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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women****Concluding observations on the combined eighth to tenth
periodic reports of Egypt***

1. The Committee considered the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt (CEDAW/C/EGY/8-10) at its 1823rd and 1824th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1823 and 1824) held on 26 October 2021. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/EGY/Q/8-10 and the responses of country are contained in CEDAW/C/EGY/RQ/8-10.

A. Introduction

2. While the Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined eighth to tenth periodic reports, it regrets the delay of six years in submitting the report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party's high level delegation which was headed by Her Excellency Ms. Maya Morsi, President of the National Council of Women. The delegation also included representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Supreme Council for Culture, and the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive Aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in January 2010 of the State party's seventh report (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7) and on decisive progress made since 2014 in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of:

(a) Constitution of 2014, which includes provisions on the commitment of State party to achieve gender equality in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and to ensure the protection of women against all forms of violence, as well as the affirmation that citizens' core rights and freedoms cannot be suspended or derogated, and that no law that regulates the exercise of rights and freedoms may restrict them in such a way as to undermine their essence;

(b) Act No. 30 of 2018 on the organization of the National Council for Women;

* Adopted by the Committee at its eightieth session (18 October to 12 November).



(c) Act no. 2 of 2018, amending certain provisions of Act No. 17 (1943), which makes it a crime to deprive someone of their inheritance;

(d) Act no. 81 of 2016 on civil service that guarantees the right of citizens to hold civil service jobs and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in the application of laws;

(e) Act no. 82 of 2016 on illegal migration and smuggling of migrants, under which it is a crime to smuggle, attempt to smuggle or facilitate the smuggling of migrants and the penalty imposed is more severe if women are among the migrants being smuggled;

(f) Act no. 11 (2011), amending certain provisions of the Penal Code, under which the penalty for rape, abduction, indecent assault and sexual harassment in the streets is heightened;

(g) Act no. 64 of 2010 on combating human trafficking.

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

(a) National Human Rights Strategy for 2021–2026;

(b) National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women for 2016–2030;

(c) National Strategy and Framework to Combat Violence against Women for 2015–2020;

(d) National Strategy to Counter Female Genital Mutilation for 2016–2020;

(e) Industrial Development Strategy to improve the status of women adopted by the Ministry of Industry in 2016;

(f) National Strategy to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking for 2016–2021;

(g) The National Council for Human Rights, which is mandated to report any violation to the Office of the Public Prosecutor and may intercede in civil proceedings at the request of the injured party;

(h) Submission of its Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) and Third National Communication (NC3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2016, in support of its efforts to realize its development and economic goals and increase its adaptive capacity to climate change.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2018.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, annex VI to E/CN.6/2010/CRP.21¹). It invites the House of

¹ Decision taken by the Committee during the 70th session to introduce reference to the report in which the Committee's statement on its relationship with Parliamentarians is cited.

Representatives, in line with its mandate, to take necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Reservations

9. The Committee remains concerned that the State party maintains reservations to articles 2 and 16 which is in contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention and undermine the implementation of the fundamental principle of formal and substantive equality between women and men in all aspects of public and private life.

10. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 14), the Committee recommends that the State party establish a clear timeline to review its reservations to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention, which are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention and constitute an obstacle to the implementation of the Convention as a whole, with a view to withdrawing them. It also urges the State party to initiate a dialogue with the religious leaders and scholars, taking into consideration best practices in the regions, with a view to overcoming the resistance to the withdrawal of its reservations to the Convention.**

Visibility of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations

11. The Committee notes with appreciation the various raising awareness programs and campaigns targeting women, including through the online social media, as well as the training programs conducted for judges and prosecutors on violence against women and the provisions of the Convention. The Committee, nevertheless, is concerned about:

(a) Insufficient capacity building programs for judges and lawyers on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations;

(b) Convention has not been directly invoked, applied or referred to in court proceedings;

(c) Women, particularly women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, are unaware of their rights under the Convention and thus lack the information necessary to claim such rights.

