



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

Distr.: General  
6 June 2024

Original: English

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Singapore\*

1. The Committee considered the sixth periodic report of Singapore (CEDAW/C/SGP/6) at its 2065th and 2066th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2065 and CEDAW/C/SR.2066), held on 16 May 2024. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/6, and the responses of Singapore are contained in CEDAW/C/SGP/RQ/6.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its sixth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group (CEDAW/C/SGP/RQ/6). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development, Sun Xueling, and included representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Communications and Information, the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore) and the Attorney-General's Chambers, as well as the Permanent Representative, Umej Singh Bhatia, and other representatives of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2017 of the State party's previous report (CEDAW/C/SGP/5) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-eighth session (13–31 May 2024).



- (a) Amendment to the Penal Code to increase the penalties for selected sexual offences, in 2021;
- (b) Amendment to the Penal Code to double the maximum penalty for persons convicted for crimes against migrant domestic workers, in 2020;
- (c) Amendment to the Protection from Harassment Act and the establishment of a specialized Protection from Harassment Court, in 2019;
- (d) Amendments to the Penal Code to repeal marital immunity for rape without qualification and to enhance penalties for select offences, in 2019;
- (e) Fatwa on joint tenancy recognizing the equal rights of the female spouse to house ownership regardless of her financial contribution to the purchase of the house, in 2019.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or establishment of the following:

- (a) White Paper on Singapore Women's Development, in 2022;
- (b) Tripartite Committee on Workplace Fairness, to strengthen anti-discrimination efforts in the workplace, in 2021;
- (c) Work-life harmony initiatives, in 2021;
- (d) Inter-Agency Task Force, Strategy and Action Plan on Child and Maternal Health and Well-being, in 2021;
- (e) Multi-stakeholder Task Force on Family Violence, in 2020;
- (f) Tripartite Standard on Unpaid Leave for Unexpected Care Needs, in 2018;
- (g) Tripartite Standards on Flexible Work Arrangements, in 2017.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in 2017.

### **C. Sustainable Development Goals**

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

### **D. Parliament**

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

observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

## **E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations**

### **General context**

9. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's commitment to mainstreaming gender equality and women's rights in its legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks, and the fact that it ranked ninth out of 193 countries in the human development index in 2022. It is, however, concerned about the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes against women and girls, reports of harassment and reprisals against women human rights defenders and women's rights activists, the maintenance of the death penalty, and the reluctance of the State party to withdraw its reservations to the Convention, ratify the Optional Protocol thereto and establish an independent national human rights institution. The Committee notes with concern the limited progress made in addressing the situation of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women and girls who are facing historical and intersecting forms of discrimination, namely, Muslim women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, older women, women in detention, women migrant domestic workers, women human rights defenders and journalists.

**10. The Committee urges the State party to uphold its commitment to women's human rights, including the right to life, the right of access to justice and the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. It calls upon the State party to strengthen the application of the Convention in legal proceedings in the State party for the benefit of all women, particularly Muslim women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, women in detention, women migrant domestic workers, women human rights defenders and journalists.**

### **Reservations and Optional Protocol to the Convention**

11. The Committee remains concerned that the State party maintains its reservations to article 2 (a)–(f), article 11 (2) and article 16 (1) (a), (c) and (h) and (2) of the Convention, which are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention and continue to constitute an obstacle to the implementation of the Convention as a whole.

**12. Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 9), the Committee recommends that the State party review its reservations to article 2 (a)–(f), article 11 (2) and article 16 (1) (a), (c) and (h) and (2) of the Convention, with a view to withdrawing them within an established time frame. In doing so, the State party should take into consideration the best practices of countries with similar cultural and religious backgrounds and legal systems that have successfully harmonized their national legislation with their international human rights obligations, in particular those under the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure the meaningful participation of religious and community leaders and members of civil society organizations, in particular women's organizations, in that process.**

13. The Committee regrets the State party's position expressed during the dialogue with regard to its decision not to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention owing to the existence of a robust domestic complaints mechanism.

