



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Kiribati\*

1. The Committee considered the combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Kiribati ([CEDAW/C/KIR/1-3](#)) at its 1765th and 1766th meetings (see [CEDAW/C/SR.1765](#) and [CEDAW/C/SR.1766](#)), held on 21 February 2020. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in [CEDAW/C/KIR/Q/1-3](#), and the responses of Kiribati are contained in [CEDAW/C/KIR/RQ/1-3](#).

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined initial, second and third periodic reports, albeit with a delay of 13 years and 9 months. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group on the combined initial, second and third periodic reports. 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 for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, Taoaba Kaiea, and included representatives of the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Justice.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the entry into force of the Convention for the State party in 2004 in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act (Family Peace Act), by which domestic violence is criminalized, in 2014;

(b) Employment and Industrial Relations Code, by which equal opportunities for women and men and equal pay for work of equal value are provided for and sexual harassment in the workplace is prohibited, in 2015;

\* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-fifth session (10–28 February 2020).



(c) Education Act, by which disciplinary action against a female student for pregnancy or for being a parent is prohibited, in 2013;

(d) Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act, in which it is established that custody will be determined in the best interests of the child, in 2013.

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 following:

(a) Establishment of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs through the Constitution (Amendment) Act, in 2013;

(b) Adoption of the national policy and action plan to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence for the period 2011–2021;

(c) Adoption of the gender equality and women's development plan for the period 2019–2021;

(d) Adoption of the children, young people and family welfare policy, giving effect to the Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act, in 2013;

(e) Establishment of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Unit in the Kiribati Police Service in 2004.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that the State party has acceded to the following international instruments:

(a) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2019;

(b) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2013;

(c) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2005.

### **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, 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**

### **Visibility of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations**

9. The Committee welcomes the various educational, training and awareness-raising programmes on women's rights conducted by the State party. It is concerned, however, that there is still a general lack of awareness among government and law enforcement officials, as well as the public, about the concept of substantive equality of women and men, the rights of women under the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its measures:**

(a) **To promote public awareness of the concept of substantive equality of women and men and ensure that women in particular are aware of their rights under the Convention and the remedies available for violations of those rights;**

(b) **To undertake systematic and regular capacity-building among government officials, parliamentarians, civil servants, police officers and the maneaba (community councils), including on the outer islands, on women's rights under the Convention.**

### **Harmonization of laws**

11. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party to strengthen its legislative framework to promote and protect the rights of women and girls, such as the adoption of the constitutional amendment to establish the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs and the enactment of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code. However, it is concerned that the State party has not brought all national laws into line with the Convention.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in collaboration with relevant partners, including civil society and faith-based organizations, review all discriminatory laws, in particular customary laws related to the participation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels, including the community councils, as well as the Native Lands Ordinance, chapter 16, on inheritance rights, the Citizenship Act and the Constitution.**

### **Definition of discrimination against women**

13. The Committee notes that, in section 3 of the Constitution, on fundamental rights and freedoms, it is recognized that "every person in Kiribati is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, ... whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex". However, the Committee notes with concern that section 15 (3), on protection from discrimination, does not contain sex or gender as prohibited grounds of discrimination in its definition of discrimination.

14. **The Committee recalls its 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, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. It recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to incorporate into the Constitution or other legislation a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women and girls in line with article 1 of the Convention, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres and recognizing intersecting forms of discrimination. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure that discrimination based on sex or gender is prohibited in any relevant new or revised laws.**

**Access to justice and remedies**

15. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act in 2014, by which domestic violence was criminalized and legal aid to survivors and victims was provided for. Nonetheless, it is concerned that there is only one lawyer in the legal aid programme. It also notes with concern the lack of information on access to justice and remedies for victims and survivors of gender-based violence against women, including sexual violence. It further notes with concern the absence of information on the number of investigations and prosecutions, the sentences imposed on perpetrators and the compensation provided to victims in the 1,110 reported cases of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, in 2017, of which 82 per cent involved female victims and 11 per cent girls under the age of 18 years.