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

(a) **Provide systematic capacity building and training for government officials, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the Convention, so that the Convention can serve as an effective framework for all laws, court decisions and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women;**

(b) **Enhance women's awareness of their rights under the Convention and the remedies available to them to claim violations of such rights, and ensure that information on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations is provided to all women, including women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups.**

Discriminatory laws

13. The Committee welcomes the prohibition of discrimination based on sex and the legal guarantees to the principle of gender equality under the Constitution, the establishment of the Supreme Committee for Legislative Reform in 2014 and the ongoing efforts to review discriminatory laws and provisions against women. However, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of discriminatory laws, the delay and absence of clear timeframe for the review of discriminatory laws and provisions, including in the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law, that continue to deny women equal rights with men. It also regrets the

delay in the establishment of the anti-discrimination commission, in line with article 53 of the Constitution.

14. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Accelerate the review process to repeal all discriminatory provisions in its legislation, particularly the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, with the participation of women's civil society organizations and in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals;**

(b) **Develop the anti-discrimination commission in line with article 53 of the Constitution and ensure the effective participation of women's civil society organizations, particularly those representing women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups.**

Women's access to justice

15. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party to improve the work of the Office of Ombudsperson for women's complaints which provides legal support and counselling for women. However, the Committee is concerned about the limited availability of free legal aid and counseling and the limited access to information on mechanisms and procedures for seeking remedies for violations of the rights of women and girls, especially in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

16. In the light of its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Continue strengthening the legal aid and counselling program of the Office of Ombudsperson for women's complaints to ensure that women have access to affordable or, if necessary, free legal aid services, particularly to women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups and disseminate information on the mechanisms and procedures for seeking remedies for violations of the rights of women and girls;**

(b) **Combat the stigmatization of women and girls who submit complaints about violations of their rights by raising awareness among the general public of those rights;**

(c) **Continue strengthening the gender responsiveness and gender sensitivity of the justice system, including by increasing the number of women in the judiciary and providing systematic capacity-building to police officers and other law enforcement officials on women's rights and gender-sensitive investigation methods to prevent the re-victimization of women and ensure that they have effective access to justice.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

17. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the National Council for Women, the adoption of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women (2016–2030), the establishment of the Women's Observatory as monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the strategy, and the preparation and adoption of the rapid response plan to address the needs of women during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Committee, nevertheless, is concerned about the lack of information on the effectiveness and transparency in the monitoring mechanisms to assess progress in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women and other strategies.

18. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to develop and adopt an action plan for implementation of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women that clearly defines the competencies of the national and local authorities and establishes impact assessment mechanisms to ensure that the strategy and the other gender equality policies are properly monitored and evaluated and that their implementation is regularly assessed.

Temporary special measures

19. The Committee notes with appreciation the introduction of a minimum quota of 25 per cent of the House of Representatives, 10 per cent of the Senate and 25 per cent of the local councils for the representation of women in parliament, as well as the establishment of Equal Opportunity Units in ministries to support the access of women to leadership position and the efforts made under the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women. The Committee, nevertheless, remains concerned about the absence of temporary special measures to achieve the substantive equality of women and men in employment in the private sector in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged.

20. **In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and recalling its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt temporary special measures with time-bound targets, including quotas, accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance, to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in all areas in which women, including rural women and those belonging to marginalized groups, are disadvantaged or underrepresented, in, inter alia, political and public life, education and employment, in particular in the civil service, diplomatic service and judicial service.**

Discriminatory stereotypes

21. The committee notes the awareness-raising campaigns on the role of women and girls in the society, including on online social media, particularly in line with the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women. However, the Committee is concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deeply rooted discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which stress the role of women as mothers and caregivers, particularly in rural and remote areas. It is particularly concerned about the lack of a clear action plan to implement the activities under the Strategy, with effective participation of women's civil society organizations, with clear time frame and assessment and monitoring mechanisms.

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

(a) **Develop and adopt a comprehensive action plan to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society that includes awareness-raising and educational efforts targeting the general public, the media and rural and remote communities, with the effective participation of women's civil society organizations and religious leaders;**

(b) **Review school curricula and strengthen efforts with the media to raise public awareness of gender stereotypes that persist at all levels of society, with a view to their elimination.**

Gender-based violence against women

23. The Committee notes the efforts by the State party to combat gender-based violence against women, including the amendment to the Penal Code in 2014 to introduce penalties for sexual harassment and the adoption of several policies such as the National Strategy to Reduce Early Marriage (2015–2020), National Strategy to Counter Female Genital Mutilation (2016–2020); and the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls (2015–2020). However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) Discriminatory provisions of the Penal Code, particularly articles 17 and 60 that justify and condone acts of violence against women by requiring that battery exceed “accepted limits of discipline” for it to be successfully prosecuted, providing for the “good faith” defense that absolves men from criminal responsibility in domestic violence cases, as well as articles 237, 274, and 277 that allow for leniency for so-called “honour crimes”, including the discriminatory application of sanctions for adultery, which perpetuate gender-based violence;