**14. The Committee reminds the State party that the Optional Protocol to the Convention provides for an increased protection of women in the State party and**

**contains additional procedures that allow for further monitoring or the receipt of individual communications, and encourages the State party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol.**

#### **Constitutional and legislative framework**

15. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The absence in the State party's legislation of a definition of discrimination against women covering both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention;

(b) The lack of effective application of the principle of intersectionality to address intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women belonging to disadvantaged groups, in particular Muslim women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, older women, women in detention, women migrant domestic workers and women human rights defenders.

**16. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3, para. 14, CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 12, and CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 11) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Incorporate into its Constitution or other appropriate legislation a definition of discrimination against women covering direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls;**

(b) **Apply the principle of intersectionality in order to ensure equality and access to public services for women facing intersecting forms of discrimination.**

#### **Women's access to justice**

17. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That the State party retains the death penalty in its laws and applies it in practice;

(b) That the courts of the State party reportedly often fail to consider pertinent circumstances and mitigating factors, such as evidence of trauma, economic pressure, child marriage, domestic and gender-based violence, as well as intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, in criminal proceedings against women or decisions on child custody or visitation rights following divorce;

(c) That women facing capital punishment are subject to solitary confinement and do not systematically benefit from the Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences at all stages owing to a lack of qualified personnel with expertise on gender-sensitive administration of justice.

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

(a) **Issue a moratorium on the death penalty, halt the execution of all women on death row and consider commuting all death sentences, including those against women, into prison sentences;**

(b) **Ensure a gender-responsive application of the law so that evidence of trauma, economic pressures, child marriage, domestic and gender-based**

violence, as well as intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities are adequately taken into consideration in criminal and civil proceedings;

(c) **Protect women in detention, including women political prisoners and women facing the death penalty, discontinue the excessive use of solitary confinement and set up independent and confidential complaint procedures that are easily accessible for women in detention, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/175 of 17 December 2015 and contained in the annex thereto;**

(d) **Ensure that women have access to affordable and, if necessary, free legal aid, provide training for the judiciary and law enforcement officials on women's human rights and gender-sensitive interrogation and investigation methods at all stages, and address judicial gender bias.**

#### **Women human rights defenders**

19. The Committee notes with concern that women human rights defenders in the State party often face intimidation, harassment and threats, and that their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are frequently subject to excessive restrictions. It is further concerned that lawyers and women human rights defenders representing women on death row or advocating for the abolition of the death penalty face harassment and intimidation in the State party.

20. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recalls that any erosion of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly constitutes a violation of the Convention and other human rights treaties, and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt effective measures for the protection of women human rights defenders, journalists, political activists and lawyers defending women facing the death penalty so that they can freely carry out their advocacy for women's human rights and exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association free from harassment, surveillance or undue restrictions, including arbitrary arrest and prosecution, and free from reprisals for having engaged or sought to engage with the Committee;**

(b) **Effectively investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of acts of harassment, gender-based violence and discrimination, intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders, including online; establish a specific registry of such incidents; guarantee the rights of women human rights defenders to due process of law and to equal protection of the law; and provide effective remedies and reparation to victims;**

(c) **Raise awareness of the contribution of women human rights defenders, political activists, journalists and non-governmental organizations, especially those headed by women, to the advancement of women's rights in the State party.**

#### **Women and peace and security**

21. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's participation in the first Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2017, the launch of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry in 2018, the first regional symposium on implementing the women,

peace and security agenda in ASEAN, in 2019, and the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's role for Sustainable Peace and Security in 2020. However, it notes with concern the lack of information on the number and role of women participating in negotiating delegations, in particular at the decision-making level.

**22. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to increase efforts to ensure women's equal participation in delegations negotiating peace processes, in particular at the decision-making level, and collect statistical information in this regard.**

#### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

23. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to strengthen the mandate of the Office for Women's Development under the Ministry of Social and Family Development and of the Inter-Ministry Committee on the implementation of the Convention. However, it notes with concern the lack of information on the use of gender budgeting as a tool for more effective and transparent implementation of gender policies and gender mainstreaming across all government departments.

**24. The Committee recommends that the State party explicitly integrate gender-responsive budgeting into all chapters of the State budget and include effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms across all sectors and levels of government.**

#### **National human rights institution**

25. The Committee regrets that the State party has not established a national human rights institution in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

**26. The Committee urges the State party to establish an independent human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, including women's rights, in accordance with the Paris Principles (annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/134). It also recommends that the State party seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in this regard.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

27. The Committee notes with appreciation the establishment of the Council for Board Diversity in January 2019 to increase the number of women on boards of listed companies, statutory boards and non-profit organizations. It is, however, concerned that women continue to be underrepresented in ministerial posts, the judiciary, the police and the diplomatic service, in particular at decision-making levels.

