Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined fourth to eighth periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*

1. The Committee considered the combined fourth to eighth periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (CEDAW/C/VCT/4-8) at its 1323rd and 1324th meetings, on 20 July 2015 (see CEDAW/C/SR.1323 and 1324). The Committee’s list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/VCT/Q/4-8 and the responses of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are contained in CEDAW/C/VCT/Q/4-8/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates that, in spite of the protracted delay, the State party submitted its combined fourth to eighth periodic reports. It also appreciates the State party’s written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and 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 delegation, which was represented by the Director of the Social Development Unit within the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Merissa Finch Burke, and also included a consultant. The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue that took place between the delegation and the Committee, while noting that some questions were not fully answered.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since its consideration in 1997 of the State party’s combined initial to third periodic reports (CEDAW/C/STV/1-3) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

   (a) Domestic Violence Bill No. 7 (2015), which prohibits and provides enhanced protection for women and girls from domestic violence;

   (b) Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, Cap 209 of the Revised Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2009);

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-first session, meeting from 6 to 24 July 2015.
(c) Protection of Employment Act (2004), which specifically prohibits the employer from terminating the services of an employee on various grounds including sex, marital status, pregnancy, reasonable absence from work due to family emergencies or responsibilities or absence from work during maternity leave.

5. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2015), which provides for a comprehensive policy framework to prevent and combat gender-based violence in the State party;

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, since its consideration of the previous report, the State party ratified or acceded to:
   (a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in 2011;
   (b) The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, in 2010;
   (c) The Convention on the Rights Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, in 2010;
   (d) The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in 2010;
   (e) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in 2005;
   (g) The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in 2002;
   (h) The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2001.

C. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

House of Assembly

7. 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, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites House of Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.

Status of the Convention

8. The Committee is concerned that, although ratified in 1981, the Convention has not yet been fully incorporated into the domestic legal order through separate domestic legislation or through judgements in order for it to be directly applicable in the national courts.

9. The Committee calls upon the State party to proceed without delay with the full incorporation of the Convention into its domestic legal order.

Constitutional framework and discriminatory laws

10. The Committee acknowledges that article 13 of the Constitution (1979) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. However, the Committee is concerned that there is no specific provision establishing that men and women have equal rights, and notes with
regret that the 2009 Constitution Bill, which included provisions for equal rights and the same legal status for women and men as well as the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, was rejected by a referendum held on 25 November 2009. The Committee notes with concern the absence of a definition of discrimination against women in line with that of the Convention as well as the principle of equality between women and men in the State party’s legislation. It is further concerned that there is no law on gender equality or comprehensive anti-discriminatory legislation which would incorporate the principle of equality of women and men and define and prohibit all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex or gender, including direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

11. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt new legislation, without delay, to incorporate fully the principle of equality between women and men, as well as a definition and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex and gender in the public and private spheres, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

12. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the State party has adopted some anti-discriminatory legislation. However, it notes with concern that sex-discriminatory provisions continue to exist in its legislation, including in the Criminal Code (Cap. 124), the Marriage Act (Cap. 173), the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Cap 209) or the Citizenship Act (1984).

13. Recalling its previous recommendation (A/52/38/REV.1(SUPP), para. 142) the Committee recommends that the State party review its existing legislation by adopting a clear time frame and targets in relation to the law reform process, and amend or repeal all discriminatory provisions, including in the laws mentioned above, in order to ensure compatibility with the principle of equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in the Convention.

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee notes as positive that the Gender Affairs Department, which has been reoriented to focus on gender mainstreaming and gender policy development in all State departments, is currently attempting to promote gender mainstreaming across all government sectors and is collaborating with the Ministry of Finance to design and implement a gender responsive budgeting approach to facilitate this process. The Committee further notes that the Gender Affairs Division is responsible for the development of a Multi-sectoral National Gender Policy. The Committee is, however, concerned about the low rank of the national machinery for the advancement of women in the institutional structure of the State party as well as the scarce human, technical and financial resources allocated to it.

15. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen the authority and visibility of the Gender Affairs Department in the State party’s institutional structure, and provide it with adequate human, financial and technical resources in order to coordinate and work effectively for the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes across all sectors and levels of the Government;

(b) Consolidate the gender mainstreaming activities by establishing the Multi-sectoral National Gender Policy, without delay, and set up a time line for rolling out the policy;

(c) Implement the gender responsive budgeting approach.
Temporary Special Measures

16. The Committee notes that the replies to the List of Issues enumerates different legislative and administrative measures to improve the situation of women and girls in different sectors, but that these do not correspond to temporary special measures as called for under article 4 (1) of the Convention and as further elaborated in General Recommendation 25. This suggests that there is still a lack of understanding on the part of the State party as to the concept of temporary special measures and their use for promoting de facto equality. In that context, the Committee regrets that “no quotas have been instituted for the inclusion of women in public office or other areas”.

