



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the tenth periodic report of Rwanda\*

1. The Committee considered the tenth periodic report of Rwanda (CEDAW/C/RWA/10) at its 2077th and 2078th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2077 and CEDAW/C/SR.2078) held on 24 May 2024. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/RWA/Q/10, and the State party's responses are contained in CEDAW/C/RWA/RQ/10.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its tenth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report (CEDAW/C/RWA/FCO/7-9) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party's high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, Valentine Uwamariya. The delegation also included representatives of the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations 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 combined seventh to ninth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/RWA/7-9) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Law No. 71/2018, of 31 August, relating to the protection of the child, which strengthens the protection of children against different forms of abuse;

(b) Law No. 66/2018, of 30 August, regulating labour in Rwanda, as amended in 2023, which includes the prohibition of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace and extends social protection and the right to paid leave to women and men employed in the informal economy;

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



(c) Law No. 51/2018, of 13 August, relating to the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons and exploitation of others.

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 and establishment of the following:

(a) The National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023–2028);

(b) The national gender transformative strategy engaging men and boys for gender equality (2023/24–2027/28);

(c) The Revised National Gender Policy (2021);

(d) The Gender Equality Seal certification programme launched in 2017, which is an instrument for enhancing the role of the private sector in creating gender equality in the workplace;

(e) The “EjoHeza” long-term saving scheme established under Law No. 29/2017, which is also accessible to employed and self-employed workers in the informal sector.

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

(a) The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization, in 2023, which covers gender-based violence and harassment.

### **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 the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, annex VI to E/CN.6/2010/CRP.2). It invites the Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take 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

### Constitutional and legal framework

9. The Committee commends the State party for its legislative review to amend a number of discriminatory laws and the adoption of new laws. The Committee welcomes the inclusion of anti-discrimination provisions in Law No. 68/2018 on offences and penalties in general, which includes discrimination on the ground of sex. The Committee is nonetheless concerned about the following:

(a) The existence of discriminatory stereotypes against women perpetuated by patriarchy that contributes to gender gaps in different spheres and undermines women's equal access to opportunities and ability to be free from discrimination, in contravention of articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution;

(b) The unequal access to electricity and clean energy sources between rural and urban areas that has an impact on women's economic empowerment, education, health and maternal health care and on access to information on women's rights and increases their risk to exposure to harmful indoor air pollution in contravention of article 22 of the Constitution;

(c) Challenges in implementing existing and progressive legislation and policies on women's rights, gender equality, non-discrimination and access to justice that hinder the attainment of gender equality and effective protection of women's rights;

(d) The lack of information on mandatory training on the application of the Convention and on the Optional Protocol thereto for the formal and informal justice, law and order sector actors, including the judiciary, prosecutors, police, traditional and religious leaders, and other duty bearers.

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

**(a) Adopt appropriate measures, including awareness-raising and capacity-building, to dismantle patriarchy in private and public spheres, including in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other fields in conformity with the Convention;**

**(b) Take concrete measures towards ensuring universal and equal access to electricity and clean energy sources for all women, including rural women, women with disabilities, refugee and migrant women and asylum-seekers to boost their economic empowerment and access to education, enhance their exposure to clean indoor air and increase access to high-quality health and maternal health care and to information to empower them to dismantle discriminatory stereotypes and patriarchy;**

**(c) Develop and create concrete actions and structures necessary to ensure the effective implementation of existing progressive legislation and policies on women's rights, gender equality, non-discrimination and access to justice;**

**(d) Provide mandatory training on the application of the Convention and on the Committee's jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol thereto and its general recommendations to all formal and informal justice, law and order sector actors, including the judiciary, prosecutors, police, traditional and religious leaders, and other duty bearers.**

### Access to justice

11. The Committee notes the State party's efforts in providing physical and virtual legal aid services and legal education to women in the communities and raising awareness of gender-based violence and women's rights, including through non-state legal aid service providers. However, it notes with concern the persistent barriers to women's and girls' access to justice, including access to justice for rights violations against women in conflict situations, in particular, the underutilization of formal justice systems by women facing rights abuses and seeking legal redress; the limited access to information among women about their rights under the Convention and domestic law and how to claim them; the limited knowledge among women, including women refugees, women migrants, asylum-seekers and Batwa women, of available legal aid services; the preference to not report abuse and remain silent; the challenges that women with disabilities face in accessing justice, including lack of sign language translators and braille; and the limited capacity on the part of the judiciary and law enforcement officials to apply the Convention directly in legal proceedings or to interpret national legislation in conformity with the Convention.