**28. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 17) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt temporary special measures, such as quotas, administrative orders, special scholarships, affirmative procurement and financial incentives for hiring women, and establish time-bound targets to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as ministerial posts, the judiciary, the police and the diplomatic service, at decision-making levels;**

(b) **Systematically collect data on the impact of temporary special measures and include such data in its next periodic report.**

#### **Discriminatory stereotypes**

29. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That, despite the State party's efforts to increase the availability of quality preschools and care services for older persons, women are still considered as the primary caregivers of children and older family members owing to the persistence of stereotypes on the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which impede equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between women and men;

(b) That, despite the growing recognition of the importance of fathers' involvement in the lives of their children and the extension of paternity leave, there is a lack of public awareness-raising campaigns to eliminate stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women as the primary and sole caregivers in the household, and to educate men and boys on gender stereotypes to ensure equal partnerships and promote equal sharing of responsibilities within the family;

(c) The persistence of discriminatory stereotypes and stereotypical portrayals of women in educational materials and in the media.

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

(a) **Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy, including for the online domain, targeting community and religious leaders, teachers, girls and boys, and women and men to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, and develop and introduce a set of targets and indicators to systematically measure the impact of the strategic interventions undertaken;**

(b) **Provide capacity-building for relevant public officials, the media and private sector representatives to enable them to address discriminatory stereotypes, including through gender-responsive language, and promote positive media portrayals of women as active drivers of development;**

(c) **Conduct awareness-raising to encourage more men to avail themselves of paternity leave and shared parental leave to promote equal sharing of domestic and childcare responsibilities, as well as responsible fatherhood.**

#### **Female genital mutilation or cutting**

31. The Committee is concerned at the significant number of women and girls in the State party, particularly in Muslim communities, who have undergone or are at risk of female genital mutilation or cutting.

32. **The Committee stresses that female genital mutilation, female circumcision and female genital cutting cannot be justified on religious grounds and constitute a harmful practice that seeks to assert male control over women's and girls' bodies and sexuality and violates the Convention, irrespective of whether or not these practices are performed within or outside a medical institution. It recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Criminalize all forms of female genital mutilation, ensuring that such criminalization cannot be overruled by fatwas or other rulings issued by religious or clerical authorities, in accordance with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general**

comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019), as revised, on harmful practices, and target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Conduct awareness-raising and educational campaigns, in particular among medical staff, practitioners, parents, community leaders, religious scholars, women and girls, and men and boys, aimed at promoting understanding of the criminal nature of and the need to eliminate female genital mutilation;

(c) Provide victims and at-risk women and girls with information about available mechanisms to file complaints against perpetrators of female genital mutilation and ensure their access to legal aid and quality social and rehabilitation services;

(d) Strengthen data collection on the number of women and girls who have been subjected to female genital mutilation or cutting for purposes of the design and implementation of tailored and gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and budgets.

#### **Gender-based violence against women**

33. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The absence of legislation specifically criminalizing domestic violence, its social legitimization, women's underreporting of domestic violence owing to their fear of stigmatization and the low prosecution and conviction rates for cases of domestic violence;

(b) The increase in online violence involving image-based sexual abuse, including non-consensual distribution of sexual, nude, or intimate photos or videos and/or images of women and girls, despite measures taken by the State party to combat gender-based online violence, such as the adoption of the Online Criminal Harms Act in 2023 and the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act in 2022.

34. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt legislation to ensure that all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and online violence, are specifically criminalized, and take into account the special protection needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, including women with disabilities, migrant women, older women, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) Strengthen the implementation of the Online Criminal Harms Act, the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act and other regulatory procedures and due diligence mechanisms to hold social media companies accountable for user-generated content used in incidents of online violence and harassment and for the prompt removal of such content; ensure that such companies have effective reporting mechanisms; and ensure that there are processes in place for the State party to bring perpetrators of online violence and harassment to justice;

(c) Intensify awareness-raising for the general public on the criminal nature of all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence, and on the need to enable women to report such cases without fear of reprisals, stigmatization or revictimization;

(d) Ensure that women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence have access to affordable and, if necessary, free legal aid; ease the burden of proof on complainants; ensure affordable access to forensic evidence;

**and continue to build the capacity of judges, prosecutors, the police and other law enforcement officers on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods in cases of gender-based violence against women;**

**(e) Strengthen victim support services and protection, including through the provision of a 24/7 hotline, adequate and accessible shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and economic support to women and girls victims of gender-based violence in the State party.**

#### **Trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution**

35. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to strengthen its legal and policy framework to combat trafficking in women and girls and implement its National Approach Against Trafficking in Persons (2016–2026). However, it remains concerned that the State party continues to be a destination and transit country for trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, for purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. In particular, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) That, despite the fact that the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act meets the definition of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, there have been no prosecutions and convictions under the Act since 2020;

(b) The lack of a provision in the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act on the right of victims of trafficking not to be prosecuted for legal infractions (so-called non-punishment clause);

(c) The lack of coordinated efforts, including legislative and policy measures, to eliminate trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation of women migrant domestic workers, and the insufficient priority given to the prevention and identification of risk factors in the State party;

(d) The limited awareness among police and other law enforcement officers about trafficking indicators, including signs of coercion, such as passport retention, debt bondage, non-payment of wages and forced confinement, as well as the lack of gender-sensitive procedures for dealing with victims of trafficking;

(e) The lack of cooperation with civil society organizations on victim identification and assistance.

**36. Recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Ensure that all cases of trafficking, including sex trafficking, are investigated and prosecuted and that perpetrators and their accomplices receive sentences that are commensurate with the gravity of the crime;**

**(b) Amend the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act to incorporate the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking and ensure that all women and girls who are victims of trafficking, without exception, are exempt from arrest, detention, prosecution and punishment for irregular entry or stay in the State party, lack of documentation or for their involvement in unlawful activities to the extent that such involvement is a direct consequence of their situation as victims of trafficking;**

**(c) Ensure that victims of trafficking can report their cases without fear of deportation or retribution;**

(d) Provide capacity-building for the judiciary, law enforcement officials, immigration officers, border guards and social workers to ensure that victims of trafficking, including women migrant domestic workers, are not inadvertently placed in detention or subject to removal procedures, and that the national legal and policy framework to combat trafficking in women and girls and gender-sensitive procedures for the early identification and referral of victims to appropriate services are implemented;

(e) Strengthen capacity-building for law enforcement officials and cooperation with civil society organizations, including through strengthening their human, technical and financial resources, to ensure that victims of trafficking are identified, assisted and protected at an early stage, including through the operation of mobile units, and to guarantee the implementation of safe disclosure procedures and the availability safe spaces, targeting in particular sites where displaced and migrant women and girls are accommodated, registered or detained;

(f) Ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on trafficking, disaggregated by age, sex, nationality of victims and forms of trafficking.

#### **Participation in political and public life**

37. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The absence of statutory quotas for women's representation in Parliament and for their leadership of political parties;

(b) Women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions in the Government, the judiciary, the public service, the foreign service, academia and international organizations;

(c) Women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions in the private sector and on boards of directors in the State party;

(d) Women's low participation in grass-roots movements, as well as the lack of measures to collect and integrate the views of women grass-roots leaders in the formulation of national laws and policies.

38. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Introduce targeted measures, including temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, such as increased quotas and targeted campaign financing, to increase the representation of women in Parliament and at all levels of government, in the judiciary, the public service, the foreign service, academia and international organizations, in particular at decision-making levels;

(b) Provide campaign financing and capacity-building to women politicians and women candidates on political campaigning, leadership and negotiation skills, and raise awareness, in cooperation with the media, among politicians, religious and community leaders and the general public on the importance of the full, independent and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life as a requirement for achieving political stability and sustainable development in the State party;

(c) Provide capacity-building and training to women managers in the private sector, sensitize private sector entities on the importance of women's equal participation in leadership positions, and incentivize public and private

**listed companies to increase the number of women in positions of decision-making and on boards of directors, including in the 100 top listed companies;**

**(d) Strengthen women's participation in grass-roots movements and ensure that their views are taken into account in the formulation of national laws and policies.**

