*The Homeland is a Woman*", targeting women diagnosed with breast cancer. It offered support in the form of special assistance, alternative integral health therapies, support during chemotherapy and radiation therapy, equipment and medicines and psychological support during the recovery process. The programme helped 10,879 women survivors of breast and cervical cancer.

3. Prevention of teenage pregnancy

149. Between 2014 and 2017, the adolescent fertility rate declined from 95.1 to 85.8 per thousand, concentrated in the 17 to 19 age group. This decline is the result is attributable to new actions targeting this group, such as acquisition and distribution of subdermal contraceptive implants, particularly for adolescents with a history of pregnancy in 2016 and 2017. This was all part of the National Programme of Reproductive Sexual Health. In states with the largest number of teenage pregnancies, adolescents with prior pregnancies were identified and immediately given implants, after counselling, written consent and a comprehensive medical evaluation. A total of 24,637 implants were provided between July 2016 and March 2017.

150. In 2014, two campaigns ("*Talking about Sex*" and "*Speak Clearly*") were conducted throughout the country in basic, secondary and technical education facilities, with the aim of preventing early and teenage pregnancies.

151. In 2015, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality was instrumental in creating the Interagency Network for Protection of Motherhood and Prevention of Early and Teenage Pregnancy. This enabled the various ministries and public bodies to coordinate their strategies and activities. It led to the 2017-2021 National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Early and Teenage Pregnancy, which aims to encourage a series of actions and measures by the State to reduce the high rates of teenage pregnancy and cases of pregnancy at an early age.

152. The Plan included the Programme of Comprehensive Sex Education outside School. Teaching methods and curricula were updated to provide comprehensive instruction in sexuality and sexual and reproductive health from initial education through college. In this connection, the Subcommittee on Statistics of Early and Teenage Pregnancy was created, with the task of compiling statistics on teenage pregnancy to assist in decision-making. In addition, a campaign was launched to raise awareness of teenage pregnancy among teenagers and their families. The campaign consists of ten spots on television, ten on the radio and ten on social networks.

153. During the period covered by this report, the 2013 Official Guidelines for Integral Sexual and Reproductive Health and the 2014 Clinical Protocols for Comprehensive Care of Adolescents were updated.

154. Between 2014 and 2019, the database of the Ministry's health information system recorded 4,167,791 cases of adolescent interventions. The national public health system has 79 facilities for the care of male and female adolescents. Since 2014, specific plans have been developed to prioritize the distribution of long-lasting contraceptives (subdermal implants) to the population.

155. In 2018, in conjunction with the international cooperation agencies, the Plan for Immediate Post-Obstetric Contraception was introduced in maternity clinics and

hospitals and the Contraception Plan in the commune and outpatient network were introduced. They involve the provision of long-term contraceptive methods (implants and intrauterine devices) to adolescents at special medical offices, middle schools and universities. These plans include counselling on family planning, informed consent and guidance on preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

156. Other methods for the prevention of teenage pregnancy adopted during the period covered by this report include:

(a) Training and guidance on sexual and reproductive health provided to 121,402 students during 2019.

(b) Provision of contraceptives, involving five of the care units in the concept of differentiated care and giving a total of 289,362 students free, universal and direct access to contraceptives.

(c) Training for 1,269 new health workers in *care strategies for providing friendly services to adolescents* (2016-2019).

(d) Strengthening of 239 pilot centres for family planning.

(e) Technical cooperation from the Andean Health Agency - Convenio Hipólito Unanue in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the Andean Plan for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.

4. Measures to combat HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

157. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 78.5 per cent of HIV cases involve the 20 to 49 age group and women account for 32.3 per cent of this group.

158. The National AIDS/STD Programme of the Ministry of People's Power for Health plans, executes and coordinates joint activities to combat HIV/AIDS and STDs in the national territory. The Programme has 24 regional offices.

159. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has laboratories at public health centres and laboratories or blood banks in all federal offices for the detection of HIV antibodies. They provide free testing, with informed consent, to all who request it, with guarantees of confidentiality. At some of the centres, counselling before and after testing is provided by the medical staff and by members of social movements and organized communities.