17. The Committee recommends that the State party familiarize all relevant State officials and policy-makers with the concept and use of temporary special measures and adopt and implement such measures to promote substantive equality of women with men in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee’s general recommendation No. 25 (2004), in all areas of the Convention where women are under-represented or disadvantaged. Such measures could include, for example, gender quotas in political parties’ electoral lists.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

18. The Committee acknowledges the importance in daily life of the culture and traditions of the State party and notes that gender sensitivity training and awareness-raising activities have been conducted in schools and through radio programmes and workshops to reach out to the communities. The Committee is nevertheless concerned at persisting discriminatory stereotypes, negative traditional values and patriarchal attitudes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in society and in the family which overemphasize women’s roles as mothers and housewives, thereby preventing them from actively participating in all areas of political and economic life covered by the Convention.

19. The Committee recommends that the State party:

   (a) Put in place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy to modify or eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against women. The strategy should include education and awareness-raising campaigns targeting women and men at all levels of society, including community leaders and religious leaders and focus particular attention on the recognition of the value and dignity of women, their empowerment to participate in decision-making processes in the community and society at large. The strategy should engage civil society organizations and the mass media for its implementation;

   (b) Adequately integrate principles of non-discrimination and equality of women and men into educational policies, the national core curriculum and related documents, as well as into basic and continuing education for teachers and health-care professionals and other service providers;

   (c) Use innovative measures that target children and parents to strengthen their understanding of the principle of equality of women and men, and work through the educational system, both formal and informal, as well as with the mass media, to enhance positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of women;

   (d) Monitor and review all measures taken in order to regularly assess their impact and take appropriate remedial action.

Violence against women

20. The Committee welcomes the adoption, in April 2015, of the new Domestic Violence Act No. 7 (2015), which broadens the definition of domestic violence by
including not only physical violence but also sexual, psychological and economic violence. The Committee also notes with appreciation the recent adoption of an inter-ministerial Action Plan to end Gender Based Violence. The Committee, however, notes that:

(a) The civil nature of the proceedings provided for in the Act, as only the breach of a protection or occupation order is considered a criminal offence, but with lenient sanctions applied and weak enforcement measures in case of such a breach;

(b) The absence of provisions explicitly criminalizing marital rape in the Criminal Code and/or the Domestic Violence Act;

(c) The exclusion of women in same sex relationships from the categories of persons who can apply for protection under the new Domestic Violence Act, as acknowledged by the State party;

(d) The financial burden imposed on victims as they need to file affidavits, thus having to retain the services of a lawyer which is not provided for by the Act;

(e) The narrow legal definition of rape which does not cover invasive acts such as penetration with other body parts or objects which are currently falling under the offence of indecent assault threatened with much lighter penalties than rape in the Penal Code;

(f) Police attitudes which sometimes actively discourage women victims of violence from pursuing their complaint by treating them with contempt and hostility;

(g) Lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, type of offense, relationship between the perpetrator and the victim on all the forms of violence covered by the Domestic Violence Act.

21. The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Amend the Criminal Code and/or the Domestic Violence Act to criminalize all acts of domestic violence covered by the Act, and explicitly criminalize marital rape;

(b) Ensure that no women is excluded from seeking and obtaining protection under the Domestic Violence Act on the basis of the type of relationship in which she is engaged;

(c) Ensure that women victims of violence wishing to apply for protection under the Act are not denied access to protection because of financial and administrative obstacles;

(d) Widen the definition of rape to include other forms of penetration or establish new offences to cover such conduct; consider using the CARICOM Sexual Offences Model Bill to do so;

(e) Provide sufficient technical, human and financial resources for the effective implementation of the new Domestic Violence Act and the National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence, enhance cooperation with civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders in that regard;

(f) Develop protocols to support response, management and referral related to domestic violence cases and provide continuous training to the judiciary and law enforcement officers on gender-sensitive procedures to deal with women victims of violence;

(g) Encourage women to report incidents of sexual and domestic violence by de-stigmatizing victims and raising awareness about the grave and serious nature of such acts;
(h) Develop protocols for the collection of information by the police, justice and health workers on domestic and other types of violence against women to systematize and institutionalize the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data on domestic violence, disaggregated by age, sex, nationality, ethnic group and type of violence, and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