### **Nationality**

39. The Committee notes the position of the State party with regard to the non-acceptance of any person seeking political asylum or refugee status, regardless of their ethnicity or place of origin, owing to the size and density of population of the country, as well as the absence of plans to establish national asylum and refugee determination procedures or to ratify relevant international conventions. In particular, it notes with concern:

(a) The absence of a legal framework for granting international protection, as well as the absence of sufficient safeguards against refoulement, which result in incidences of denial of entry, deportation and refoulement of women without an assessment of their international protection needs;

(b) That the applicable legal provisions on citizenship under article 121 of the Constitution do not contain legal safeguards to ensure that any child born in the State party, who would otherwise be stateless, acquires Singaporean citizenship;

(c) That a child born outside Singapore to a citizen by descent may become stateless if the parent has not met the residence requirements stipulated in section 122 (3) of the Constitution, and that children and youths (up to the age of 21 years) are at risk of statelessness owing to government orders depriving children of nationality in cases of the Singaporean parent's renunciation or deprivation of citizenship.

**40. With reference to its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Formulate and adopt national asylum and refugee status determination procedures, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to protect asylum-seekers and refugees under the jurisdiction of the State party;**

**(b) Review its legal provisions on citizenship to facilitate the exercise of the right of every child to a nationality; introduce legal safeguards to ensure that every child born in the State party who would otherwise be stateless acquires Singaporean citizenship; modify the residence requirements for parents who are citizens by descent, so that they can always transmit their citizenship to their children if the children would otherwise be stateless; and prohibit the withdrawal of citizenship of a child on account of the parent's renunciation or deprivation of citizenship, if the child would otherwise become stateless;**

**(c) Accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol thereto, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

### **Education**

41. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's significant efforts in the field of education. It also welcomes the replacement of the rhetoric of "Asian values" with a universal human rights discourse that promotes the right to education. However, it notes with concern:

(a) That despite those efforts, women remain underrepresented in non-traditional fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and information and communications technology, in particular at the tertiary level, owing in part to the persistence of gender stereotypes, as well as the “leaky pipeline phenomenon”, that is, the high dropout rates of women pursuing a career pathway in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

(b) That the high achievements of girls in education do not translate into labour market opportunities, as well as the lack of education and training for girls and women on artificial intelligence, financial technology (fintech), “femtech” (technology to support women’s health), biotech, green technology, emerging green jobs, green engineering solutions and green finance;

(c) The increasing number of cases of cyberviolence and cyberbullying, often targeting girls, in schools in the State party;

(d) That the existing sexuality education curriculum is based on the concept of abstinence until marriage and lacks concepts such as consent, gender-based violence against women, contraception, responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases;

(e) The lack of measures taken to ensure the right of migrant women, including women migrant domestic workers, to education and vocational training.

**42. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party raise awareness of the importance of girls’ education as a basis for their empowerment, and:**

(a) **Raise awareness among parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders, women, men, girls and boys of the importance of girls’ and women’s education to their economic empowerment, personal development and autonomy; combat structural barriers that deter girls from choosing non-traditional fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and information and communications technology; and address the high dropout rate of women on career paths related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (“leaky pipeline phenomenon”);**

(b) **Develop national policies to ensure that progress in education for women and girls translates into improved employment prospects for them; promote and encourage girls and women to enrol in non-traditional fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and information and communications technology, including through orientation programmes and career counselling in secondary and higher education; and support the development of leadership skills, critical thinking and the ability to lead and take decisions among women and girls, including for emerging green jobs, green engineering solutions and green finance;**

(c) **Strengthen regulations on the protection of pupils, including girls, from harassment, disinformation, cyberviolence and cyberbullying; raise awareness of the risks of cyberviolence and cyberbullying among students, parents, teachers and the general public; and monitor the adoption of zero-tolerance policies for handling cases of harassment and cyberbullying of students, including girls;**

(d) **Strengthen the effective implementation of comprehensive sexuality education at all levels of education and ensure that it includes: (i) inclusive and accessible content on gender equality, including on women’s rights and the harmful effects of gender-based violence against women and girls; (ii) age-**

appropriate sexuality education, with particular attention paid to the concept of consent, responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases; and (iii) education on human rights and peace;

(e) Take measures, including temporary special measures, such as financial incentives, special scholarships and tax exemptions for employers, to ensure that women migrant workers, including women migrant domestic workers, and all women and girls belonging to vulnerable and marginalized communities have access to education and vocational training.