160. The ability to diagnose HIV has been significantly affected since 2016 by the unilateral coercive measures adopted against the country, which have delayed regular and adequate purchases of the necessary reagents for testing.

161. With regard to antiretroviral therapy (ARVT), the national programme has set a compulsory national standard which since 2015 complies with global treatment standards set by the World Health Organization requiring *Treatment for All*, regardless of CD4 count.

162. Universal free distribution of ARVT has been a priority for the Government. Most of the cost of ARVT is paid from the fund for strategic public health inputs or the PAHO/WHO Strategic Fund. However, since 2017 the unilateral coercive measures have made it difficult to obtain ARVT and the situation worsened in 2018. In order to deal with this situation, the *Master Plan to strengthen the response to HIV, tuberculosis and malaria from a public health viewpoint* was formulated, making it possible to obtain funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and this has been devoted entirely to the purchase of ARVT. Under this Plan, the distribution of ARVT is monitored jointly with civil society. The dolutegravir/lamivudine/tenofovir formula was obtained and made it possible during

2019 to meet at least 85 per cent of the demand from active population registered in the National AIDS/STD Programme.

163. As part of viral load reduction, this testing is part of the national policy for monitoring ARVT, which must be done at least twice a year in all patients, whether adults or children. However, implementation of this policy has been limited in recent years by the difficulty of obtaining the reagents needed for testing, because of the unilateral coercive measures. In 2019, no national laboratories in the public health system, including the National Institute of Hygiene, were able to perform viral load testing.

164. In 2018 and 2019, prevalence studies of population groups at risk were conducted jointly with UNAIDS and included incidence among trans women and sex workers. Following the publication of the *Manual of Clinical Management of Sexual Violence*, preventive care can be provided to victims of violence, by detection of sexually transmitted diseases, and prompt treatment recommended.

165. As regards attainment of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets, 62 per cent of people know their serological status, 64 per cent are receiving treatment and only 1 per cent know their viral load. This is because of the lag created by the unilateral coercive measures that have affected the country, despite the commitment to actively identify cases in the territories.

166. HIV testing is free of charge and compulsory for all expectant women. An initial test is performed when women first contact the health system, in order to identify positive women in a timely manner so that treatment can be started, and the pregnancy properly managed before 36 weeks have elapsed.

167. In coordination with the international cooperation agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and UNAIDS), the strategy since 2018 has been to identify and monitor through the Ruta Materna in order to provide timely diagnosis and immediate treatment of expectant women. This strategy started with the main maternity centres and training, testing and treatment were provided to the community and outpatient network at the end of 2019 and in 2020.

168. ARVT is given to all infected pregnant women as of the fourteenth week of gestation, regardless of the results of immunological and virological tests. In 2019, because of the difficulty of measuring viral load, consideration was given to including in the treatment plan, following national treatment standards, all women who tested positive for HIV, as confirmed by a second rapid test or a test by a public health laboratory. In addition, 167,910 rapid diagnostic tests were distributed in 2019 and 101,050 by September 2020. This made it possible to control and eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

169. During the period covered by this report, the *Guidelines for diagnosis and syndromatic treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV* were issued and health workers were trained, with priority given to maternity clinics in 2019 and to the community and outpatient network in 2020.

E. Economic empowerment of women

170. Between 2014 and 2020, women's access to credit was expanded both by private and by public banks. Since 2017, at least 45 per cent of loans extended by public banks were reserved for female entrepreneurs. As a result of the policies adopted, women now form the majority of recipients of loans for small and medium-sized industries from public banks. The unilateral coercive measures have impacted credit, causing a decline in the absolute volume of loans that started in 1918 and mainly affected private banks.

