



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
8 April 2021

Original: English

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## Commission on the Status of Women

### Sixty-fifth session

15–26 March 2021

Agenda item 3 (c)

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

## **Results of the seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The present note reflects the results, including decisions taken, of the seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, held online from 29 June to 9 July 2020, from 26 October to 5 November 2020 and from 15 to 25 February and on 4 March 2021, respectively.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [47/94](#), the General Assembly recommended that the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be scheduled, whenever possible, to allow for the timely transmission of the results of those sessions for information to the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. The Committee held its seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions from 29 June to 9 July 2020, from 26 October to 5 November 2020 and from 15 to 25 February and on 4 March 2021, respectively. At its seventy-sixth session, the Committee, having reviewed the conditions under which its seventy-sixth session had been held remotely, including accessibility of the online meeting platforms used as well as issues of simultaneous interpretation, Internet connectivity and sound quality, decided to limit future remote sessions to exceptional circumstances of a global dimension similar to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide reasonable accommodation and ensure the full accessibility of remote sessions for Committee members with disabilities. It adopted the text of a joint statement on ending sexual harassment against women and girls with disabilities, initiated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and subsequently endorsed by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also adopted a statement entitled “Global anti-racism protests must herald a new era in human rights, social and gender justice”. The Committee also decided to include a new standard paragraph on women’s rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts in its lists of issues and questions in relation to State party reports and in its lists of issues prior to reporting.

3. At its seventy-seventh session, the Committee adopted general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration ([CEDAW/C/GC/38](#)), by consensus. It also adopted a call to release all detained women human rights defenders, including Saudi women’s rights activist Loujain Al-Hathloul, in the wake of International Women Human Rights Defenders Day on 29 November 2020. It decided that, in exceptional circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and in the event that its seventy-eighth session was held remotely, the newly elected members of the Committee would read out the solemn declaration, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the Committee, at the public opening meeting of the session, with live webcasting.

4. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee adopted a call for national action plans to achieve gender parity by 2030, issued jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on International Women’s Day in 2021. It also adopted a joint statement on corruption and human rights with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Committee established a working group to draft a general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls and decided to hold a half-day general discussion on the topic during its seventy-ninth session. At the same session, the Committee elected Gladys Acosta Vargas as Chair and the following members as officers of the Committee: Nahla Haidar, Vice-Chair; Ana Peláez Narváez, Vice-Chair; Elgun Safarov, Vice-Chair; and Aruna Devi Narain, Rapporteur.

5. The Committee continued to engage with partners. Before the seventy-seventh session of the Committee, the previous Chair presented the report of the Committee on its seventy-third, seventy-fourth and seventy-fifth sessions ([A/75/38](#)) to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, remotely, on 9 October 2020. She also submitted

a pre-recorded video statement to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in New York on 1 October 2020. Directly following the seventy-eighth session, the new Chair delivered a statement to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fifth session, in New York on 15 March 2021.

6. At its seventy-sixth session, the Committee held an informal, private meeting remotely with representatives of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of UN-Women, who briefed the Committee on the impact of COVID-19 on women's and girls' livelihoods across the Europe and Central Asia region. It also held an informal, public briefing remotely for States parties on its draft general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee held an informal, private meeting remotely with the Secretary-General of IPU, Martin Chungong, and Zeina Hilal of the IPU Gender Partnership Programme, who briefed the Committee on women's full participation in decision-making in political and public life, including in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery strategies.

7. The Committee continued to benefit from country-specific information received from United Nations country teams and entities, specialized agencies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.

8. As at 4 March 2021, the closing date of the seventy-eighth session of the Committee, there were 189 States parties to the Convention and 114 States parties to the Optional Protocol. A total of 80 States had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee. To bring the amendment into force, two thirds of the States parties to the Convention (currently 126 States parties) must deposit their instruments of acceptance with the Secretary-General.

## **II. Results of the seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions of the Committee**

### **A. Reports considered by the Committee**

9. At its seventy-sixth session, the Committee decided to postpone the consideration of the reports of the following States parties submitted under article 18 of the Convention, which had initially been scheduled for consideration at the seventy-sixth session, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic: Bahrain ([CEDAW/C/BHR/4](#)), Denmark ([CEDAW/C/DNK/9](#)), Dominican Republic ([CEDAW/C/DOM/8](#)), Gabon ([CEDAW/C/GAB/7](#)), Kyrgyzstan ([CEDAW/C/KGZ/5](#)), Maldives ([CEDAW/C/MDV/6](#)), Mongolia ([CEDAW/C/MNG/10](#)) and Panama ([CEDAW/C/PAN/8](#)).