### **Employment**

43. The Committee notes the decrease in the gender pay gap from 6.7 per cent in 2018 to 6.0 per cent in 2023, and the increase of paternity leave from two to four weeks, on a voluntary basis, in 2024. It also notes the establishment of the Tripartite Committee on Workplace Fairness in 2021. However, it notes with concern:

(a) That workplace fairness legislation has not yet been submitted to Parliament;

(b) The limited use of paternity leave by fathers;

(c) The disproportionate burden placed on women for unpaid care work, which constitutes a barrier to their economic participation;

(d) That, despite the establishment of the Workplace Harassment Resource and Recourse Centre in 2019, women continue to face sexual harassment in the workplace.

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

(a) **Adopt workplace fairness legislation and ensure that it covers indirect discrimination, sexual harassment in the workplace, and discrimination based on disability and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and Muslim women;**

(b) **Strengthen programmes to encourage more men to avail themselves of paternity leave;**

(c) **Recognize, reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work placed on women by providing affordable childcare facilities, care services for older persons and incentives to enable women and men to balance work and family responsibilities, and by conducting awareness-raising campaigns to promote equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between women and men;**

(d) **Ensure that women victims of sexual harassment have access to effective remedies, their complaints are effectively investigated, perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished, and victims are protected from retaliation; and ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization.**

### **Women migrant workers**

45. The Committee notes the position of the State party concerning its reservation to article 11 (2) of the Convention “that legislation in respect of article 11 is unnecessary for the minority of women who do not fall within the ambit of Singapore’s employment legislation”. However, the Committee notes that foreign work permit holders constitute 30 per cent of the State party’s workforce, including a large proportion of women migrant domestic workers. It notes with concern:

(a) That migrant domestic workers, most of whom are migrant women, are not covered under the Employment Act, but rather under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, which lacks protections of basic labour rights, including limitations on working hours and provisions for overtime pay, annual leave and medical leave, and exposes them to economic and physical abuse, risk of trafficking and exploitation;

(b) The absence of specific legislation regulating domestic employment that includes provisions regarding the effective protection of migrant domestic workers from abuse, exploitation and violence, or that provides for labour inspections of domestic households, and the absence of penalties imposed on employers for withholding the passports of migrant domestic workers, despite legislation prohibiting that practice, or for failing to provide adequate housing, food, medical expenses, daily breaks and weekly rest days;

(c) The absence of effective complaint mechanisms with adequate enforcement measures against employers engaging in abusive practices and the denial of the right of women migrant domestic workers to obtain redress for wrongful dismissals from the Employment Claims Tribunal;

(d) That it is currently illegal for women migrant workers, including migrant domestic workers, to become pregnant and that they are subject to mandatory and regular testing for pregnancy and are deported when pregnancy is detected.

**46. The Committee, recalling target 8.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on the protection of labour rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers; its general recommendation No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, in particular women overseas workers; its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration; and its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3, para. 24, CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 32, and CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 35), recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act provides for basic labour rights, including limitations on working hours, and for overtime pay, annual leave, medical leave, and protection from economic and physical abuse and exploitation;**

(b) **Adopt legislation regulating domestic employment that includes provisions on the effective protection of migrant domestic workers, particularly women migrant domestic workers, from abuse, exploitation and violence; that explicitly prohibits and sanctions the withholding of passports of migrant domestic workers and the failure to provide adequate housing, food, medical expenses, daily breaks and weekly rest days; and that provides for free legal aid;**

(c) **Establish a confidential and independent complaint mechanism for women migrant workers under abusive employment contracts and conduct regular labour inspections of workplaces and dormitories of women migrant workers;**

(d) **Repeal national legislation that requires mandatory testing for pregnancy of work permit holders, including women migrant domestic workers, and that mandates their deportation on grounds of pregnancy;**

(e) **Ratify the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization.**

## Health

47. The Committee notes the progress made by the State party to improve women's health and well-being, including their mental health. However, it notes with concern:

- (a) That women migrant domestic workers do not have access to adequate health-care coverage or regular medical check-ups, which results in late diagnoses and the need to return to their countries for treatment;
- (b) That the prohibition of pregnancy for women migrant domestic workers may cause them to resort to unsafe abortion;
- (c) That the Voluntary Sterilization Act provides for the sterilization of women with disabilities on the basis of a court order declaring that it is necessary and in the best interest of the person concerned;
- (d) That women in prostitution do not have access to health services;
- (e) That single women do not have access to or ownership over their frozen genetic material.