Table III
Loans for men and women, by year

Private banks

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>
2014	6 609 436	44.82%	8 135 812	55.18%
2015	8 381 419	46.02%	9 831 587	53.98%
2016	8 894 010	44.95%	10 891 124	55.05%
2017	8 514 404	44.72%	10 525 257	55.28%
2018	7 299 732	45.18%	8 857 585	54.82%
2019	2 525 953	48.24%	2 710 389	51.76%
2020	1 688 505	48.40%	1 800 430	51.60%

Table IV
Loans for men and women, by year

Public banks

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>
2014	2 094 339	51.72%	1 954 846	48.28%
2015	3 026 254	53.03%	2 680 338	46.97%
2016	3 744 679	54.56%	3 118 575	45.44%
2017	4 013 049	55.89%	3 166 706	44.11%
2018	4 115 746	50.60%	4 017 786	49.40%
2019	2 707 632	44.81%	3 334 424	55.19%
2020	1 790 473	38.32%	2 881 992	61.68%

Table V
Loans for small and medium-size businesses
Men and women, by year

Private banks

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>
2014	67 077	45.14%	81 535	54.86%
2015	65 836	45.14%	80 020	54.86%
2016	53 598	43.89%	68 529	56.11%
2017	35 080	37.70%	57 967	62.30 %
2018	11 039	26.92%	29 965	73.08%
2019	747	25.62%	2 169	74.38%
2020	212	28.08%	543	71.92%

Table VI
Loans for small and medium-size businesses
Men and women, by year

Public banks

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>
2014	9 566	42.41%	12 990	57.59%
2015	7 367	44.64%	9 136	55.36%
2016	12 915	57.58%	9 514	42.42%
2017	9 777	53.85%	8 378	46.15%
2018	9 214	59.18%	6 356	40.82%
2019	8 605	60.91%	5 522	39.09%
2020	4 845	64.57%	2 659	35.43%

171. In 2016, the “*I am a Woman*” programme was created in order to involve women in the country’s production processes by providing financing for socially productive projects, training, and comprehensive support. By May 2019, a total of 24,046 women had received financing at interest rates between 1 per cent and 8 per cent without needing to provide security.

172. In another initiative, the Ministry of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality funded the *Madres del Barrio* programme.³⁷ Between 2014 and 2016, this initiative funded 1,569 women involved in social production enterprises and productive organizations. *The Mama Rosa Network of Tourist Sites providing Training* concentrates on tourism, gastronomy and the economy with a gender focus. It started with three inns and an initial funding of \$US15,873,015.

173. The *Professional Women Entrepreneurs* programme provided financial support to women entrepreneurs individually and to women entrepreneurs working in social production companies and family production units and cooperatives, with loans granted by a public bank for a period of eight years, with interest rates ranging from zero to 12 per cent and a grace period of up to one year.

174. In September 2020, the Ministry of People’s Power for the Communities and Social Movements listed a total of 122,814 persons (52.76 per cent of whom were women) participating in community social production organizations.

175. In addition, during the period covered by this report, the Ministry of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality concluded the following agreements to promote the economic empowerment of women:

(a) Agreement on cooperation with the National Institute for Training and Socialist Education to design and implement training programmes for women in the tourism, gastronomy and textile sectors, with certification of attendance at courses and workshops.

(b) Agreement on cooperation with the Simon Rodriguez National Experimental University to conduct training and certification programmes in the areas of tourism, trade and services.

(c) Agreement on cooperation with the Economic and Social Development Bank on the financing of social production projects.

³⁷ The *Madres del Barrio* programme provides financial support to women living in poverty, paying them the equivalent of 80 per cent of the minimum monthly wage.

(d) Agreement on cooperation with the Ministry of People's Power for the Communities and Social Movements to enhance social production projects.

(e) Agreement on tourism training between the Central University's Hotellerie School of the Venezuelan Andes and the Mama Rosa Cabins.

176. The Ministry of People's Power for the Social Process of Labour has organized various technical and productive training programmes for women on production topics, reaching about 150,000 women throughout the country.

177. A Humanized Childbirth logo was created in 2020 to make women involved in the community productive economy aware of the Humanized Childbirth Plan. Women producers are participants in and leaders of this project, since they are responsible for developing a sustainable economy based on home-made products, personal hygiene, natural medicine and diet.

F. Rural women

178. In the period covered by this report, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela adopted various measures to improve the situation and meet the needs of rural women and girls, including access to basic services, justice, economic opportunities, land ownership, credit and politics.

179. According to data provided by the Federal Council of Government, 50.07 per cent of agricultural production projects are headed by women. The Women's Development Bank (BANMUJER) has financed the expansion of productive work by rural women by approving 11,696 loans for the agrarian sector.

