



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Belarus*

1. The Committee considered the ninth periodic report of Belarus ([CEDAW/C/BLR/9](#)) at its 2124th and 2125th meetings (see [CEDAW/C/SR.2124](#) and [CEDAW/C/SR.2125](#)), held on 6 February 2025.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State Party of its ninth periodic report, which was prepared in response to the list of issues and questions prior to reporting ([CEDAW/C/BLR/QPR/9](#)). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State Party on its distinguished delegation, which was headed by the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Larysa Belskaya, and included representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health and the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since its consideration in 2016 of the State Party's eighth periodic report ([CEDAW/C/BLR/8](#)) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of:

(a) Order No. 1505 of 30 November 2021 of the Ministry of Health, amending Order No. 830 of 28 July 2017, on the organization of cancer screening and early diagnosis;

(b) Act No. 151-Z of 6 January 2022, amending Act No. 122-Z on the principles of crime prevention and addressing domestic violence;

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninetieth session (3–21 February 2025).



(c) Decree No. 35 of 6 June 2022 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, reducing the number of banned professions for women to 88, compared with 252 at the time of the consideration of the previous periodic report;

(d) Act No. 219-Z of 18 July 2019, introducing 14 days' paternity leave, albeit unpaid.

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 campaigns encouraging fathers to be more actively involved in parenting their children.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State Party has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2016.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

8. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the National 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.**

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Women and peace and security

9. The Committee notes the State Party's incorporation of elements of the women and peace and security agenda in its response to the regional armed conflict, in particular by hosting refugee and displaced women and girls from Ukraine. However, it regrets that the State Party has not adopted a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, and has therefore not mainstreamed a gender perspective in its peacebuilding, conflict prevention and security efforts. While acknowledging the State Party's mediation efforts to promote regional peace and stability, the Committee notes with concern the lack of measures to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in those efforts. It is further concerned about the lack of targeted measures to protect and support refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls affected by conflict-related sexual violence.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution No. [1325 \(2000\)](#) on**

women and peace and security and integrate a gender perspective into security and peacebuilding policies, ensure the participation of women at all levels of decision-making and enhance societal resilience to regional instability. It also recommends that the State Party ensure that women and girls who are victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have access to justice, humanitarian assistance and specialized support services. It calls upon the State Party to refrain from actions that could directly or indirectly expose women and girls to further violations of their rights in situations of armed conflict.

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

11. The Committee is concerned that a gender perspective was not adequately integrated into the State Party's coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response and recovery efforts, in particular in preventing and addressing gender-based violence, ensuring the participation of women in decision-making and providing women in unpaid care roles and informal employment with targeted socioeconomic support.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State Party systematically mainstream gender perspectives into all crisis prevention, response and recovery efforts by ensuring that such measures, including economic relief and social protection policies, specifically address the needs of women and girls, in particular those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups. It calls upon the State Party to institutionalize gender-responsive crisis management frameworks that guarantee the equal participation of women in decision-making, to adopt targeted support for victims/survivors of gender-based violence during crises and to ensure the continued accessibility of essential services, including access to justice, shelters for victims/survivors of gender-based violence against women, education and sexual and reproductive health services. The Committee also recommends that the State Party conduct a gender-sensitive assessment of its pandemic response, ensuring close and meaningful collaboration with independent, pluralistic civil society organizations working in the field of women's rights; and integrate lessons learned into national policies to enhance the resilience and preparedness of women in anticipation of future crises.**

Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations

13. The Committee notes with concern that, to date, the Convention has not been directly invoked, applied or referred to in court proceedings, nor are there data on women having claimed their rights to non-discrimination and equality by invoking provisions of the Convention or relevant national legislation, which indicates a lack of awareness among the judiciary, lawyers and women themselves about women's rights under the Convention and the procedures under the Optional Protocol thereto.