**12. Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recalls the State party's obligation to ensure that women's rights are protected against violations by all components of plural justice systems. It recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Harmonize legislation to address gaps and contradictions in existing laws on women's rights, gender-based violence and access to justice;**

**(b) Provide training for formal and informal justice, law and order sector actors, including judges, prosecutors, police, religious leaders, traditional leaders and community leaders, to enable them to interpret and apply the Convention and regional women's rights instruments alongside domestic legislation and policies in legal proceedings;**

**(c) Strengthen witness and victim protection measures to encourage women and witnesses to report on and testify in cases of violations of women's rights recognized in the Convention and national legal framework and ensure that they are protected from reprisals and stigmatization;**

**(d) Increase awareness-raising campaigns and women's rights and legal literacy among communities and women, including women with disabilities, women refugees and migrants, asylum-seekers and Batwa women, to educate them on women's rights under the Convention, regional women's rights instruments and national legal and policy frameworks to empower them to claim their rights and dismantle patriarchy that perpetuates discriminatory stereotypes that promote gender inequality;**

**(e) Regularly monitor the implementation of legislation and policies that protect women and provide for access to justice to assess their effectiveness in achieving substantive equality of women and men, including by systematically collecting disaggregated data on the impact of measures taken, and include such data in its next periodic report.**

### Women and peace and security

13. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of a third national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security for the period 2023–2028, and the increasing participation of women in the defence and security sector, including the important participation of Rwandan women in international peacekeeping operations. However, it is concerned

at the underrepresentation of women in senior positions, including at the decentralized level, and at the low number of women effectively involved in peace negotiations, despite suffering disproportionately as victims of conflict.

**14. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Effectively implement and assess the national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, in cooperation with all women in their diversities, representatives of women's civil society organizations and women human rights defenders, and ensure that it takes into consideration the full spectrum of the Security Council agenda on women and peace and security, as reflected in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, and that it incorporates a model of substantive equality that addresses all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women in all spheres of women's lives, including intersecting forms of discrimination against women;**

(b) **Ensure that women contribute through an equal, consistent and effective representation in regional peace processes and negotiations and that specific consideration is given to the women and peace and security agenda in peace negotiations;**

(c) **Take the necessary measures to ensure a systemic and increasing role and representation of women in diplomacy, including in international security affairs.**

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

15. The Committee appreciates the progress achieved by the State party in the implementation and mainstreaming of women's rights and renews its appreciation for the national machinery for the advancement of women, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, and includes the national, provincial and district levels. It is concerned, however, that the funding allocated to the different entities is not sufficient, in particular at the subnational levels.

**16. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its national machinery by providing it with adequate visibility, power, and human, technical and financial resources at all levels in order to further increase its effectiveness and enhance its capacity to coordinate and monitor actions for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality.**

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

17. The Committee notes with concern the cumbersome registration requirements for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (CEDAW/C/RWA/RQ/10, para. 18), including the requirement for a recommendation letter issued by the mayor of the district where the organization intends to implement its activities, which poses a potential risk of political interference. It also regrets the lack of information on any measures taken by the State party to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders from potential intimidation, harassment and reprisals.