**16. Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee urges the State party:**

**(a) To ensure that cases of women and girls who are victims and survivors of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, are promptly investigated, that the accused are prosecuted and that the perpetrators are adequately punished;**

**(b) To ensure that women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence have timely access to remedies, including legal, medical and psychosocial support and financial compensation;**

**(c) To address issues pertaining to physical and communications accessibility in courts of law, including the unavailability of procedural accommodations in court proceedings, and deprivation of legal capacity on the ground of disability;**

**(d) To ensure that the judiciary, including lay judges, receives systematic training on women's rights;**

**(e) To accelerate the development of the judiciary database to make available data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, crime, punishment, redress and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.**

**National machinery for the advancement of women**

17. The Committee welcomes the establishment in 2013 of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, headed by the Vice-President, and of the Women's Development Division of the Ministry as the coordinating body for gender mainstreaming and women's development. It is concerned, however, about the limited technical expertise and inadequate human and financial resources of the Division and its limited outreach on the outer islands, as well as the weakness of the coordination, monitoring, evaluation and oversight arrangements for impact assessment. It is also concerned that the mandate of the national machinery may be limited to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence and does not cover the full range of women's rights under the Convention.

**18. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the Women's Development Division has adequate resources to carry out its activities throughout the State party's territory, including the outer islands; that it is provided with technical expertise to develop and implement activities covering all the rights enshrined in the Convention across all sectors; and that it has the mandate and the capacity to effectively coordinate women's advancement initiatives, monitoring and impact assessment.**

19. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the national human rights task force in 2014 to coordinate and facilitate the State party's engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the establishment of the Human Rights Unit within the Ministry of Justice, which also serves as the secretariat of the task force. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about the limited resources available to the task force to carry out its work.

**20. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen, and provide adequate resources to, the national human rights task force as a functional national mechanism for reporting on the fulfilment of the State party's treaty obligations and the implementation of and follow-up to recommendations made by the United Nations human rights mechanisms. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights under the treaty body capacity-building programme.**

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

21. The Committee notes that the State party carried out a scoping mission in 2019 to explore the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution. It also notes the information provided during the dialogue about the possibility of establishing a regional human rights institution in the light of the limited resources available to several small island States in the Pacific region.

**22. The Committee recommends that the State party establish an independent national or regional 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) and ensure that it has a specific mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources to effectively promote and protect women's rights and gender equality in the State party.**

#### **Civil society organizations**

23. The Committee welcomes the existence of diversified civil society and women's human rights organizations but is concerned about their limited access to resources, which affects their capacity to independently promote, monitor, evaluate and advocate the advancement of women's rights in the State party.

**24. The Committee recommends that the State party provide adequate financial support to women's human rights organizations offering services to women and girls that are not yet provided by the State party and strengthen its collaboration with those organizations in the implementation of plans and activities for the advancement of women's rights. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure that faith-based organizations support the implementation of the Convention and that it carry out awareness-raising programmes on gender and provide education on the Convention for faith-based and civil society organizations.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

25. The Committee notes that the adoption of temporary special measures is permitted under the Convention. It is concerned, however, that the State party has not adopted any such measures to achieve substantive equality of women and men, such as statutory quotas to increase the representation of women in elected and appointed political positions.

**26. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general**

**recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, including statutory quotas for the representation of women in the parliament and the Government, to achieve substantive equality of women and men in all areas in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged.**

#### **Stereotypes and harmful practices**

27. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes regarding women, including the implementation of the positive parenting programme and the Kiribati male behavioural change programme. However, the Committee is concerned about the persistence, despite those efforts, of discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society.