180. Among the initiatives taken to create economic opportunities, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, working with the Ministry of People's Power for Agriculture and Land, Café Venezuela, and Cacao Oderi, made arrangements to provide induction, training, technical assistance and advice to social production organizations sponsored by it in the agriculture sector. Mention should also be made of the Cooperation Agreement between the Simón Rodríguez National Experimental University and the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality on sustainable farming training and certification. In addition, three Eva de Pernalet Schools of Sustainable Farming Production opened and are active throughout the country, following an investment of US\$1,269,841 for equipment and supplies.

181. As part of the Technical Cooperation Programme between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, a start was made in 2020 on the project to *reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change and increase the resilience of rural women*.

182. The goal of the *Female Smallholders* programme, created in 2020, is to involve women in the agro-food production sector, with a view to the development of sustainable farming, by empowering rural women and tapping into their ancestral knowledge.

V. Part IV of the Convention

183. In the period covered by this report, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took steps to guarantee the equality of women, including the most disadvantaged groups, and to eliminate discrimination in marriage and family relationships, following the Committee's General Observations.

A. Disadvantaged groups of women

184. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has taken action to ensure the equality of women of African descent and indigenous women, older women, women with a disability, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexual women and women deprived of their liberty.

1. Women of African descent and indigenous women

185. Since its creation, the Ministry of the People's Power for Indigenous Peoples has always been headed by a woman. In addition, there is a National Institute against Racial Discrimination, which reports to the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Relations, Justice and Peace and verifies compliance with public policies designed to prevent and punish racial discrimination and to defend the human rights of the populations of African descent and the indigenous and immigrant populations. These bodies have a differentiated gender approach.

186. The Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality includes in its portfolio the coordination of activities for women of African descent and indigenous women. In 2014, it appointed two multiethnic and pluricultural Ombudspersons for Women's Rights in Kumarakapay, the indigenous sector of Gran Sabana and Santa Elena de Uairen in Bolivar state to assist in the application of justice with a gender focus and comprehensive protection for women victims of violence. In this connection, attention should be drawn to the interagency cooperation between this Ministry and the Ministry of People's Power for Indigenous Peoples, involving training of indigenous women to defend their specific rights.

187. The translation of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence into the Jivi, Ye'kuana and Yanomami languages was published in 2015. Similarly, the Apacuana Programme, which focuses broadly on indigenous women from an ethnic and gender viewpoint, was launched in 2017 by the National Institute for Women.

188. Another step guaranteeing the rights of indigenous women was the approval of the 2017 Basic Guidelines on Human Rights. According to these Guidelines, the attitude of civil servants towards indigenous peoples and communities should be based on and guided by recognition of their existence, their social, political and economic organization, their cultures, habits and customs, languages and religions as well as their habitat and ancestral entitlement to the land that they occupy historically and traditionally and that they need in order to develop and guarantee their way of life. Consequently, civil servants must guarantee the right of indigenous peoples to use their own indigenous language for all applications, petitions and administrative procedures.

189. On 23 October 2015, the symbolic remains of Juana Ramírez *La Avanzadora* were placed in the National Pantheon. Subsequently, on 8 March 2017 (International Women's Day), the symbolic remains of Hipólita, Matea and Apacuana were placed in the National Pantheon, as a tribute to the role in the construction of Venezuelan identity played by indigenous women, women of African descent and women from the popular districts.

190. Other important initiatives for women of African descent were the *Meeting of Black Women* held in May 2016 and the creation in 2017 of the work plan for women of African descent.

191. In 2018, meetings were held on the sectoral work plan for women of African descent and agreements were reached with the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations, in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent. In the same year, the International Day for people of African Descent was celebrated.

192. The 2019-2025 Motherland Plan to promote the economic and social development of the Nation had an ethnic component.

2. Older women

193. Between 2014 and 2020, the Venezuelan Social Security Institute reported that the number of women receiving ongoing pensions increased from 1,545,044 to 2,752,825, accounting for 59.9 per cent of all pensioners.