**18. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt effective measures to ensure that women human rights defenders are able to gain access to justice and receive protection from harassment, threats, retaliation, surveillance and violence to allow them to**

**exercise their rights to freedom of expression, opinion, peaceful assembly and association in an enabling environment;**

**(b) Review the registration requirements for NGOs in order to ensure that those organizations, in particular women's rights organizations, may be established and operate without undue restrictions;**

**(c) Effectively investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of physical and online acts of harassment, discrimination, intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders, ensure the right to due process and equal access to effective legal remedies for women human rights defender who are victims of such acts, and raise public awareness of the importance of women human rights defenders, journalists and NGOs working on women's rights in advancing women's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination in the State party.**

#### **Data collection**

19. The Committee notes the efforts of the State party to improve the systematic collection of gender-specific data to effectively monitor and evaluate progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including the Gender Management Information System, launched in 2019 by the Gender Monitoring Office as a data management tool, with the main objective of informing gender-responsive programming and evidence-based advocacy for inclusive and sustainable development. While noting that implementation of the System is ongoing, the Committee is concerned about the lack of disaggregated data on women's enjoyment of their human rights under various articles of the Convention, in particular the lack of disaggregated information on disadvantaged groups of women, including women with disabilities and refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women.

**20. The Committee recommends that the State party expedite the operationalization of the Gender Management Information System, including the recent integration of data on gender-based violence from the Isange One Stop Centres, and ensure the systematic collection of disaggregated data, which can be used to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken for the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality and as a basis for gender-responsive programming and evidence-based advocacy.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

21. The Committee commends the State party's implementation of temporary special measures to increase the representation of women in political life, notably the introduction of mandatory 30 per cent quotas for women candidates and of 30 per cent reserved seats for women in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Committee is nonetheless concerned at the lack of temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as education and employment, and to address inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups of women, such as women and girls with disabilities, rural women, Batwa women and refugee women.

**22. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt temporary special measures, such as quotas, to increase the representation of women in employment sectors where they are currently underrepresented, including in leadership and decision-making positions, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures. The State party should also adopt targeted temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women and**

**men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as education and employment, and to address inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups of women, such as women and girls with disabilities, rural women, Batwa women and refugee women. It also recommends that the State party shift its approach from numerical quotas to achieving meaningful parity in all spheres of political and public life, including in decision-making positions.**

### **Stereotypes**

23. The Committee commends the State party on its initiatives pursuant to the National Gender Policy of 2021 to combat patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, including the development of a national gender transformative strategy engaging men and boys for gender equality for the period 2023/24–2027/28. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that undermine the social status, autonomy, educational opportunities and professional careers of women and constitute an underlying cause of gender-based violence against women.

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

(a) **Develop and implement a comprehensive human rights-based strategy, including for the digital space, to eliminate gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**

(b) **Provide relevant public officials, the media and the private sector with capacity-building on the use of gender-responsive language and promote positive portrayals of women as active drivers of development;**

(c) **Take steps to promote the equal sharing of domestic and family care responsibilities between women and men, including through public education and the introduction of shared parental leave;**

(d) **Develop targets and indicators to systematically measure the impact of the strategic interventions undertaken.**

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

25. The Committee appreciates measures taken by the State party to strengthen the legal framework to combat gender-based violence against women and provide appropriate support and services to victims, including through the Isange One Stop Centres and local health centres. However, it remains concerned about the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, in the State party and regrets the lack of updated and disaggregated data on the number of complaints, prosecutions and convictions, the sentences imposed on perpetrators and compensation provided to victims. The Committee also notes with concern:

(a) The social acceptance of different forms of gender-based violence against women that are considered to fall into the private sphere, such as domestic violence, based on persisting patriarchal attitudes and norms;

(b) The underreporting of gender-based violence against women due to fear of reprisals and stigmatization, economic dependency on the perpetrator and women's lack of awareness of their human rights and of the remedies available to claim those rights;

(c) The lack of information provided by the State party on the legal procedure for women to apply for protection orders and on the enforcement and monitoring of protection orders;

(d) The fact that the penalty for marital rape in Law No. 59/2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence is not harmonized with the penalty for rape in Law No. 68/2018 on offences and penalties in general and that marital rape, which reportedly remains a taboo subject, is not reported or prosecuted;

(e) The increased risk of gender-based violence and barriers to access justice faced by disadvantaged groups of women, such as women and girls with disabilities and refugee, internally displaced and migrant women and girls.