10. At its seventy-seventh session, the Committee decided to postpone the consideration of the reports of the following States parties, which had initially been scheduled for consideration at the seventy-seventh session, owing to the ongoing pandemic: Azerbaijan ([CEDAW/C/AZE/6](#)), Ecuador ([CEDAW/C/ECU/10](#)), Nicaragua ([CEDAW/C/NIC/7-10](#)), Senegal ([CEDAW/C/SEN/8](#)), South Africa ([CEDAW/C/ZAF/5](#)), Sweden ([CEDAW/C/SWE/10](#)), Uruguay ([CEDAW/C/URY/10](#)) and Yemen ([CEDAW/C/YEM/7-8](#)).

11. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee considered the ninth periodic report of Denmark ([CEDAW/C/DNK/9](#)), submitted under article 18 of the Convention, using an online platform for the dialogue with the State party, on an

exceptional basis, given that no in-person meetings could be held owing to the ongoing pandemic. It issued its concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/DNK/CO/9](#)).

12. At the same session, the Committee decided to postpone the consideration of the reports of the following States parties, which had initially been scheduled for consideration at the seventy-eighth session, owing to the pandemic: Bolivia (Plurinational State of) ([CEDAW/C/BOL/7](#)), Indonesia ([CEDAW/C/IND/8](#)), Peru ([CEDAW/C/PER/9](#)), Russian Federation ([CEDAW/C/RUS/9](#)), South Sudan ([CEDAW/C/SSD/1](#)), Spain ([CEDAW/C/ESP/9](#)), Tunisia ([CEDAW/C/TUN/7](#)) and Uzbekistan ([CEDAW/C/UZB/6](#)).

13. Representatives of United Nations country teams and entities, specialized agencies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations remotely attended the seventy-eighth session and the pre-sessional working groups for the seventy-eighth, seventy-ninth and eightieth sessions of the Committee, held from 13 to 17 July 2020, from 9 to 13 November 2020 and from 1 to 5 March 2021, respectively. The reports of the States parties, the Committee's lists of issues and questions, and the States parties' replies thereto are posted on the website of the Committee under the relevant session or pre-sessional working group, as are the concluding observations of the Committee on the ninth periodic report of Denmark.

## **B. Action taken in relation to the implementation of article 21 of the Convention**

### **Working group on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration**

14. The working group met during the seventy-seventh session to discuss and incorporate comments made during the first reading of draft general recommendation No. 38, held on 27 October and 3 and 4 November 2020. On 5 November, the Committee adopted general recommendation No. 38 (2020), by consensus.

### **Working group on working methods**

15. The working group met during the seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh and seventy-eighth sessions. At the seventy-sixth session, it discussed and submitted four draft decisions to the Committee, concerning exceptional remote sessions; reasonable accommodation of experts with disabilities during remote sessions; a predictable cycle for the review of State party reports; and the inclusion in its lists of issues and questions and lists of issues prior to reporting of a new standard paragraph on women's rights and gender equality in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the seventy-seventh session, it discussed the possibility of newly elected members making their solemn declaration remotely at the public opening meeting of the seventy-eighth session in the event the session was held remotely, and submitted a draft decision on the matter to the Committee. At the seventy-eighth session, it discussed the removal of the strict limitation on the number of States parties for which lists of issues prior to reporting could be prepared at any pre-sessional working group session, and submitted a draft decision on the matter to the Committee.

### **Working group on gender-based violence against women**

16. The working group met during each of the sessions. At the seventy-sixth session, the working group decided to prepare comprehensive guidance for States parties, including a checklist for the submission to the Committee of periodic reports on the implementation of their obligations and their accountability as set out in general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating

general recommendation No. 19. It also discussed a proposal to embark as a matter of priority on the formulation of a practitioner's guide for States parties and other stakeholders on gender-based violence against women and girls during pandemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic. At the seventy-seventh session, the Chair of the working group presented a draft introduction to the guidance note for States parties. The group decided to issue the guidance note in the form of a checklist and to include the practitioner's guide. The group held an intersessional meeting with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences to discuss the draft guidance note. At the seventy-eighth session, the Chair of the working group presented the first section of the draft guidance note, which is focused on domestic violence. The group discussed and adopted a programme of work for the completion of the guidance note.