28. **The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To adopt a comprehensive strategy, including awareness-raising programmes, aimed at women and men at all levels of society, including religious and traditional leaders, to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, and regularly monitor and review measures taken in this regard;**

(b) **To promote a dialogue among members of the public, traditional leaders and faith-based organizations to foster an understanding of culture and religion in line with the provisions of the Convention and to promote the use of gender-sensitive interpretations of religious texts by churches;**

(c) **To reinforce the use of the media, including the radio, as an important way of reaching the public and promoting behavioural change, and involve women in the planning and development of radio programmes.**

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

29. The Committee welcomes the various measures adopted by the State party to combat gender-based violence against women, including the national policy and action plan to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence for the period 2011–2021, which led to the adoption in 2014 of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act, by which domestic violence was criminalized. It also welcomes the establishment of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Unit in the Kiribati Police Service in 2004; the Sexual and Gender-based Violence Unit in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services; the task force for the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence chaired by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs; the Women's and Children's Crisis Centre; the Safenet inter-agency protocol for responding to cases of gender-based violence; and the first national counselling framework for domestic violence. However, the Committee is deeply concerned about:

(a) The high incidence of gender-based violence against women and girls, with 68 per cent of women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 years having experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partner;

(b) The lack of information on the State party's response to an increased number of reported cases of gender-based violence against women by their partners, including information on the number of investigations and prosecutions and the sentences imposed on perpetrators, and information on victim support;

(c) The lack of implementation of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act and the absence of a definition of marital rape in the Act;

(d) The absence of designated safe spaces for victims and survivors of gender-based violence against women.

30. **The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act and the national policy and action plan to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence for the period 2011–2021 that includes the collection of disaggregated data on women and girls who have received assistance under the Act and information on the number of prosecutions, the sentences imposed on perpetrators and the number of victims and survivors who have received compensation;**

(b) **To ensure that the standard operating procedures for responding to sexual and gender-based violence followed by the Kiribati Police Service, the Prosecutor’s Office and the courts, as well as the Women’s Development Division, prioritize access to justice and support to victims and survivors;**

(c) **To amend the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act to specifically define and criminalize marital rape and allocate the resources necessary for the implementation of the Act and associated action plans;**

(d) **To designate safe spaces for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, throughout the State party’s territory.**

**Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

31. The Committee appreciates that the State party prohibits exploitation of prostitution and notes the absence of any reported cases of trafficking in girls and young women. However, it is concerned about reports of girls and women engaged in prostitution (known as *ainen matawa*), in particular on foreign fishing vessels, who are at risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. The Committee also notes with concern that domestic trafficking in persons is not criminalized in the State party.

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

(a) **Strengthen its measures under the Kiribati Family Health Association to provide girls and women in prostitution with access to sexual and reproductive health services, including modern contraceptives, as well as other support services, educational opportunities and alternative income-generating opportunities, and provide exit programmes for women in prostitution;**

(b) **Establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Penal Code and enforce the law against those who facilitate and benefit from the exploitation of girls and young women in prostitution, including ship’s captains and bar and hotel owners, and criminalize domestic trafficking in persons in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;**

(c) **Address the root causes contributing to the exploitation of girls and young women in prostitution, including patriarchal control and domestic violence, lack of access to secondary education and poverty, especially on the outer islands.**

**Participation in political and public life**

33. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party’s appointment of women to head its international missions. However, it is concerned about the extremely low participation of women in political and public life, including in the Government, the parliament and the community councils on the outer islands. It regrets that, of the 46

parliamentarians elected in 2016, only 3 were women, and that in 2019 no women were appointed to any of the 14 ministerial positions.

**34. The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To strengthen its awareness-raising activities on the importance of women's participation in political life, especially in decision-making positions, ensure access to campaign financing and conduct training on political campaigning and leadership skills for women who wish to stand for election or hold public office;**

(b) **To adopt a law on gender parity with a view to achieving equal representation of women in all areas of political and public life, including in the parliament, the Government and the community councils.**

**Nationality**

35. The Committee is concerned that female nationals of the State party are not able to transmit their nationality to their children and foreign spouses on an equal footing with male nationals.