**26. 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) Strengthen efforts to address patriarchal attitudes and norms that condone gender-based violence against women;**

**(b) Provide support to victims to report acts of gender-based violence, including through targeted awareness-raising campaigns on women's human rights, and combat the stigmatization of victims;**

**(c) Strictly enforce and monitor compliance with protection orders, and impose penalties in case of non-compliance and provide information on the number and types of protection orders issued on an annual basis in its next periodic report;**

**(d) Harmonize the lesser penalty for "conjugal rape" provided under article 19 of Law No. 59/2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence with that for the crime of rape under article 134 of Law No. 68/2018 on offences and penalties in general to ensure that these penalties are commensurate with the gravity of the crimes, in line with general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19;**

**(e) Reinforce measures to combat all forms of gender-based violence against disadvantaged groups such as women and girls with disabilities and refugee, internally displaced and migrant women and girls;**

**(f) Ensure that reports of gender-based violence are effectively investigated and prosecuted, that perpetrators are adequately punished and that victims have access to adequate support services, including shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and legal assistance, as well as to adequate compensation;**

**(g) Provide rehabilitative programmes for perpetrators of gender-based violence;**

**(h) Fully operationalize the Gender Management Information System, including the recent integration of data from the Isange One Stop Centres, ensuring the comprehensive and standardized collection and analysis of data on gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and use such data as a basis for targeted interventions.**

#### **Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

27. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Law No. 51/2018 on the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons and exploitation of others, the corresponding national action plan approved in 2020 and other measures, including training for relevant stakeholders, support services for victims of trafficking and awareness-raising campaigns. Nevertheless, the Committee notes with concern:



(a) The lack of effective and systematic screening and referral of victims of trafficking, in particular women and girls, to appropriate services;

(b) Cases of arrest and detention of unidentified trafficking victims, in particular women in prostitution, women and girls living on the street and girls and boys forced into begging;

(c) Increased cross-border trafficking, facilitated by free movement agreements such as the trilateral agreement between the Governments of Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda that allows for border crossings using a national identification document instead of a passport;

(d) Internal trafficking of Rwandan women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour in domestic work and the service sector;

(e) The lack of information provided by the State party on safeguards in place for the protection from forced prostitution and trafficking of asylum-seeking women and girls removed to the State party under the asylum partnership treaty of December 2023 between Rwanda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and on capacity-building for law enforcement officers on the early identification of trafficking victims among those asylum seekers.

**28. Recalling the Committee's 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) Strengthen the early identification and referral of women and girl victims of trafficking to gender-responsive support services and protection, including at borders, paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups of women, such as women in prostitution, refugee women, asylum-seeking women, and women and girls with disabilities;**

**(b) Ensure that women victims of trafficking are not penalized solely for violations of immigration law or other administrative offences committed as a direct result of being trafficked;**

**(c) Provide systematic capacity-building for front-line responders to identify victims of trafficking, including victims of internal trafficking;**

**(d) Ensure that women and girls removed to Rwanda under the asylum partnership treaty of December 2023 between the State party and the United Kingdom have effective access to justice to claim international protection, including on grounds of gender-based violence, and are protected from forced prostitution or other forms of trafficking.**

29. The Committee welcomes the decriminalization of women in prostitution following the adoption of Law No. 68/2018. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The lack of information on support services available to women in prostitution, including exit programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities for women who wish to leave prostitution;

(b) The lack of information on the number and outcomes of cases prosecuted under article 24, paragraph 2, of Law No. 51/2018, under which payment for sexual intercourse "for the purpose of exploitation" is criminalized;

(c) Reports indicating that women in prostitution continue to be arrested and detained by police and subsequently released without charge.