### **Working group on the rights of indigenous women and girls**

17. The newly constituted working group met during the seventy-eighth session and elected Gladys Acosta Vargas as its Chair. The group updated its internal workplan and tentative timeline for drafting and adopting the general recommendation. It submitted a draft decision to the Committee to hold a half-day general discussion on the rights of indigenous women and girls during the seventy-ninth session.

## **C. Action taken in relation to ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee**

### **Enhancing the Committee's working methods under article 18 of the Convention**

18. At its seventy-sixth session, the Committee reviewed the conditions under which its seventy-sixth session had been held remotely, including accessibility of the online platforms used, time to migrate from one platform to another, problems with simultaneous interpretation, and issues of Internet connectivity and sound quality regardless of location. It decided that, in view of the technical and other difficulties encountered, future remote sessions of the Committee should be limited to exceptional circumstances of a global dimension similar to the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with articles 2 and 5 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, in particular with reference to its aim of promoting inclusiveness and the need for barriers to accessibility to be "properly identified, addressed and removed" and its affirmation that "persons with disabilities engaging with the United Nations in any capacity ... have the right to reasonable accommodation", the Committee decided to request the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure the full accessibility of remote sessions or parts thereof for Committee members with disabilities who require personal assistance, including by guaranteeing the full accessibility of any online platform used to conduct the business of the Committee and by providing reasonable accommodation to members with disabilities, including financial compensation for their personal assistant, in order to enable them to participate fully in the work of the Committee. It also decided to move towards a predictable review cycle in order to ensure regular and timely reporting by all States parties, subject to the capacity and adequate resourcing of the Committee and its secretariat. The Committee further decided to include the following standard paragraph in its lists of issues and lists of issues prior to reporting in relation to reports of States parties:

Please indicate the measures implemented by the State party in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men by placing women at the centre of recovery as an economic diversification strategy; to meet the needs and uphold

the rights of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups and women in conflict or other humanitarian situations; and to ensure that, in the context of lockdown measures, whether partial or total, and in post-crisis recovery plans, women and girls are not relegated to stereotyped gender roles. Please indicate the measures in place to ensure that all COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts: effectively address and are aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls; guarantee the equal participation of women and girls in political and public life, decision-making, economic empowerment and service delivery; and are designed so that women and girls benefit equally from economic stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care roles, that are aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Please explain how the State party is ensuring that measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as restrictions on freedom of movement or physical distancing, do not limit the access of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to justice, shelters, education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

19. At its seventy-seventh session, the Committee, recalling rule 15 of its rules of procedure, decided that, in exceptional circumstances such as the current pandemic and in the event that its seventy-eighth session was held remotely, the newly elected members of the Committee would read out the solemn declaration at the opening meeting of the session, which was public and webcast. They would deposit their signed solemn declarations with the secretariat for publication on the website of the Committee.

20. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee, recalling its decision 73/III, by which it removed the requirement of the submission of a common core document for States parties wishing to avail themselves of the simplified reporting procedure for the submission of their periodic reports, decided to rescind its decision 70/VI limiting the number of States parties for which lists of issues prior to reporting could be prepared at any session of the pre-session working group to a maximum of three. In this context, the Committee decided that the number of States parties for which lists of issues prior to reporting could be prepared at any session of the pre-session working group would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **Follow-up procedure**

21. The Committee continued its work under the follow-up procedure at its seventy-sixth and seventy-eighth sessions, adopting the reports of the Rapporteur on follow-up to concluding observations and considering the follow-up reports of Barbados, Burkina Faso, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Guatemala, Ireland, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Oman, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, the State of Palestine and Thailand. At its seventy-sixth session, the Rapporteur on follow-up met a representative of Nauru remotely, given that its follow-up report was overdue.