**36. The Committee recommends that the State party amend sections 21, 26 and 29 of the Constitution, as well as the Citizenship Act, to bring them into full compliance with article 9 of the Convention by enabling female nationals of the State party to transmit their nationality to their children and foreign spouses on an equal footing with male nationals.**

**Education**

37. The Committee commends the State party on achieving gender parity in basic education and ensuring that the first nine years of education are free. It also welcomes the integration of gender equality into the school curriculum in 2011 under the Kiribati Education Improvement Programme and the adoption of the inclusive education policy in 2015 to support the implementation of the Education Act. It is nevertheless concerned that, in post-secondary and tertiary education, women's attainment is significantly lower than that of men and that girls and women are overrepresented in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and career paths. The Committee is also concerned about the insufficient measures to support pregnant girls and women and young mothers in continuing their education.

**38. In line with target 4.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Encourage girls and women to choose non-traditional fields of study, such as maritime science, technology and engineering;**

(b) **Provide adequate support to pregnant girls and women, as well as to young mothers, to enable them to continue their education;**

(c) **Improve accessibility in mainstream schools by removing physical and communications barriers.**

**Employment**

39. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code in 2015, in which equal opportunities for women and men and equal pay for work of equal value were provided for and sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited. It also notes with appreciation the information provided by the State

party during the dialogue about the absence of a gender pay gap in the civil service. However, the Committee notes with concern the insufficient support provided to working women with children: employers in the private sector are required to pay only 25 per cent of a woman's salary during maternity leave; the 12-week maternity leave period has to begin 6 weeks before the due date and end 6 weeks after the birth; there are no nursing spaces and day-care centres; and there is no provision for paternity leave. The Committee also notes with concern the concentration of women in the informal sector, the gender pay gap in the private sector, the de facto exclusion of women from working in the fishing industry and the disproportionate burden of community work borne by women. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of statistics related to women's employment and the absence of collective bargaining agreements.

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

**(a) Strengthen the support provided to working women with children by significantly increasing their payment during maternity leave, eliminating any restrictions on women's choice as to when they take their maternity leave, provide nursing spaces and day-care centres and introduce paid paternity leave;**

**(b) Allocate the resources necessary to implement the decent work country programme agreed upon with the International Labour Organization and support women's transition from informal to regular paid employment;**

**(c) Ensure that women can work in the fishing industry on equal terms with men and that community work is shared equally between women and men;**

**(d) Introduce a complaint mechanism for cases of unequal pay, preferential treatment of men and sexual harassment in the workplace;**

**(e) Collect statistical data on employment relations disaggregated by sex.**

**Economic empowerment of women**

41. The Committee commends the State party on its gender equality and women's development plan for the period 2019–2021, which includes a specific programme for women's economic empowerment. However, it notes the following with concern:

(a) The fact that women continue to face barriers in gaining access to financing for their entrepreneurial initiatives;

(b) The lack of access for women employed in the informal sector to the social security system and social protection and compensation programmes;

(c) The lack of access to toilets and hygiene facilities in markets where women sell their products;

(d) The lack of data on how the acquisition by women of certificates in business and accounts administration has an impact on their income and their ability to maintain decent lives, and the lack of data on women in trades such as plumbing, carpentry and mechanical engineering;

(e) The lack of a long-term strategy to ensure the sustainability of programmes aimed at increasing the participation of women in economic activities.

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

**(a) Ensure that women can gain access to loans and other forms of financial credit and adopt policies to promote entrepreneurship among women and enhance their entrepreneurial skills;**

(b) **Ensure access for women in the informal sector to the social security system and develop coordinated social protection and compensation programmes for those women;**

(c) **Provide toilets, sanitation and hygiene facilities in markets where women sell their products;**

(d) **Develop a database on women in various sectors of the economy;**

(e) **Adopt long-term policies and programmes on the economic empowerment of women and regularly monitor their implementation and effectiveness.**

### **Health**

43. The Committee congratulates the State party on providing universal free health care, including maternal health care, and welcomes the adoption of the reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health programme. It is nevertheless concerned that access by girls and women to sexual and reproductive health and rights are undermined by the conservative narratives of the church and faith-based organizations, which challenge women's right to have access to family planning and modern contraceptives. It is also concerned about the high number of teenage pregnancies, many of which are unwanted. The Committee is further concerned that abortion is prohibited in the State party.