194. Another important development is “Jobs for Seniors” launched on 22 January 2019 with the goal of enabling adults and seniors to become involved in production, giving them productive jobs as part of the country’s economic, social and cultural development plans. For 2020, over 700,000 seniors registered (51.5 per cent were men and 48.5 per cent were women).

3. Women with a disability

195. For the whole country, women certified as disabled and registered with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities numbered 243,629 or 38.82 per cent of the total population. Of the total women registered, 90 per cent were older than 18 and 10 per cent were 17 years of age or less.

196. Most of the women certified suffered from a neuromusculoskeletal disability (38.06 per cent) or from multiple disabilities (35.24 per cent). As to the causes of the disabilities, 62.89 per cent were acquired and 16.27 per cent were congenital, 19.44 per cent were genetic and 1.39 per cent were hereditary. These figures cover 99.99 per cent of all women in the country with a disability.

197. According to the register and to information given to the National Council for Persons with Disabilities by employers throughout the country, 63.21 per cent of the people with disabilities working in the formal sector are women.

198. In 2015, the Ministry of People’s Power for Women and Gender Equality created the program *Heroines without Barriers*, advocating comprehensive measures to help women with disabilities.

199. The programme *I can do it*, run by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, helps 44.17 per cent of women throughout the country, mainly in the states of Bolívar and Zulia, between 18 and 60 years of age. Among the women covered by the programme, 70.38 per cent have musculoskeletal disabilities, 8.30 per cent have vision disabilities and 7.31 per cent have hearing disabilities.

200. The National Service for Accessible Communication has a programme enabling people who have hearing problems, who are deaf or who are deaf and blind to access information and communication using methods suited to their various disabilities, including sign language, Braille and audiovisual aids. Between 2017 and September 2020, a total of 3,297 women were taught Venezuelan sign language.

201. In addition, the Counselling and Family Programme provides biopsychosocial care (technical, legal and emotional) concerning personal relationships in order to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and of their relatives and representatives, developing their potential and enabling them to develop their skills. Between 2015 and 2020, 67 per cent of the people helped by this Programme were women with disabilities.

202. In the period covered by this report, a total of 56,812 women with visual disabilities were helped by the José Gregorio Hernández Mission.

4. Women and sexual diversity

203. In 2013, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality designed a basic course entitled *Sexual Diversity: Argument and Disagreement*, which was attended by 2,439 people and was aimed at ending discrimination and incitement to hatred against sexually diverse people. In 2014, on the occasion of World Sexual Diversity Day, the *We Are Diversity* training programme was launched.

204. The Advisory Council on Sexual and Gender Diversity was created in 2015 and in 2018 became the Presidential Council on Sexual Diversity. It provides an opportunity for LGBTI organizations to meet with the Executive in order to exchange views on public policies and institutional initiatives in favour of gender equality and support for the sexually diverse population.

205. As far as legislation is concerned, the 2017 Constitutional Act against Hatred and for Peaceful Coexistence and Tolerance³⁸ prohibits messages advocating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; criminalizes the promotion of or incitement to hatred (article 20), mentioning as punishable conduct the promotion of or the incitement to discrimination or violence against a person or group of persons on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; and includes as an aggravating factor of any punishable act the fact that it is committed or intensified because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (article 21).

206. The Basic Guidelines for Civil Servants in the area of Human Rights³⁹ were adopted in 2017 in order to establish binding principles and criteria for the work of civil servants, for the purpose of enhancing respect, guarantees and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In accordance with these Guidelines, the behaviour of civil servants must always respect, guarantee and protect human rights, in accordance with the principles of universality, equality, indivisibility, interdependence, progressiveness, inalienability, interculturality and shared responsibility for human rights. Accordingly, civil servants must refrain from any kind of discriminatory act or attitude of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, social status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, language, political opinion, nationality or origin, age, economic status, disability, health condition or any other personal, legal or social circumstance aimed at or resulting in cancellation of or disregard for the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights.

207. The most significant legal developments include the 2016 ruling No. 1187 of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court which recognized same-sex parenting, interpreting article 75 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to mean that same-sex parents can be heads of families and that the children of these families are protected by the State in the same way as any other children born into a traditional family.