### **Overdue reports**

22. The Committee decided that its secretariat should systematically remind States parties whose reports were five years or more overdue to submit their reports as soon as possible. As at 4 March 2021, the closing date of the seventy-eighth session, there were 14 States parties whose reports were overdue by five years or more: Algeria, Belize, Chad, Dominica, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Libya, Malta, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe and Zambia. With regard to long-overdue reports, the Committee decided that, as a last resort, and failing receipt of those reports by a specified date, it would proceed with the consideration of the

implementation of the Convention in the State party in the absence of a report. States parties have been responsive to the reminders transmitted by the secretariat, as evidenced by the number of reports submitted and scheduled for consideration. The Committee currently has 16 reports scheduled for consideration between the seventy-ninth session (June/July 2021) and the eightieth session (October/November 2021).

#### **Dates of future sessions of the Committee**

23. The Committee confirmed the tentative dates of its seventy-ninth and eightieth sessions, as follows:

##### *Seventy-ninth session*

- (a) Fiftieth session of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol: 17 and 18 June 2021;
- (b) Nineteenth session of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol: 17 and 18 June 2021;
- (c) Plenary: 21 June–9 July 2021;
- (d) Pre-sessional working group for the eighty-first session: 12–16 July 2021;

##### *Eightieth session*

- (a) Fifty-first session of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol: 13–15 October 2021;
- (b) Twentieth session of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol: 14 and 15 October 2021;
- (c) Plenary: 18 October–5 November 2021;
- (d) Pre-sessional working group for the eighty-second session: 8–12 November 2021.

#### **Reports to be considered at future sessions of the Committee**

24. Subject to possible future disruptions in the holding of in-person sessions due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee tentatively confirmed that it would consider the reports of Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, South Sudan, Spain (under the simplified reporting procedure) and Yemen at its seventy-ninth session and the reports of Azerbaijan, Ecuador (under the simplified reporting procedure), Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon, Peru, South Africa and Sweden (under the simplified reporting procedure) at its eightieth session.

### **D. Action taken by the Committee in respect of issues arising from article 2 and article 8 of the Optional Protocol**

25. At its seventy-sixth session, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol on its forty-seventh session. The Committee adopted decisions of inadmissibility with regard to communications concerning Hungary ([CEDAW/C/76/D/117/2017](#)), Switzerland ([CEDAW/C/76/D/124/2018](#)), Slovakia ([CEDAW/C/76/D/135/2018](#)) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ([CEDAW/C/76/D/141/2019](#)). It also adopted views finding violations with regard to communications concerning the Republic of Moldova ([CEDAW/C/76/D/105/2016](#)) and Bosnia and Herzegovina ([CEDAW/C/76/D/116/2017](#)). It discontinued its consideration of one communication concerning Czechia ([CEDAW/C/76/D/121/2016](#)).

26. With regard to inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol on its sixteenth session. In relation to inquiry No. 2014/1, concerning Kyrgyzstan, it decided that the assessment of the follow-up information adopted by the Committee should be sent to the State party. In relation to inquiry No. 2011/2, concerning the United Kingdom, it decided to request the State party to submit within six months a comprehensive follow-up report under article 9 (2) of the Optional Protocol. The Committee undertook a first reading of its draft report regarding inquiry No. 2013/1. It took note of the publication, on 24 June 2020, of its report regarding inquiry No. 2011/4, concerning Mali ([CEDAW/C/IR/MLI/1](#)), following the lapse of the six-month period under article 8 (4) of the Optional Protocol for the State party to submit its observations to the Committee.

27. At its seventy-seventh session, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol on its forty-eighth session. It adopted views finding violations with regard to Kyrgyzstan ([CEDAW/C/77/D/133/2018](#)) and North Macedonia ([CEDAW/C/77/D/143/2019](#)).

28. With regard to inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol on its seventeenth session. It adopted its findings, comments and recommendations on inquiry No. 2013/1 and decided to transmit them to the State party concerned for observations within six months, following which the report of the inquiry will be made public.

29. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol on its forty-ninth session. It adopted views finding no violation with regard to Spain ([CEDAW/C/78/D/120/2017](#)) and views finding a violation with regard to Libya ([CEDAW/C/78/D/130/2018](#)).

30. With regard to inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol on its eighteenth session. In relation to inquiries Nos. 2016/1, 2014/3 and 2014/2, it decided to send a note verbale to the permanent missions of the States parties concerned to explore the possibility, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, of undertaking the respective inquiries in a hybrid format combining desk research and a country visit at a later stage. In relation to submission No. 2019/1, it decided to designate Lia Nadaraia and Genoveva Tisheva to conduct an inquiry and to seek the consent of the State party concerned to a visit to its territory.

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