14. **The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that the Convention is translated into all national languages and integrated into national law, and that the State Party promote its active application in judicial proceedings. Judges and lawyers should systematically reference the Convention in relevant cases, and the State Party should take concrete steps to educate women and men in the general public and legal professionals about its international commitments to women's rights. The Committee also recommends the systematic collection and publication of disaggregated statistical data on court decisions related to discrimination against women, categorized by type and outcome, and requests that the State Party include detailed information on such cases in its follow-up to the present concluding observations and in its next periodic report.**

Legislative framework

15. The Committee remains concerned that the State Party has not institutionalized a systematic gender analysis of its legal framework to ensure full compliance with the Convention. While noting that a legislative review was conducted between 2017 and 2019, the Committee is concerned that the review did not explicitly aim to identify and amend or repeal discriminatory laws, such as legal provisions criminalizing HIV transmission. It also notes with concern that the gender expertise toolkit developed by the State Party is limited to economic regulations rather than applying a cross-sectoral approach in all areas of law.

16. The Committee recommends that the State Party institutionalize a mandatory gender analysis to ensure that draft legislation is systematically reviewed with regard to its impact on women's rights and gender equality before adoption. It also recommends that the State Party adopt a comprehensive gender equality law that provides a cross-sectoral framework for promoting gender equality; and that it repeal discriminatory provisions, such as those criminalizing HIV transmission. The Committee recommends that the State Party expand its gender expertise toolkit to apply across all areas and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for its implementation. It further recommends that the State Party establish a mechanism to monitor and evaluate progress in gender impact assessments.

Definition of discrimination

17. The Committee is concerned about the absence in the State Party's legislation of a definition of discrimination against women, covering both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

18. The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that specifically prohibits all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States Parties under article 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

Access to justice

19. The Committee remains deeply concerned about:

(a) The widespread and systematic practice of arbitrary arrests and detention, in particular the targeting of individuals for their real or perceived opposition to the Government, with heightened violence inflicted in such contexts on women human rights defenders, political activists and opposition figures who challenge patriarchal gender norms, many of whom are reported to have been subjected to torture, ill-treatment and gender-based violence;

(b) The increasing use of trials in absentia and the arbitrary deprivation of citizenship and legal documents as a form of political retaliation, in particular against women perceived as dissenters, including human rights defenders, politicians and activists in exile, as a result of which they are denied access to justice and due process;

(c) The use of counter-extremism and anti-terrorism laws to criminalize legitimate human rights work and civic activism, which disproportionately affects

organizations advocating for women's rights and gender equality, thereby creating further barriers to justice for women facing gender-based discrimination and violence;

(d) The systemic barriers to fair trials and the lack of judicial independence, including the harassment, prosecution and arbitrary detention of lawyers working on human rights cases, as well as the revocation of their licences, the subordination of the professional bar association to the Ministry of Justice and the absence of gender-sensitive legal training, which result in gender-biased rulings and severely limit women's access to independent legal representation, in particular for women human rights defenders and political activists;

(e) The lack of accountability for human rights violations, as evidenced by the failure to effectively investigate such cases and prosecute those responsible, the suppression of appeals mechanisms, the State Party's unwillingness to engage in legal and institutional reforms, and the State Party's withdrawal from the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2023.

20. The Committee urges the State Party:

(a) To review and reassess all charges brought against women unlawfully or arbitrarily detained for exercising their freedoms of expression, association and assembly, or for carrying out their legitimate functions, and cease and reverse any administrative or criminal proceedings initiated for the exercise of those rights;

(b) To guarantee fair trial rights for all individuals, including those in exile, by discontinuing the practice of trials in absentia; restoring citizenship and legal documentation for all women affected by politically motivated charges; and ensuring due notification of charges against them, access to independent legal counsel of their choice, participation in legal proceedings and the right to appeal before an independent and impartial tribunal, free from political interference, in line with the State Party's international human rights obligations;

(c) To cease to apply counter-extremism and anti-terrorism laws against individuals exercising their legitimate human rights, such as freedoms of expression, association and assembly, or those affiliated with civil society organizations, in particular those advocating for gender equality and women's rights;