44. **The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To conduct awareness-raising activities for the general population and target groups, in particular religious and community leaders and politicians, aimed at combating the negative impact of traditional or religious narratives on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights;**

(b) **To promote, at all levels of the education system, age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including responsible sexual behaviour and the use of modern contraceptives, and youth-friendly family planning services to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections;**

(c) **To adopt a national plan to promote access to modern contraceptives and ensure that girls and women, including those with disabilities, have access to confidential sexual and reproductive health-care services and information;**

(d) **To amend chapter 67 of the Penal Code to legalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe fetal impairment, and decriminalize it in all other cases.**

### **Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

45. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the joint implementation plan for climate change and disaster risk management for the period 2014–2023 and the participation of women in the National Expert Group, which conducted the midterm review of the plan and incorporated a gender perspective into it. The Committee also welcomes the participation of women in consultations on the development of plans and frameworks. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The limited participation of women in the implementation of climate change and disaster risk management programmes;

(b) The impact of seawater flooding of agricultural land and the pollution of wells on women's access to food, water, firewood and medicinal plants;

(c) The limited participation of women in migration policies as part of the State party's long-term adaptation strategy.

**46. The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To ensure the participation of women, including disadvantaged groups of women, in the implementation of climate change and disaster risk management initiatives;**

(b) **To take measures to address the impact of climate change specifically on women's access to resources and livelihoods to ensure that they are not disproportionately affected;**

(c) **To review the "Migration with dignity" policy and comparable schemes to ensure greater participation of women in employment opportunities abroad and respect women's agency and their mobility choices.**

**Rural women**

47. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Outer Island Women's Liaison Office in 2012 and of social welfare officer posts in the community councils. However, it is concerned about the barriers that rural women face in gaining access to health care, higher education opportunities and paid employment.

**48. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its measures to provide skills training and employment opportunities to women on the outer islands and ensure access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care.**

**Women's access to land**

49. The Committee notes with concern that the State party, in customary law and the Native Lands Ordinance, chapter 16, fails to ensure equal rights to land ownership and inheritance for women and that the views of women are not fully taken into account in decision-making processes relating to the inheritance, leasing and use of land.

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

(a) **Ensure that women have equal rights to land use, ownership and inheritance by amending the Native Lands Ordinance and repealing discriminatory customary law provisions on women's access to land;**

(b) **Conduct systematic training and awareness-raising activities with community leaders, judges, including lay judges, and magistrates to uphold women's land rights;**

(c) **Ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in the negotiation of agreements on land leasing and use and ensure that their livelihoods are not negatively affected by such agreements.**

**Marriage and family relations**

51. The Committee is concerned about the widespread use of customary law to regulate marriage and family relations. Customary law gives men authority over women, may result in sexual and other forms of gender-based violence against women, limits women's sexual and reproductive choices and discriminates against women in matters of child custody and inheritance.

**52. 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 urges the State party:

(a) To adopt a family law to uphold equality in marriage and family relations, including with regard to child custody and the equal rights of women and men to the ownership and inheritance of land and other marital property;

(b) To strengthen campaigns to raise awareness among religious and traditional leaders and the population in general, including on the outer islands, of the negative effects of discriminatory customary laws.

#### **Data collection and analysis**

53. The Committee is concerned about the general lack of statistical data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, location and socioeconomic background, which are necessary to accurately assess the situation of women, determine the extent and nature of discrimination, adopt informed and targeted policies and systematically monitor and evaluate progress towards the realization of substantive equality between women and men in all the areas covered by the Convention.

54. The Committee recommends that the State party develop an indicator system on gender-related issues to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors, which are necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming gender equality and enhancing the enjoyment by women of their human rights. In this regard, the Committee draws attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from the relevant United Nations agencies and enhance its collaboration with women's associations that could assist in the collection of accurate data.

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

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

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

56. 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 the context of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Declaration and Platform in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

#### **Dissemination**

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

**Technical assistance**

58. **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**

59. **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 Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a party.**

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

60. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 18, 22, 30 (d) and 46 (c) above.**

**Preparation of the next report**

61. **The Committee requests the State party to submit its fourth periodic report, which is due in February 2024. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

62. **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).**

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<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.