208. As far as regional jurisdictions are concerned, the Government of the Capital District approved Decree No. 006 of 17 May 2016 prohibiting any act of discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, in order to combat homophobia in the city of Caracas. In order to comply with this Decree, the Ministry of People's Power for Culture and Public Defence started to display information posters on its premises indicating that discrimination against members of the LGBTI community is prohibited. In 2018, the Mayoralty of the Libertador Municipality (Caracas) created the Office for Sexual Diversity, which provides legal counsel, training plans and social assistance. In addition, the legislative councils in the Bolívar

³⁸ Official Gazette No. 41.276 dated 10 November 2017.

³⁹ Decree 2.654. Official Gazette No. 41.069 dated 6 January 2017.

and Carabobo states have issued decisions rejecting any kind of discrimination threatening the identity of LGBTI persons in municipalities and communities in their territory and various municipal councils have taken decisions specifically designed to combat discrimination against LGBTI people.

209. In 2017, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality created a work plan concerning sexual diversity, focusing on feminism and human rights for comprehensive care, training, leadership participation and research, working with the sexually diverse population.

210. The 2016-2019 National Human Rights Plan included the creation of specialized procedures in the Ombudsman's Office and the Public Prosecution Service for the promotion and protection of the right to equality and non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The 2019-2025 Plan for the Motherland advocates comprehensive protection for the LGBTI community.

211. In November 2020, the Ombudsman's Office created a special subsidiary office with nation-wide competence for the protection of sexually diverse people, reporting to the Directorate for Matters requiring Special Attention.⁴⁰

5. Female prisoners

212. The period covered by this report saw the introduction of the new Penitentiary System in all women's prisons, under the administration of the Ministry of People's Power for the Penitentiary Service. The System encourages the social rehabilitation of female prisoners through comprehensive plans, projects and policies for them in areas including education, work, culture and sports.

213. In 2020, there were 2,153 female prisoners, distributed between 16 prison facilities. The managerial, disciplinary and custodial staff of these facilities are all female and are kept separate from the men's facilities. The centres have space to accommodate the number of female prisoners specified in the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (Bangkok Rules) and the Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules).

214. The main policies implemented include the *Work Opportunities* plan, designed to develop the work skills of prisoners and to mass produce some agricultural items by setting up factories and production units. The *Luisa Cáceres de Arismendi* programme also encourages women prisoners to form social production units, involving their family members and thus allowing them to do productive work when they leave prison. This programme funded 513 projects using textile raw materials.

215. The Autonomous Institute Funding Prison Work owns over 50 production units in women's prisons working on bread-making, textiles, agriculture, ceramics, ironwork, carpentry, general services, maintenance, home-made soap, childcare, silk screening and hairdressing, among other pursuits. Between 2014 and 2020, over 2,500 women prisoners were involved, and the hours spent working for their own benefit were deducted from their sentences when they were serving a sentence of imprisonment. Between 2015 and 2020, the Institute served a nation-wide population of 2,576 women prisoners

216. By guaranteeing the right to education, the Ministry of People's Power for the Penitentiary Service is promoting the intellectual development of women prisoners through Education Missions (Robinson, Ribas and Sucre) at the primary, secondary and university levels respectively. As regards non-formal education, various workshops and courses are offered, as is training geared to productive work. Between

⁴⁰ Resolution 2020-062. Official Gazette No. 42.007 dated 13 November 2020.

2015 and 2020, 1,985 women prisoners received formal education at the national level.

217. The Orchestra and Chorus Network in the country's prison facilities, as well as groups helping adolescents in trouble with the law, use classical music as a means of social readjustment for prisoners through learning, practising and enjoying music. In 2020, there were 15 Symphony Orchestra groups for adults. Over half of the participants in the various groups are women.

218. As far as health care is concerned, frequent medical briefings are held on women's health topics, including diagnosis of breast and cervical cancer. The Ministry of People's Power for the Penitentiary System pays special attention to pregnant and breastfeeding women. Accordingly, it has selected the National Women's Advisory Institute to be the only penitentiary facility allowed to accommodate these women in these conditions and circumstances who are pregnant or caring for children under three years of age, since it has enough space for his purpose.