48. **The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party:**

- (a) Ensure that women migrant domestic workers have access to adequate health-care coverage and regular medical check-ups;**
- (b) Repeal the mandatory testing for pregnancy of women migrant domestic workers and ensure that they have adequate access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including safe abortion and post-abortion services;**
- (c) Repeal the Voluntary Sterilization Act and expressly and effectively protect women and girls with disabilities from sterilization without their free and informed personal consent, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2022 (CRPD/C/SGP/CO/1, para. 36);**
- (d) Ensure that women in prostitution have universal access to health care;**
- (e) Allow women access to and ownership of their frozen genetic material, and its fertilization, regardless of their marital status.**

## Economic and social benefits

49. The Committee notes with appreciation the improvements to Muslim women's prospects for financial security through fatwas on women's equal rights to house ownership. The Committee is, however, concerned:

- (a) At the persistence of gender inequalities in access to socioeconomic benefits; that 38 per cent of women over the age of 60 years live in poverty, despite existing support schemes; and at the marginalization of disadvantaged groups of women, including older women, women with disabilities, women heads of households, widows, women living with HIV/AIDS, women ex-prisoners and migrant women, in particular women migrant domestic workers;
- (b) At the lack of measures to conduct a gender-impact assessment of the Caregiver Support Action Plan (2019);
- (c) At the persistence of gender-based wealth disparity and women's lower investment capacity;

(d) That only 4 out of 16 board members of the national sports associations are women; and at the discriminatory content in the futsal league rules.

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

(a) **Address the feminization of poverty, including by mainstreaming gender into the national strategy for social protection, and ensure that women, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, in particular older women, women with disabilities, women heads of household, widows, women living with HIV/AIDS, women ex-prisoners and migrant women, in particular women migrant domestic workers, can meaningfully participate in the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and renewal of these strategies and have adequate access to social and economic benefits;**

(b) **Carry out a gender impact analysis of the Caregiver Support Action Plan, tax reforms and relevant national legislation, and, on the basis of the findings of that analysis, develop and implement policies and programmes that promote women's economic empowerment and take into account the impact of tax reforms on women, especially single women heads of household and women living in poverty;**

(c) **Introduce gender bonds (e.g. Orange Bond Initiative) or affirmative procurement measures for public-private partnership projects, initiatives linked to environmental, social and governance causes and the environmental and social impact assessment policy framework to galvanize gender-responsive private sector investment; and ensure compliance with the Convention and business and human rights principles in areas such as the extractive industry, the blue and green economies, digital technology, artificial intelligence, sovereign wealth funds and other innovative schemes within the context of the national development priority agenda;**

(d) **Establish incentives and sanctions to address the intersections between the segmented sports labour market, sports gender ideology and gender stratification in sports in the State party, and eliminate discriminatory provisions from the futsal league rules.**

**Disadvantaged groups of women**

*Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women*

51. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of discrimination in law and in practice against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, in particular:

(a) The absence of legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;

(b) Deeply embedded homophobic and transphobic attitudes; discriminatory stereotypes, including in the media; the persistence of discrimination in education, employment, family relations, housing and access to health services, in particular sexual and reproductive health and rights; and higher levels of exposure of such persons to gender-based violence in the domestic sphere and in public spaces.

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

(a) **Adopt legislative and policy measures to explicitly incorporate provisions on legal protection from discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(b) **Protect the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in all areas covered by the Convention; conduct awareness-raising activities to address their stigmatization in society; and ensure that they**

**enjoy equal rights to education, employment, housing and health care, in particular sexual and reproductive health services, and in family relations, as well as protection from violence and abuse.**

*Women with disabilities*

53. The Committee notes with concern that women with disabilities face intersecting forms of discrimination in the State party, especially with regard to access to justice, education, employment and health care. It is also concerned at the lack of measures taken to support mothers with disabilities so that they can exercise their family and parental rights.