22. The Committee notes the positive steps undertaken by the State party to address trafficking in human beings, in particular women and girls, including the enactment of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2011), the establishment of an Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit within the Police, and the creation of a crisis centre for the victims. However, the Committee is concerned about reports of cases of sexual abuse of children in the family by persons who pay the family to be silent and not report cases, which leads to sexual exploitation of children, particularly girls, effectively putting them into a situation of forced prostitution. The Committee notes with concern that only three cases of human trafficking were investigated in 2014 and five in 2013 without resulting in prosecution. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the lack of alternative employment opportunities for women and girls wishing to leave prostitution.

23. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen measures to prevent and effectively respond to incidents of transnational and internal trafficking for sexual abuse and exploitation, especially of girls under 18, including through awareness-raising initiatives, the prosecution and punishment of offenders, and the establishment of specific support and rehabilitation programmes for victims;

(b) Systematically gather and analyse sex-disaggregated data and information on trafficking and sexual exploitation, including exploitation of children in the family by outsiders, and sex tourism;

(c) Strengthen measures aimed at addressing the root causes of trafficking such as poverty and high unemployment among women and girls which may also drive them into prostitution;

(d) Enhance support services for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, including alternative employment opportunities, to facilitate the reintegration into society of women and girls who wish to leave prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

24. The Committee notes that women currently constitute 40 per cent of the work force in civil service institutions, and that high level public positions, including Attorney General, Accountant General, Clerk of the House of Assembly, 50% of judges of the High Court and Magistrates, Registrar of the Supreme Court and President of the Family Court are held by women. However, the Committee remains concerned about the stark underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of decision making, noting that they represent only 13 per cent of Parliamentarians and 9.1 per cent of Ministers. The Committee is concerned that no quota system has been introduced to promote the participation of women in political and public life as a result of the rejection by referendum in 2009, of the proposal to include in the Constitution, section 21(3) which would have provided for the introduction of a quota of 30 per cent women candidates on political parties’ electoral lists. It is further concerned that the measures taken by the State party to support women contesting for elected positions remain insufficient and that targeted training and mentoring programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for them are non-existent. The Committee is also concerned by the several barriers faced by
women when applying for public office such as negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes.

25. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt, as a matter of priority, targeted measures, including training, capacity-building, gender-sensitive recruitment and temporary special measures, to increase the percentage of women in appointed senior positions, the Government, the public service and foreign service, in line with the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 23 on women in political and public life;

(b) Amend the Electoral Act to allow for reserving at least 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention, the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 23 and General Recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures;

(c) Provide training for women, including in the Grenadines, on leadership skills, campaigning and constituency-building to prepare them as candidates and for positions in political life and the various areas of public administration;

(d) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for politicians, journalists, teachers and community leaders, especially men, to enhance the understanding that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full implementation of the Convention;

(e) Address cultural barriers that prevent women from moving into decision-making positions, and ensure equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions.

Nationality

26. The Committee notes with satisfaction that under the law of the State party, women have the same rights as men to acquire, change or retain nationality. It also acknowledges that legislative provisions extend the same rights to women and men to pass on their nationality to their children and provide for dual citizenship for both sexes equally. However, the Committee is concerned about information stating that a married woman’s ability to pass her nationality to her husband is subject to the discretion of the responsible Minister of Government who can refuse such transmission of nationality ‘on reasonable grounds’.

27. The Committee recommends that the State party amend its relevant legislation to grant women citizens equal rights with men regarding the transmission of their nationality to their foreign spouses.

Education

28. The Committee commends the State party for achieving universal access to primary and secondary education. It also welcomes the development of the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum. The “Teen Mothers Returning to School” programme aiming at enabling pregnant adolescent girls to pursue their education through the provision of day care services, payment of school fees and books, as well as transportation. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The high rate of teenage pregnancy (as nearly 50 per cent of women/ girls give birth between 15 and 19 for the first time), which results in high rates of drop-out from school, as well as the lack of information on whether the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum is offered in an age-appropriate manner at all levels of
education and includes a gender perspective and education on responsible sexual behaviour;

(b) The limited coverage and the lack of public awareness of the “Teen Mothers Returning to School” programme, designed to facilitate the return of adolescent mothers to school, and the lack of sex-disaggregated data to carry out an impact assessment;

(c) The lack of a comprehensive and integrated strategy to address ideological and structural barriers that discourage girls from participating in non-traditional academic and technical-vocational subjects.

29. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Consider means of reducing unwanted teenage pregnancy by continuing to promote education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible sexual behaviour for girls and boys, and ensuring that it is age-appropriate and is offered at all levels of education;

(b) Strengthen efforts to retain girls in school and facilitate the reintegration of pregnant girls and young mothers into schools by providing support services such as counselling in parenting skills, appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and adequate childcare facilities, as well as by extending the coverage and increasing the accessibility and availability of the “Teen Mothers Returning to School” programme.

(c) Eliminate traditional stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, such as science and technology, and step up efforts to provide girls with career counselling on non-traditional career paths, as well as alternatives outside formal education, including non-stereotypical vocational training.

Employment

30. The Committee acknowledges the adoption of legislative and other measures by the State party to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment and ensure that women and men have equal access to the labour market, including by establishing early childhood facilities at community level and by improving public transportation. However, the Committee notes with concern that in 2013, the labour force participation rate was 55.7 per cent for women and 78.4 per cent for men. While noting the efforts of the State party to increase female participation in non-traditional sectors of the economy, the Committee remains concerned about the clear horizontal segregation of the labour market and women’s concentration in low income occupational categories.

31. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Systematically collect sex-disaggregated data on labour market participation, and analyse and develop effective responses to the continuing lack of correlation between the high level of education attained by women and their low level of engagement in the work force;

(b) Adopt and implement policies with time-bound targets and indicators to reverse cultural patterns and transform traditional gender stereotypes and norms of sex-appropriate roles in the society transmitted through schooling and parenting in order to eliminate occupational segregation and achieve substantive equality of women and men in the labour market, including in traditionally male-dominated fields through intensified technical and vocational training for women in these areas.
32. The Committee notes with concern that the Equal Pay Act, 1994, is not in conformity with the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

33. The Committee recommends that the State party amend section 3(1) of the Equal Pay Act in order to ensure equal remuneration of women and men for work of equal value.

34. The Committee is concerned about information provided in the State party’s periodic report stating that there is anecdotal evidence that some women who seek employment are requested to provide sexual favours in exchange for being hired. It is also concerned that the existing legislation within the State party does not cover all aspects of sexual harassment and that harassment in the Domestic Violence Act is limited to the private sphere, failing to address the scope of sexual harassment in the workplace.

35. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legislation specifically criminalizing sexual harassment in all settings, including in the workplace, which covers both quid pro quo and hostile working environment harassment.

Health

36. The Committee notes with appreciation the awareness-raising activities carried out by the Family Planning Coordinator in secondary schools, technical institutions and the Community College to address issues such as responsible sexual behaviour, adolescent pregnancy, family planning services, including contraceptives, and sexually transmitted diseases. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned about information that traditional attitudes and cultural norms hamper access to contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives, as clinic nurses frequently consider that it is not appropriate for schoolgirls to be sexually active and either refuse to supply such contraceptives or inform their mothers about their sexual activity.

37. In line with article 12 of the Convention and General Recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:

   (a) Ensure free and adequate access to sexual and reproductive health services, in particular to modern contraceptive methods, for all women and girls, including those living on the outer islands, and strengthen age-appropriate school based education on sexual and reproductive health and rights for adolescent girls and boys through the HFLE curriculum;

   (b) Review policies and protocols governing the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to women and girls, and ensure their effective implementation by developing and conducting sensitization and training programmes for health care providers with a view to addressing traditional attitudes and overcoming cultural barriers that constrain access to family planning services, including contraceptives;

   (c) Provide free and confidential family planning at the community level, including in the Grenadine islands, and educate women and girls as well as men and boys on responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early and unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

38. The Committee notes that abortion is illegal except in cases of rape, incest, risk to the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or severe foetal impairment, as stipulated in Section 149 of the Criminal Code Cap 171 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2009). However, the Committee remains
concerned at information indicating that, in practice, abortion is not available to victims of rape or incest, neither to women whose life is threatened by the pregnancy. It further notes with concern the information mentioning that a proper medical procedure is very expensive and is therefore not an option for many women who resort to backstreet abortions. It notes with concern that official data shows that the maternal mortality ratio is 48 births per 100,000 live births, reportedly due in part to unsafe abortions in the State party.