(b) The lack of progress made in ensuring that gender-based violence against women in the domestic sphere and marital rape are explicitly criminalized in national legislation, including by revising the definition of rape to include non-vaginal penetration;

(c) High rate of female genital mutilation in rural and remote areas and the reports on the increased medicalization of female genital mutilation, in which among those who underwent the practice, despite the amendment to the Penal Code in April 2021 to introduce harsher sentences against perpetrators, including person who request it and the medical personnel who commit the violation;

(d) Prevalence of underreporting of cases of gender-based violence against women, particularly domestic violence and harassment in the public sphere such as streets, owing to cultural barriers and fear of stigmatization, re-victimization and impunity, in particular among rural women and women belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups;

(e) Prevalence of child forced marriages, , particularly in rural and remote areas and girls living in poverty, notwithstanding Act No. 126 of 2008 that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years old for women and men;

(f) Insufficient number and capacity of shelters and support services for victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, such as psychosocial counselling, legal assistance and rehabilitation programs, particularly for women in rural and remote areas and disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women;

(g) Lack of information on the outcome of the implementation of strategies to combat gender-based violence and ongoing efforts to develop future action plans, with the effective participation of women's civil society organizations.

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

(a) **Repeal discriminatory provisions in the Penal Code, particularly articles 17, 60, 237, 274, and 277 that condone acts of violence against women, such as domestic violence and the so called "honour crimes" by exempting perpetrators from punishment or reducing the sentences imposed, as well as article 61 that exempt medical doctors and personnel who committed female genital mutilation under the guise of performing cosmetic surgery or necessity of protecting a third party from grievous harm;**

(b) **Adopt a comprehensive legislation, in consultation with women's civil society organizations, to criminalize all forms of violence against women, particularly domestic and sexual violence;**

(c) **Effectively investigate and prosecute cases of harassment and female genital mutilation, including cases of medicalization of female genital mutilation;**

(d) **Ensure the effective implementation of Act No. 126 of 2008 on the minimum age of marriage for women and men, particularly in the cases of child and forced marriages and to impose penalties on Mazoun as perpetrators for contracting such marriages or not reporting these marriages;**

(e) **Continue developing and adopting, with the participation of women's civil society organizations and religious leaders, a comprehensive strategy and action plan to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, allocate sufficient and sustainable resources to ensure the full implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the strategy;**

(f) **Allocate sufficient resources to expand, and increase, the number of State-run shelters for women victims of gender-based violence and ensure that such victims receive counselling, rehabilitation and support services for their reintegration into society, particularly for disadvantaged groups of women, such as women in rural and remote areas, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women with disabilities, migrant women and domestic worker women.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

25. The Committee welcomes the efforts by the State party to combat trafficking in persons through the adoption of the Act no. 64 of 2010 on combating human trafficking, the establishment of the National Coordination Committee Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking in 2017 and the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking (2016–2021). However, the Committee is concerned about:

- (a) The lack of sufficient resources to address the needs of women and girls who are victims of human trafficking;
- (b) While victims of human trafficking have access to gender-based violence shelters for medical and social assistances, there is only one dedicated shelter for women and children victims of human trafficking;
- (c) Prevalence of temporary, seasonal and contractual marriages, particularly in rural and remote areas and women living in poverty, which are forms of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women, notwithstanding the law 64/2010.

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

- (a) **Strengthen its efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls and to ensure the investigation into cases of trafficking, including by allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources, as well as by providing adequate services to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration;**
- (b) **Increase the number of dedicated shelters across the territory of the State party for women and girls victim of trafficking;**
- (c) **Address the prevalence of temporary, seasonal and contractual marriages, particularly in rural and remote areas and women living in poverty, which are forms of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and enforce the law on contractual marriages.**

Equal Participation in political and public life

27. The Committee notes with appreciation the introduction of minimum quotas and reserved seats for women, which led to an increased representation of women in the House of Representatives, the Senate, the executive branch and in foreign service. The Committee, nevertheless, is concerned that women are still underrepresented in the judiciary, the civil service, and local councils.