**54. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 18 (1991) on disabled women, and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2022 (CRPD/C/SGP/CO/1), the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that women and girls with disabilities are able to access justice, inclusive education, employment and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, and that they can exercise their family and parental rights on an equal basis with other rights holders.**

*Older women*

55. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to support older women, including with regard to health, pension benefits, social support and digital literacy. However, the Committee notes with concern the lack of sufficient care services to meet the needs of older women, especially single older women and those without family support.

**56. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights, the Committee recommends that the State party pay special attention to the precarious situation of older women; develop measures that adequately address their health, economic and emotional situation in order to prevent poverty and isolation; and ensure the availability of affordable care services to meet the needs of older women, especially single older women and those without family support.**

**Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

57. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's international and national commitments to addressing climate change, the national target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, the development of the Singapore Green Plan 2030 and the Third National Climate Change Study. However, it notes with concern that as a low-lying island, the State party faces risks from climate change impacts, including sea level rise, flooding and drought resulting from intense weather variability, and a rise in temperatures; these impacts could in turn threaten food security and result in a public health crisis and displacement. The Committee is particularly concerned at the insufficient participation of women in decision-making related to climate change and disaster risk management, as well as the lack of gender-responsive budgeting in climate-related sectors.

**58. The Committee recommends that, in line with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the State party review its climate change and disaster response strategies, taking into account the negative effects of climate change on the livelihoods of women, and ensure that women are equally represented with men in the development, adoption and implementation of legislation, policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction, in particular by:**

(a) **Ensuring the incorporation of a gender perspective in climate change and disaster risk reduction legislation, policies, financing and programmes, including economic infrastructure sectors and the green economy, renewable energy and clean technology; and empowering women by equipping them with knowledge to effectively participate in climate change-related decision-making and the development of adaptation strategies and actions that build women's and girls' resilience to the impacts of climate change;**

(b) **Introducing effective gender budgeting for climate financing and climate change adaptation activities, including those aimed at financing and encouraging a sustainable blue economy, to ensure that such initiatives are fully inclusive of women, promote women's empowerment and support the climate change agenda to help women and girls adapt effectively to climate change and disasters;**

(c) **Promoting women's active participation in the creation and implementation of new funding arrangements for responding to environmental damage, as decided during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in 2022.**

#### **Marriage and family relations**

59. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to increase the representation of women in key positions in the country's religious institutions, including the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, and to strengthen the protection of foreign spouses of Singaporean men. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The requirement for women to obtain a guardian's permission to enter into marriage;

(b) That polygamy is legal for Muslim men;

(c) The persistence of discriminatory provisions relating to divorce and inheritance;

(d) That, despite the decrease in the number of child marriages, this harmful practice still persists, and that exemptions from the legal minimum age of marriage can be granted;

(e) The limitations on the parental rights of non-married women and same-sex couples, as only married, opposite-sex couples can benefit from medically assisted procreation.

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

(a) **Ensure that women have an equal right with men to enter into marriage, without having to resort to court proceedings to secure that right, by abolishing the requirement for women to obtain permission from a male guardian;**

(b) **Explicitly prohibit polygamy and ensure the protection of the economic rights of women in existing polygamous unions;**

(c) **Ensure that women have equal rights with men to divorce and to inheritance;**

(d) Set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men, without exceptions, and address the root causes of child marriage, including patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes; encourage reporting of child marriage and ensure the prosecution and adequate punishment of those responsible for child marriage, including complicit family members, religious and community leaders, and civil registrars, in accordance with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, as revised;

(e) Recognize the equal right of all women, including those in same-sex relationships and non-married women, to parenthood through assisted reproductive technology, and ensure that all children enjoy equal rights to citizenship regardless of their family circumstances.

#### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

61. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

#### **Dissemination**

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

#### **Ratification of other treaties**

63. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments<sup>1</sup> would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.

#### **Follow-up to the concluding observations**

64. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 34 (b), on gender-based violence against women, 42 (d),

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

on education, 44 (a), on employment, and 46 (c), on women migrant domestic workers, above.

**Preparation of the next report**

65. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the seventh periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

66. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).

---