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

(a) **Ensure that adequate support services are available to women in prostitution, including exit programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities for women who wish to leave prostitution;**

(b) **Ensure, further to the decriminalisation of prostitution introduced in 2018, that women in prostitution are not arbitrarily arrested and detained by authorities, including through appropriate training for law enforcement officials;**

(c) **Address the root causes of prostitution, such as poverty and structural gender inequalities, as well as the demand for prostitution, and adopt targeted measures to protect women from being exploited in prostitution.**

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

31. The Committee welcomes the high level of representation of women in the Chamber of Deputies of the State party, which continues to rank first globally in this regard, as well as in ministerial positions and the judiciary, and the strong participation of women in peace and security processes. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) Women's underrepresentation in local governance leadership functions, including as district mayors and sector executive secretaries, as well as in decision-making positions in the public service and public institutions;

(b) The low number of women in leadership positions in the private sector, including the Private Sector Federation, and the media;

(c) The persistence of patriarchal norms and stereotypes in which women are considered less suitable for leadership positions than men and which discourage them from applying for or being promoted to such positions.

32. **Recalling its general recommendations No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Introduce targeted measures, including temporary special measures, such as increased quotas, to achieve parity between women and men in political and public life, in particular in decision-making positions, including in local governance structures;**

(b) **Provide capacity-building and training for women managers in the private sector, raise awareness among private sector entities of the importance of the equal participation of women in leadership positions and incentivize public and private listed companies to increase the number of women on boards and in leadership positions;**

(c) **Implement awareness-raising campaigns to address patriarchal norms and stereotypes regarding women's suitability for leadership positions and highlight the importance of women's full and equal participation in political and public life, in particular at decision-making levels;**

(d) **Provide training on gender equality for politicians, journalists, teachers, and community and civil society leaders, especially men, to enhance the understanding that the full, free and democratic participation of women in political and public life on an equal basis with men is a requirement for the full implementation of the Convention.**

## Education

33. The Committee notes the progress made by the State party in increasing school enrolment rates among girls, providing dedicated and equipped “girls’ rooms” in schools as safe spaces where support is available, including for menstrual-related issues, and facilitating continued access to education for pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, and the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the school curriculum at the primary and secondary levels. The Committee, however, notes with concern:

(a) The continued high incidence of early pregnancy and the lack of information on the impact of school education on sexual and reproductive health and rights;

(b) The reported lack of adequate sanitary facilities in a significant number of schools in the State party;

(c) The persistence of gender stereotyping resulting in lower enrolment rates of girls and women in tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training, and tertiary courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in information and communications technology (ICT);

(d) The significant number of schools that are not physically accessible for children with disabilities and lack adequate teaching materials to meet their learning needs, resulting in lower school enrolment rates among girls and boys with disabilities;

(e) The limited availability of pre-primary education for girls and boys in the State party;

(f) Existing barriers, including financial barriers, for access to tertiary education, in particular for refugee women and girls, migrants and asylum-seeking women and girls, Batwa women and girls and other disadvantaged groups.

**34. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, in which it is recognized that education plays a pivotal, transformative and empowering role in promoting human rights values and is acknowledged as the pathway to gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Further increase school enrolment rates at all levels, including pre-school and tertiary levels, and address the causes of school dropout among women and girls, with a view to enabling them to complete their education, in particular by providing scholarships and financial support to all women and girls, including refugee and migrant women, asylum-seekers and those from other disadvantaged groups; increase access to electricity for power and lighting in schools; and take measures to make schools safe spaces through combating bullying, stigma and gender-based violence;**

**(b) Proactively combat gender-discriminatory stereotypes in private and public spheres that result in gender gaps in education, especially in technical and vocational education and training, and promote lower enrolment rates of girls in tertiary education and promote non-traditional educational choices and career paths of girls and women, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT, including through conducting awareness-raising campaigns in schools and among parents;**

**(c) Strengthen the technical capacity of teachers at all educational levels to provide high-quality, inclusive and gender-equitable education, and increase the recruitment of women in academia;**

(d) **Allocate necessary human, technical and financial resources to meet the education needs of women and girls with disabilities, including by increasing the number of schools offering inclusive education throughout the State party, training teachers on inclusive teaching methods, offering adequate teaching material to meet their learning needs and ensuring physical accessibility in schools, and take measures to ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation for girls with disabilities in schools;**