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt additional temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention, the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 and the Committee's general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, to achieve the equal representation of women and men, particularly in the judiciary, the civil service, and the local councils. It also recommends that the State party provide capacity-building programs for women candidates on campaigning and political leadership skills and raise awareness of their participation in decision-making, particularly for women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups.**

Women human rights defenders and civil society organizations

29. The Committee takes note of the information by the State party on the constitutional and legal guarantees and safeguards to fair trial, including during investigation. It also notes the information on the adoption of the Law No. 149 of 2019 on non-governmental organization and the initiatives to be undertaken under the Human Rights Strategy to guarantee the right to freedom of association. However, the Committee is deeply concerned about information that women human rights defenders, including employees of civil society organizations, have been subjected to restrictions, arbitrary detention, prolonged pre-trial detention, ill-treatment in detention and travel ban for their civic engagement.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party respects its obligations in accordance with international human rights treaties when dealing with women human**

rights defenders and their organizations in expressing the right to freedom of expression and association. The Committee also recommends that the State party to systematically investigate cases of reprisals, harassment and restrictions against women human rights defenders, including gender-based violence and ill-treatment in detention by law enforcement officials.

Nationality

31. The Committee notes that citizenship is a right to anyone born to an Egyptian father or mother in accordance with article 6 of the Constitution and the Act no. 154 of 2004. However, the Committee is concerned about reports that Egyptian mothers encounter difficulties in transferring their nationality to their foreign husbands, unlike Egyptian men who have such right after two years of marriage. It is also concerned that Egyptian women married to foreigners are still encountering obstacles in passing their nationality to their children.

32. Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 38), the Committee recommends the State party to ensure gender equality by eliminating any obstacles or delays faced by Egyptian women in transferring their nationality to their foreign husbands and children and the registration of their birth.

Education

33. The Committee notes with appreciation the increase in the enrolment rates for women and girls at all levels of education, setting the minimum spending on education at 4 per cent of the GDP, in line with article 19 of the Constitution, as well as the adoption of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Pre-School University Education to provide equal access to education for all residents of school age, particularly in poor areas, and to improve the quality of educational services. It also notes that Ministerial Decrees No.43 and 44 of April 2021 repealed the restriction on women from performing night work and working in certain occupations. However, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Illiteracy, including digital illiteracy, and drop-out rates are higher among women and girls, particularly in rural and remote areas and among women and girls belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups;

(b) Increase in educational enrolment rates is not resulting in women's economic empowerment opportunities, and women's labor force participation rate stands at half the global rate (at 22 per cent), and women and girls tend to be concentrated in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

(c) Lack of effective measures in place to protect women and girls from sexual violence and harassment in educational settings and the lack of complaint and redress mechanism;

(d) Lack of education on gender equality in school curricula to address negative stereotypes and all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, such as female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage, sexual harassment in the private and public spheres.

34. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Intensify its efforts to address illiteracy and drop-out rates among women and girls, particularly in rural and remote areas and among women and girls belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including women and girls with disabilities, while conducting systematic impact assessment of its strategies and policies to ensure their effectiveness;**

(b) **Address discriminatory stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter women and girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study and career paths, such as STEM and ICT education, and ensure that they have equal access to technical and vocational education and training, including in non-traditional fields;**

(c) **Adopt a policy of zero-tolerance on sexual violence and harassment against women and girls in schools and universities, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and suitably punished, and provide psychological, medical and legal assistance to victims;**

(d) **Encourage the incorporation into school curricula mandatory age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights education, for girls and boys, including teaching materials on family planning, modern forms of contraception and responsible sexual behavior;**

(e) **Develop and integrate into school curricula inclusive and accessible content on gender equality, including on women's rights, aiming at the raising awareness of children against gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage, sexual harassment in the private and public spheres.**

Employment

35. The Committee notes the efforts by the State party to promote employment opportunities for women. However, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) **Vertical and horizontal occupational segregation, the persistence of the gender pay gap, notwithstanding that the Labor Code prohibits wage discrimination on the ground of sex, and the concentration of women in the informal and agriculture sectors;**

(b) **Limited availability of affordable childcare facilities and breastfeeding arrangements, especially in the private sector;**

(c) **Lack of information on the implementation of the Act no. 39 of 1975 on the 5 per cent quota for women with disabilities;**

(d) **Penal Code does not explicitly criminalize sexual harassment in the workplace.**