(d) To strengthen judicial independence by establishing an independent and impartial accreditation process for lawyers to ensure their professionalism and autonomy, ending the harassment and prosecution of legal professionals, training judges, prosecutors and legal professionals on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods and ensuring fair trial guarantees, in particular for women human rights defenders and political activists;

(e) To ensure accountability for human rights violations by promptly, impartially and effectively investigating, prosecuting and punishing those responsible, establishing independent oversight mechanisms, ensuring remedies for victims and reinstating full and meaningful cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, including the re-ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

National machinery for the advancement of women

21. The Committee notes the adoption by the State Party of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025 and the development of a gender assessment methodology for specific programmes. However, it is concerned that gender assessments are not applied systematically across all legislative and policy

frameworks and that the National Council on Gender Policy lacks decision-making authority and adequate resources and does not hold regular meetings to coordinate gender policies effectively. The Committee also notes with concern that the absence of dedicated funding and a clear monitoring framework for the implementation of the National Action Plan, combined with the limited participation of independent, pluralistic civil society organizations – following the liquidation of most of them – and the lack of gender-disaggregated data, has weakened national gender expertise and capacity.

22. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Strengthen the National Council on Gender Policy by providing it with a clear mandate, decision-making authority, adequate human, technical and financial resources and the facilities required to enable it to effectively coordinate gender policies; and consider transforming it into a ministry-level authority on women’s rights and gender equality, with regional departments to ensure effective implementation of gender policies;

(b) Systematically apply gender assessments across all legislative, policy and programmatic frameworks and ensure that gender-specific data collection includes disaggregated data to address the needs of women, in particular those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups;

(c) Allocate dedicated funding and establish a comprehensive monitoring framework for the implementation of the National Action Plan, and ensure that it is regularly reviewed and updated;

(d) Restore collaboration with independent, pluralistic civil society organizations and ensure their meaningful participation in developing, implementing and monitoring gender equality policies, including the next national action plan;

(e) Prioritize gender-responsive budgeting and strengthen national gender expertise to allocate resources effectively in support of women’s empowerment initiatives.

National human rights institution

23. The Committee regrets that the State Party has decided not to establish an independent national human rights institution, which would ensure compliance with international human rights obligations, enhance coordination of human rights-related activities and programmes in the State Party, provide impartial expertise and facilitate engagement with civil society, including women’s organizations, despite the State Party having studied the feasibility of establishing such an institution.

24. The Committee recommends that the State Party reconsider establishing an independent national human rights institution within a clear time frame, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), with a broad mandate to protect the human rights of women, to promote women’s rights and gender equality and to meaningfully involve independent, pluralistic civil society organizations and seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the process.

Civil society, including women human rights defenders

25. The Committee remains gravely concerned about:

(a) The shrinking civic space in the State Party and the State Party’s active role in suppressing human rights advocacy, with reports of severe reprisals against

women human rights defenders, political activists and journalists, including unlawful and arbitrary detention, harassment, censorship, heightened surveillance, forced exile, gender-based violence and threats, such as the deprivation of parental rights, amounting to crimes against humanity;

(b) The lack of accountability for those acts, perpetuating a culture of impunity and fear, which deters freedom of speech and of the press;

(c) The dissolution of non-governmental organizations, restrictive requirements for the registration of such organizations and the criminalization of unregistered or dissolved organizations under vague charges of extremist activities, which disproportionately affect civil society organizations advocating for women's rights that challenge patriarchal gender norms;

(d) The provisions of Act No. 337-Z and Presidential Decree No. 37 authorizing the use of force by security personnel against civilians, including women, and granting immunity from liability for the harm caused; and the lack of compliance of public security and public order measures with international human rights standards.