(e) **Strengthen the effective implementation of comprehensive age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of education to prevent unplanned pregnancies and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, and take measures to support the mental and physical well-being of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers in and out of school and increase access to water sources, sanitary rooms, sanitary napkins and proper bathroom facilities in schools to support safe menstrual health.**

### **Employment**

35. The Committee notes provisions in Law 66/2018 regulating labour that prohibit sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace and extend social protection and the right to paid leave to women and men employed in the informal economy. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The persistence of horizontal and vertical occupational segregation;

(b) The disproportionately high unemployment rates among women in the State party, in particular in rural areas;

(c) The overrepresentation of women in the informal economy and the high proportion of women working in unpaid subsistence agriculture, and the limited coverage under the social security system;

(d) The unequal sharing between women and men of family and domestic responsibilities, including women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work;

(e) The lack of information provided by the State party on the number and outcomes of complaints about sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination in the workplace, notably in relation to articles 8 and 9 of Law 66/2018;

(f) The persistence of child labour and the fact that a significant number of girls under the age of sixteen are illegally employed in domestic service and at high risk of exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence.

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

(a) **Take targeted measures, including temporary special measures, to increase the representation of women in formal employment, including in senior positions, in sectors where they are most underrepresented, such as academia, law enforcement, manufacturing, engineering, construction, ICT, the media and creative industries;**

(b) **Scale up existing initiatives to support women in expanding their agricultural activities in the informal economy, including by boosting women's access to land as a basis for economic independence, such as through income-generating activities in commercial agriculture;**

(c) **Recognize, measure and value unpaid care work, including through raising public awareness, promoting equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men, adopting care-friendly employment policies including flexible working arrangements for women and men and increasing the number of affordable high-quality childcare facilities;**

(d) **Ensure the effective enforcement of articles 8 and 9 of Law 66/2018 prohibiting sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace;**

(e) **Enhance the human resources available to effectively enforce the provisions on child labour in Law 66/2018, including the prohibition of child labour under the age of 16; in this regard, ensure that girls do not drop out of school and fall victim to exploitation, especially in domestic work, through, inter alia, regular labour inspections, including of private households.**

## **Health**

37. The Committee notes the progress made by the State party on improving women's mental and physical health, including efforts taken to reduce maternal mortality, increase access to sexual and reproductive health services and expand legal grounds for abortion. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The persistent high rates of maternal mortality and the higher rates of HIV/AIDS among women than men;

(b) The requirement for adolescents aged 16 and 17 to obtain parental consent in order to access contraceptives, and the persistence of adolescent pregnancies;

(c) The restrictions on accessing legal abortion, including limiting authorization for the performance of abortions to doctors only, the continued stigma, and the high number of women serving prison sentences for abortion-related offences despite the granting of presidential pardons;

(d) The discrimination and barriers in accessing health care faced by women from disadvantaged groups, including refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers, Batwa, and women and girls with disabilities;

(e) The criminalization of abortion in all circumstances other than cases of rape, incest or forced marriage or if the health of the pregnant woman or the foetus is endangered, and the persistence of societal stigma around abortion, leading many women to resort to unsafe abortions.

38. **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) **Strengthen access to health services and information, including maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, and safe abortion care, for all women in their diversities, including women with disabilities, without discrimination, in order to meet Goal target 3.1 of reducing global maternal death to less than 70 per 100,000 births and increase access to contraception;**

(b) **Provide age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as adequate access to affordable modern methods of contraception, including emergency contraception, to all women and girls, including by removing the requirement for girls aged 16 and 17 to obtain parental consent in order to access contraceptives;**

(c) **Remove the cumbersome requirements for access to legal abortion and train and recruit more qualified health professionals who are authorized to perform abortions, pardon all women currently serving prison sentences for abortion-related offences and consider decriminalizing abortion in all cases;**

(d) **Ensure the protection of the right to mental and physical health of female asylum-seekers under the asylum partnership treaty between the State party and the United Kingdom.**