36. **Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 34) and in line with its general recommendation No. 13 (1989) on equal remuneration for work of equal value and with target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure the effective implementation of Labor Code on the prohibition of pay discrimination for equal work and amend legal provisions on employment to explicitly introduce and enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;**

(b) **Intensify its efforts to eliminate horizontal and vertical occupational segregation and enhance the access of women, including women with disabilities, to the formal labor market and to increase their representation in decision-making positions, particularly in the private sector;**

(c) **Increase the number of affordable and accessible childcare facilities throughout the State party;**

(d) **Amend the Penal Code to explicitly criminalize sexual harassment in the work place, in line with applicable international human rights standards, and ensure that victims of sexual harassment in the workplace have access to effective, independent and confidential complaint procedures with effective remedies, and that all complaints are effectively investigated, perpetrators prosecuted and adequately punished and victims protected from retaliation;**

(e) **Conduct raising awareness campaigns and trainings targeting the public and private sectors, lawyers, judges and law enforcement officials on the prevention sexual harassment in workplace;**

(f) **Ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156).**

Women domestic workers

37. The Committee notes the introduction of the optional employment contract for Egyptian domestic workers as a temporary measure and the information that the House of Representatives is considering a draft law on domestic employment as well as amendments to the Labor Code.

38. **Referring its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 36), the Committee recommends that the State party accelerate the adoption of the draft law on regulating migrant workers to ensure the the same level of protection and benefits as other workers, to protect them from abuse and violence, and to develop and implement measures for labor inspection, enforcement and penalties. The Committee also recommends that the State party ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).**

Health

39. The Committee notes the measures adopted to improve the health care services for women and girls, particularly maternal health care and family planning and the the adoption of the Comprehensive Health Insurance System Act and the National Strategy for the Protection of Childhood and Motherhood. The Committee, nevertheless, is concerned:

- (a) That only 20 per cent of women in the State party have health insurance;
- (b) About reports on the increase in number of cases of HIV/AIDS and the lack of policies to ensure the provision of age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and treatment and to combat stigmatization and violence against women and girls living with HIV/AIDS;
- (c) That abortion continues to be criminalized in the State party, except to save the life of the woman;
- (d) That women and girls with disabilities face obstacles in obtaining access to health-care services and about the lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodation in the health-care system;
- (e) About inadequate mental health services for women, including addiction treatments.

40. **In line with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Increase the budget allocated to health care and accelerate the implementation of the Comprehensive Health Insurance System Act to ensure the provision of accessible and affordable health care services to all women and girls, particularly for women in rural and remote areas and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups;**
- (b) **Adopt measures to combat discrimination, violence and stigma against women living with HIV/AIDS and women using drugs, to ensure that they have access to adequate health services, including sexual and reproductive health services and HIV and drug addiction treatment, and to collect data, disaggregated by sex, on the prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, while fully respecting the confidentiality of patient information;**
- (c) **Adopt measures to ensure the availability and quality of accessible mental health-care services as well addiction treatments;**
- (d) **Legalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman and severe fetal impairment and ensure that medically safe modern methods of abortion are available and accessible.**

Economic and social benefits

41. The Committee notes the initiatives by the State party to promote employment opportunities for women and entrepreneurship and that women benefit from the available

social protection program. The Committee, nevertheless, notes with concerns that women in the informal sector are not covered by social security services and the absence of an impact assessment of these projects and initiatives.

42. The Committee recommends that the State party allocate sufficient resources to ensure access for women in informal sectors to the national social security programs and to conduct an impact assessment of these programs with the aim of strengthening them.

Rural women

43. The Committee notes the focus of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women for 2016–2030 on rural women and the efforts to increase the issuance of identity cards to rural women. However, the Committee notes with concern about:

- (a) Limited access by rural women to land ownership, formal credit and loans, despite being the main workforce in the agriculture sector;
- (b) Low level of representation in political life and decision making positions;
- (c) High rates of illiteracy and school drop-out among girls and women, including digital literacy, and the limited access to health-care and family planning services.