39. The Committee recommends that the State party remove penalties imposed on women who undergo abortion and ensure that Section 149 of the Criminal Code is properly implemented to guarantee access to legal and safe abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe foetal impairment, in line with the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health; and ensure that women and girls have confidential access to adequate post-abortion care, including in case of backstreet abortions.

Rural women

40. While welcoming the efforts of the State party to reduce rural poverty by carrying out a number of development and micro-credit projects and by improving the delivery of basic social services to remote communities, the Committee notes with concern that rural women, including those in isolated communities, which includes indigenous women, are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and gender-based violence. Rural women have limited access to health care, education, skill-development and training opportunities, and to justice and legal aid, and have low rates of participation in decision-making. The Committee is also concerned about the high prevalence of female-headed households that also suffer from undue disadvantage and lack of social protection. The Committee is further concerned that rural women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, volcanoes, etc.), as evidenced in the cases of Hurricane Ivan (2010), Hurricane Tomas (2010) and Tropical Storm Lili (2009), as well as the impact of climate change.

41. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen the programmes to address gender-based violence, poverty and unemployment for rural women, particularly those in isolated communities and those that head households, and ensure that they have improved access to health care, social services and the justice system, with targeted programmes for women who suffer multiple discrimination due to old age and disabilities, including through greater access to social safety nets;

(b) Consider extending social protection schemes, conditional cash transfers targeting all vulnerable female-headed households;

(c) Ensure that the development and implementation of policies and programmes on disaster preparedness, response to natural disasters and impacts of climate change, as well as other emergencies, are based on a comprehensive gender analysis, and mainstream the concerns of women, particularly those of rural women, as well as include them into the design and management of such programmes.

Family relations and marriage

42. The Committee welcomes the adoption of national legislation which protects the rights of children born out of wedlock. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about cultural attitudes and power imbalance within family relations that lead to discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls. The Committee is further concerned that women in de facto unions continue to be disadvantaged before the law, as they do
not enjoy the right to property acquired during the union or financial support from their partners. The Committee also notes with concern the existence of disparities between the child maintenance awards made to the children of unmarried mothers and those of married mothers by the courts.

43. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen its efforts to eliminate stereotypical attitudes regarding the roles of women and men in the family through awareness-raising campaigns;

(b) Expedite efforts to undertake reforms, including legislative reforms, with a view to protecting the property rights of women upon the termination of de facto unions, and giving them the right to financial support in case of need, in line with General Recommendation no. 29 on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, and article 16 of the convention;

(c) Strengthen its efforts to secure child maintenance payments in adequate amounts, ensuring also that there are no disparities between those accorded to the children of married and unmarried mothers;


44. The Committee is concerned that the Marriage Act set up the minimum legal age for marriage at 15 for girls and 16 for boys.

45. The Committee urges the State party to expeditiously amend the Marriage Act to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for girls and boys, in accordance with joint General Recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices.

Data collection and analysis

46. The Committee is concerned at the general lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, race, ethnicity, geographical location and socioeconomic background in the areas covered by the Convention, which are necessary to assess the situation of women, for informed and targeted policymaking and to systematically monitor and evaluate progress achieved towards the realization of substantive equality of women in all areas covered by the Convention.

47. The Committee calls upon the State party to implement systems of collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, geographic location and socioeconomic background and to use measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and the progress achieved in the realization of substantive equality of women in all areas covered by the Convention. In that regard, it draws the State party’s attention to the Committee’s general recommendation No. 9 on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages it to develop gender-sensitive indicators that could be used in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and, when necessary, review of gender equality policies.

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

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

49. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.

Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development framework

50. The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, into all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and into the post-2015 development framework.

Dissemination

51. The Committee recalls the obligation of the State party to systematically and continuously implement the provisions of the Convention. It urges the State party to give priority attention to the implementation of the present concluding observations and recommendations between now and the submission of the next periodic report. The Committee therefore requests that the present concluding observations be disseminated in a timely manner, 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 ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation. It encourages the State party to collaborate with all stakeholders concerned, such as employers’ associations, trade unions, human rights and women’s organizations, universities, research institutions and the media. It recommends that the present concluding observations be disseminated in an appropriate form at the local community level to enable their implementation. In addition, the Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and relevant jurisprudence, in addition to the Committee’s general recommendations, to all stakeholders.

Technical assistance

52. 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 that respect.

Ratification of other treaties

53. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments1 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 consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

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1 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.
Follow-up to the concluding observations

54. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 and 21 (d), (e), (g) and (h) above.

Preparation of the next report

55. The Committee invites the State party to submit its ninth periodic report in July 2019.

56. 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).