**Economic empowerment of women**

39. The Committee welcomes measures taken by the State party to increase women's financial literacy and access to financial credit and to improve their economic security, such as the partially subsidized "EjoHeza" long-term savings scheme, which is accessible to employed and self-employed workers in the informal sector, many of whom are women. However, the Committee notes with concern:

- (a) The significant gender gap in access to loans;
- (b) The barriers faced by women in accessing financial credit, including the requirement of collateral, their limited agency to manage land resources jointly owned by both spouses, and the small average size of agricultural land plots owned by women;
- (c) The continued overrepresentation of women in the informal economy, in particular in subsistence agriculture, and the resulting gender disparity in social protection coverage, including with regard to pension schemes.

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

- (a) **Expand measures to promote women's financial literacy and access to low-interest loans and other forms of financial credit, including through support schemes for access to credit and the use of technology such as smartphones for information-sharing and mobile money transfers;**
- (b) **Expand initiatives to support women's entrepreneurship, such as women's cooperatives and schemes promoting access to markets, including export markets;**
- (c) **Improve economic security for women through increased social protection coverage, in particular for women working in the informal economy and in subsistence agriculture;**
- (d) **Ensure that women engaged in unpaid work in subsistence agriculture and in the informal sector have access to non-contributory social protection schemes in line with general recommendation No. 16 (1991) on unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises and that those employed in the formal sector have access to contributory social security benefits in their own right, irrespective of their marital status, as recommended in the 2017 concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.**

**Rural women**

41. The Committee notes with concern:

- (a) The high number of women farmers engaged in unpaid or low-paid work without access to non-contributory social protection schemes such as pension schemes;
- (b) The fact that most women farmers own small plots of less than 0.3 hectares as a result of customary practices and discriminatory norms, which limits opportunities to move out of subsistence agriculture;
- (c) The fact that most rural women lack the 25 per cent contribution that is necessary to access the Rural Investment Facility, the Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the Women Guarantee Fund;
- (d) The limited access of rural women to basic services such as electricity and clean or improved fuels.

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

- (a) **Ensure that rural women working in the informal sector have effective access to non-contributory social protection schemes;**
- (b) **Raise awareness among rural women, local authorities, mediation committee members (*abunzi*) and judicial officers about women's human rights under the Convention and recent legislation relating to land ownership and succession, including on women's equal land inheritance rights and the significance of the choice of matrimonial regime;**
- (c) **Ensure that rural women have effective access to legal aid and counselling to be able to access justice in relation to land claims;**
- (d) **In the light of the land reform process, monitor the evolution of land ownership and registration by women as compared with men;**
- (e) **Further enhance rural women's access to financial credit, technology and support for entrepreneurship, including for climate-smart agriculture, such as by addressing difficulties in meeting credit terms requiring a 25 per cent contribution, where appropriate;**
- (f) **Increase rural women's access to basic services, including electricity, clean or improved fuels, and agricultural inputs.**

**Batwa women**

43. The Committee takes note of the State party's policy to refrain from categorizing groups on the basis of ethnicity following the genocide. However, it notes with concern that the former forest-dwelling Batwa women and girls continue to face intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization and that the lack of targeted measures for Batwa women and girls results in a failure to adequately address their needs.

44. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/RWA/CO/7-9, para. 45), the Committee recommends that the State party collect data on the specific situation of Batwa women with a view to assessing their lived realities and the intersecting forms of discrimination that they face, and adopt targeted measures including temporary special measures to address the stigma faced by Batwa women and girls and facilitate their full integration into the wider society, notably by ensuring the fulfilment of Batwa women's rights in multiple domains, including education, employment and health care, as well as the right to participate in political and public life.**

**Refugee, asylum-seeking, internally displaced and migrant women**

45. The Committee welcomes the implementation of an integrated civil registration system in 2024. However, it notes with concern the lack of information provided by the State party on:

- (a) Measures to ensure access to civil registration documents for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls;
- (b) Measures in place and human, technical and financial resources available to ensure that gender-specific protection grounds are duly taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis when conducting refugee status assessments and processing the claims of asylum-seeking women and girls, including those having arrived via the United Kingdom, who fall under the agreement between the State party and the United Kingdom;

(c) Measures to ensure access to judicial review and the availability of legal aid in asylum procedures;

(d) Gender-responsive training provided to examiners and other stakeholders in refugee status determination and asylum procedures;

(e) Steps taken to implement the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

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

**(a) Ensure access to civil registration documents, including birth certificates, for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls;**

**(b) Ensure that gender-specific protection grounds are duly taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis when conducting refugee status assessments and processing the claims of asylum-seeking women and girls, including those having arrived via the United Kingdom, who fall under the agreement between the State party and the United Kingdom;**

**(c) Guarantee access to judicial review and affordable and, if necessary, free, legal aid in asylum procedures;**

**(d) Provide gender-responsive training to examiners and other stakeholders in refugee status determination and asylum procedures;**

**(e) Take appropriate steps to implement the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.**

**Women with disabilities**

47. The Committee notes the explicit prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities in the State party's Constitution and in Law No. 68/2018 and various measures taken by the State party to provide support to women with disabilities. However, the Committee is concerned about the low representation of women with disabilities in decision-making systems, including the absence of women with disabilities in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the State party. It also notes with concern the stigmatization and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women with disabilities and the lack of information provided by the State party on:

(a) Measures to ensure that women with disabilities are aware of their legal rights, that the justice system is accessible, including for blind women, women hard of hearing and women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and that women with disabilities have full legal capacity, including the right to freely enter into marriage and equal inheritance rights;

(b) Measures to protect women and girls with disabilities from gender-based violence and abuse in families, households and communities and from dispossession because of their gender and disability;

(c) Measures to ensure access to employment opportunities for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

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

**(a) Adopt targeted measures, including temporary special measures such as statutory quotas or reserved seats, to ensure the proportionate representation of women with disabilities in decision-making systems, including in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate;**



(b) **Ensure that women with disabilities have effective access to justice, including in rural and deprived urban areas, and full legal capacity, including the right to freely enter into marriage and equal inheritance rights;**

(c) **Ensure that women and girls with disabilities are protected from gender-based violence and abuse in families, households and communities, through regular visits by social workers and awareness-raising campaigns targeting religious and community leaders as well as the general public, and that they are not denied their rights to inherit and to own land and property because of their gender and disability;**

(d) **Provide adequate access to employment opportunities for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.**

### **Marriage and family relations**

49. The Committee welcomes legislative amendments to ensure that women have equal rights relating to marriage, divorce and succession, as well as measures taken to promote civil registration of de facto unions and to eliminate polygamy. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lack of legal and economic protection of women in de facto unions, including women married under customary law or in polygamous unions, notably with regard to rights to land and property in the case of separation or upon the death of their partner, in the absence of ownership titles;

(b) The prevalence of child marriage, mainly affecting girls, including adolescent refugee mothers;

(c) The practice that some families reportedly opt for arranged and forced marriages to avoid shame and stigmatization in cases of rape and early pregnancy of their daughters.

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

(a) **Continue to facilitate the regularization of de facto unions, and prohibit the harmful practice of polygamy, which is contrary to the Convention and the dignity of women and girls;**

(b) **Enhance legal and economic protection of women in de facto unions, including women married under customary law and women in existing polygamous unions;**

(c) **Take appropriate measures to combat child marriage, targeting in particular refugee girls, adolescent mothers and survivors of rape;**

(d) **Raise awareness of the criminal nature and harmful impact of child and/or forced marriage on girls and women and ensure that those responsible for such unions are prosecuted and adequately punished.**

### **Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention**

51. The Committee encourages the State party to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

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

52. 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**

53. 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.

### **Technical assistance**

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

### **Ratification of other treaties**

55. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.

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

56. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 10 (b), 12 (a), 26 (b) and 40 (a) above.

### **Preparation of the next report**

57. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the eleventh 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.

58. 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 (see [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).