44. Recalling its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and target 5.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) **Enforce the implementation of Act no. 219 of 2017 to ensure the protection of the rights of rural women to inheritance and land ownership and develop complaint mechanism to promptly investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators and to provide victims with redress;**
- (b) **Adopt and implement legal and policy measures to ensure that rural women effectively have access to education, health care, education, employment, microfinancing and microcredit at low interest rates, housing and family planning services, as well as equal opportunities to participate in political and public life.**

Disadvantaged groups of women

45. The Committee is concerned about reports that women with disabilities, refugee women, asylum-seeking women and migrant worker continue to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

46. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) **With regard to women with disabilities:**
 - (i) **Ensure the access of women and girls with disabilities to inclusive education, employment, justice, public services, and adequate health-care, as well as the ensuring their accessibility to the physical environment, transportation and to information and communications;**
- (b) **With regards to refugees, asylum-seeking women and migrant workers:**
 - (i) **Set a clear time frame for the issuance and renewal processes of official documentation and residence permits for women refugees, asylum seeking women and migrant workers;**
 - (ii) **Adopt measures to ensure the access of asylum-seeking women, refugee women and migrant workers to employment and basic health services, including prenatal and postnatal care;**
 - (iii) **Improve its efforts to identify asylum seekers and determining asylum status, which should be gender-sensitive, age-sensitive and culturally sensitive, in order to ensure the systematic and early identification of women and girls who are victims of or who are at risk of gender-based violence and trafficking and provide appropriate assistance to such women and girls.**

Women in detention

47. The Committee notes the information by the delegation of the State party that the Human Rights Strategy (2021–2026) pays particular attention to the situation of prisons and detention facilities. However, the Committee is deeply concerned about information on lack of medical care and unhygienic conditions in prisons, in which women prisoners reportedly are frequently subjected to strip search and to prolonged solitary confinement as a punishment. The Committee is also concerned about the findings of the inquiry procedure under article 20 of the United Nations Convention against Torture (A/72/44, paras. 58 – 71).

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

(a) **Adopt and implement measures to improve the conditions in detention facilities and to ensure the provision of adequate access to health care and personal hygiene items for women in detention, in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules);**

(b) **Promptly investigate all alleged cases of violence against women in detention, in line with the recommendations of the inquiry report of the United Nations Committee against Torture (A/72/44, para. 70).**

Marriage and family relations

49. The Committee notes the State party's efforts and commitment to review all discriminatory personal status laws regarding marriage and family relations. It notes the information on the development of a draft law to amend the Personal Status Code and its provisions on marriage, divorce, guardianship and custody, as well as the preparation of a draft law to prohibit child marriage. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) Men have the right to unilaterally divorce their spouses (*talaq*), including verbally with a week period for its official registration, which leaves many women in precarious situations, whereas women who seek divorce by unilateral termination of their marriage contract (*khula*) under Act No. 1 of 2000 can only obtain such a divorce if they forgo alimony and return their dowry;

(b) Women's marriage guardianship, which grants men the right to oppose a woman's marriage;

(c) women retain custody of children until the age of 15 after divorce, however, fathers are guardians of children even if the mother has custody, and that women are denied custody of their children upon remarriage;

(d) discrimination against women and girls in inheritance law, both as daughters and as widows;

(e) the persistence of child marriage under the contractual marriages, , particularly in rural and remote areas, notwithstanding that under Act No. 126 of 2008 the minimum age of marriage is 18 years old for women and men.

50. **Recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 48 and 50), its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Accelerate the adoption of the amendment to the Personal Status Law, with a clear timeframe, to ensure that it guarantees the equal rights of women and men in all matters relating to marriage and family relations by prohibiting polygamy, equal rights in divorce for men and women, including equal grounds and procedures for obtaining a divorce, and grant equal rights of legal guardianship to both parents following dissolution of the marriage based on the best interest of the child, regardless of whether the woman remarries;**

(b) **Repeal discriminatory provisions in national legislation, including Act No. 77 of 1943, to guarantee equal rights of women and men to inheritance;**

(c) Accelerate the preparation and adoption of the draft law to prohibit child marriage, effectively enforce the Law No. 126 of 2008 on the minimum age of marriage, and conduct awareness-raising campaigns concerning the negative consequences of such child and forced marriages.

Data collection and analysis

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

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

52. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

53. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the implementation of the Convention in the context of the Beijing +25 Review to achieve substantive equality of women and men.

Dissemination

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

Ratification of other treaties

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

Follow-up to concluding observations

56. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 18, 24 (a) and (d) and 32 above.

Preparation of the next report

57. The Committee requests the State party to submit its tenth periodic report, which is due in November 2025. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission².

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

² Modified during the Committee's 67th session in July 2017, to be applied to all COBs.