B. Marriage and family relations

219. Ruling No. 739 of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court repealed articles 394 and 395 of the Criminal Code because they discriminated against women and undermined the values and principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity embodied in articles 2, 3 and 21 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

220. In 2020, out of a total of 3,178,000 housing units constructed by the Great Housing Mission for Venezuela, 2,555,512 or 80.46 per cent were allocated to female heads of household. And 81.5 per cent of the Mission's loans were made to women.

VI. Other recommendations of the Committee

221. After studying the Committee's concluding observations in document [CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/7-8](#), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela adopted various measures relating to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, the dissemination of the concluding observations and the ratification of international human rights treaties.

A. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

222. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela confirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In addition to noting the observations concerning the Convention, it is taking action in response to the Committee's general observations and to the 12 Critical Areas of Concern noted in the Beijing Platform for Action, such as:

1. Women and armed conflict and General Recommendation No. 30

223. In 2013, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality launched the *Women's movement for peace and life*, which enrolled 12,000 women in prevention and awareness activities. In 2014, women from all walks of national life were invited to discussions on peace and life. In 2017, the strategic plan and plan of action for the movement were created. In 2017 and 2018, the First and Second Binational Congresses of Women from Colombia and Venezuela were held to strengthen peacekeeping under female leadership, with the participation of

nongovernmental organizations from both countries. The goal was to implement the joint agenda for peace and eradication of instances of inequality in common territory, with an intercultural focus and under the leadership of the Wayuu women. 1,200 women from the two countries participated and agreement was reached on a road map for gender-based peace.

2. Women and the environment and General Recommendation No. 37

224. Over the last five years there has been an increase in female leadership in the national electricity industry, where women are occupying senior posts in a traditionally masculine field, reaching the 2018 goal of filling 69 per cent of such posts with women.

225. In the area of atomic energy, women are heading technical cooperation programmes with the International Atomic Energy Agency, participating in WiNArca, where the WiN Venezuela segment is being implemented. There is also a *Gender Mainstreaming* project, which has produced a handbook on the inclusion of a gender perspective during the diagnosis, design, implementation and monitoring phases of alternative energy projects. Mention should also be made of the *Sowing Light programme* and the *Energy Panels Programme*, which reverses the feminization of poverty by providing free photovoltaic systems, bringing electricity to isolated, indigenous and frontier communities.

B. Sustainable Development Goals

226. In 2018, the Office of the General Comptroller of the Republic, working with the Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Supreme Audit Institutions, conducted an audit on the preparations made by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with emphasis on Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). The audit showed an optimal efficiency index for the implementation by Venezuela of the 2030 Agenda, with emphasis on Goal 5.

227. The Goals are specifically incorporated in the 2019-2025 Motherland Plan, and a total of 29 general and specific national goals relating to various areas, results and methods for eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against women have been established in relation to gender equality (Goal 5).

C. Dissemination

228. The National Human Rights Plan of Venezuela includes a unit responsible for relations with international human rights bodies, including the following programmatic activities: (i) Creation of awareness of the content of the rights recognized in international human rights treaties and of the possibility of invoking them in court, particularly among the components of the justice system and other entities responsible for their application; and (ii) Broad dissemination of the international human rights instruments accepted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and recommendations from the United Nations system, including publication in accessible formats such as Braille and audio recordings.

229. The concluding observations were disseminated promptly to the relevant institutions at all levels (national, region and local). They were also circulated in communities, by inclusion on the websites of the public agencies responsible for human rights policies.

D. Technical assistance

230. In September 2019, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights signed a memorandum of understanding to specify arrangements for cooperation and technical assistance concerning human rights. Following up on the memorandum, a work plan was drafted on the technical assistance to be provided each year to various government bodies. It was also agreed that human rights staff from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could be present in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to perform their duties. The memorandum of understanding was renewed and expanded in September 2020.

231. The memorandum of understanding and the work plan mainstream the topic of gender. As part of the cooperation and technical assistance, a start was made on the creation of a national mechanism to follow up on the recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies.

E. Ratification of other treaties

232. In May 2014, the National Assembly approved the Act ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families.⁴¹ The instrument of ratification was deposited on 25 October 2016.

⁴¹ Official Gazette No. 40.405 dated 6 May 2014.