26. The Committee urges the State Party:

(a) **To ensure that women human rights defenders, women political activists, representatives of civil society organizations and journalists, whether in the State Party or in exile, can freely express their opinions and pursue their legitimate human rights advocacy activities, free from harassment, censorship, gender-based threats, politically motivated prosecutions and arbitrary detention; and repeal legislation that unduly restricts their activities;**

(b) **To promptly initiate independent, impartial, effective and transparent investigations into all allegations of human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, harassment, censorship and gender-based violence against women human rights defenders, political activists and journalists; prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators; and provide victims with effective protection and redress;**

(c) **To review and amend excessive restrictions on pluralistic civil society organizations, including articles 361 (1) and 361 (4) of the Criminal Code and laws governing the registration and operation of civil society organizations; and eliminate all barriers to the work of civil society organizations, in particular those promoting women's human rights and gender equality;**

(d) **To repeal the provisions in Act No. 337-Z and Presidential Decree No. 37 that allow the indiscriminate use of force against women and children, including women and girls with disabilities; and ensure that all measures to protect public security and public order are proportionate and comply with international human rights standards.**

Temporary special measures

27. The Committee notes with concern the lack of temporary special measures adopted by the State Party, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention, despite evidence of significant gender disparities, in particular in decision-making in political and public life, and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities.

28. The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures to advance substantive equality of women, including women and girls with disabilities and

other groups of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, in all areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in decision-making in political and public life, including time-bound targets and benchmarks. It also recommends that the State Party raise public awareness to promote understanding of the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures and their importance for advancing gender equality, and develop mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their impact.

Gender stereotypes

29. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of gender stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in the State Party, which constitute a root cause of gender-based violence, limit the opportunities available to women and girls and reinforce gender segregation in education and in the labour market. It is particularly concerned about the role of authorities in actively promoting, reinforcing and tolerating such stereotypes, leading to a culture of impunity. It notes with concern the limited impact of efforts, such as national action plans and awareness campaigns, to address stereotypes, including sexist portrayals and the objectification of women in the media and advertising, and the absence of specific provisions in the Advertising Act to prohibit such portrayals. It also notes with concern the increasingly hostile attitude towards individuals who choose not to have children, undermining women's bodily autonomy and equal rights in marriage and family life.

30. The Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen public awareness campaigns to address stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society and promote gender equality in the labour market. It also recommends that the State Party adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate stereotypes in education, employment, the media and advertising; and amend the Advertising Act to explicitly prohibit discriminatory and sexist stereotypes. The Committee further recommends ensuring that women have the autonomy to decide whether or not to have children and that any practices that penalize individuals for their reproductive choices be eliminated.

Gender-based violence against women and girls

31. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to criminalize domestic violence, including amendments to the Crime Prevention Act and expand victim/survivor support services. However, it is concerned about:

(a) The absence of comprehensive legislation addressing all forms of gender-based violence, the failure to criminalize marital rape, the omission of domestic violence as an aggravating factor in sentencing and the frequent failure of courts and relevant authorities to take incidents of domestic violence into consideration in legal proceedings concerning divorce and child custody;

(b) The insufficient 30-day duration of protection orders and the lack of protection of victims/survivors from reprisals;

(c) The barriers faced by victims/survivors in gaining access to justice, including the absence of ex officio prosecution and gender bias on the part of law enforcement officials, who reportedly often discourage reporting through threats of child removal or by labelling households as "socially dangerous";

(d) The inadequate support for victims/survivors of gender-based violence against women and girls; the limited number, funding and capacity of shelters and

crisis rooms; and the closure of women's non-governmental organizations, which further undermines access by victims/survivors to independent support services;

(e) The lack of data on gender-based violence against women and girls, disaggregated by age, disability and relationship between the victim/survivor and perpetrator.

32. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt comprehensive legislation addressing all forms of gender-based violence; specifically criminalize marital rape; recognize domestic violence as an aggravating factor when sentencing perpetrators of crimes of physical and sexual violence, of psychological, emotional, economic and financial abuse, of neglect or abandonment and of violation of protection orders, and crimes involving children or vulnerable persons; and ensure, through regular capacity-building for the judiciary and youth welfare offices, that incidents of domestic violence are taken into consideration in legal proceedings concerning divorce and child custody, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19;**

(b) **Extend the duration of protection orders to allow sufficient time for the investigation and resolution of cases, and remove barriers to their issuance, such as the requirement for written consent;**

(c) **Build the capacity of judicial and law enforcement authorities to address gender bias and stereotypes and ensure that child protection measures are not used to deter victims/survivors of domestic violence from reporting abuse;**

(d) **Increase the availability and capacity of State-run and independent shelters and crisis rooms, ensuring that they are adequately staffed, funded and equipped to meet the needs of women and girls who are victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including psychosocial counselling, medical treatment, free legal assistance and access to education and professional skills training;**

(e) **Establish a comprehensive data collection system on gender-based violence, disaggregated by age, disability and relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator to inform policy and improve interventions.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

33. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls, including the legal framework under the Criminal Code and policies and programmes; and to ensure victim identification, rehabilitation, reintegration and empowerment. It remains concerned, however, that trafficking continues to disproportionately affect ethnic minority, refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls. It is concerned that challenges in effective enforcement of anti-trafficking and sexual exploitation laws, in particular at the Belarusian-Polish border, leave women and girls vulnerable to gender-based violence, trafficking and exploitation. The Committee is also concerned about the challenges undermining the effective implementation of a comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty and a lack of awareness about human rights and anti-trafficking laws among women and girls. It notes with concern the limited availability of recent data disaggregated by age, sex and disability on trafficking, prosecution and conviction rates in trafficking cases and on reintegration and rehabilitation programmes.

34. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Strengthen the enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation to ensure effective and early identification, prevention and protection services and referral of victims to appropriate services, as well as the investigation, prosecution and adequate sentencing of perpetrators of trafficking;**

(b) **Address the root causes of trafficking by expanding socioeconomic empowerment opportunities for at-risk women and girls, including vocational training, access to financial resources and measures to mitigate the risk of trafficking of ethnic minority, refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls;**

(c) **Establish independent monitoring mechanisms to investigate gender-based violence, trafficking, ill-treatment and exploitation, ensuring accountability for perpetrators;**

(d) **Strengthen the implementation of comprehensive, victim-centred and gender-sensitive referral mechanisms and services, including safe shelters, free legal aid, psychosocial counselling, education, sustainable employment opportunities, financial support and economic empowerment programmes, in meaningful collaboration with independent civil society organizations, in order to provide holistic support that addresses the root causes of trafficking;**

(e) **Systematically collect disaggregated data on the number of trafficking victims and investigations, prosecutions and convictions, as well as on the sentences imposed on perpetrators.**

35. The Committee remains concerned that women exploited in prostitution continue to face administrative liability unless they are formally recognized as victims of trafficking. It also notes with concern the lack of strategies to reduce the demand for commercial sex, including legislative measures and public awareness campaigns, and of exit programmes, including alternative income-generating opportunities, for women who wish to leave prostitution.

36. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Abolish administrative liability for women in prostitution and ensure that no fines or other penalties are imposed on them;**

(b) **Ensure that all women in prostitution, regardless of trafficking status, have adequate access to information on support services, free legal aid, psychosocial counselling, skills training, employment opportunities and affordable health services free from discrimination and stigmatization;**

(c) **Offer reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for women trafficked into prostitution;**

(d) **Protect the personal data of women in prostitution and prohibit the disclosure of those data to third parties, including educational institutions, employers and healthcare providers;**

(e) **Develop and implement strategies to reduce demand for commercial sex, including public awareness campaigns targeting buyers and legislative efforts addressing the demand side of exploitation;**

(f) **Offer exit programmes, including alternative income-generating opportunities, to women who wish to leave prostitution.**

Participation in political and public life

37. The Committee remains concerned about significant barriers to the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making in political and public life, including at higher levels of the judiciary, in diplomatic roles, such as ambassadors, and in regional governments (oblasts), as well as the lack of targeted measures to increase their representation in leadership roles in the public and private sectors. It notes with concern that attributing the underrepresentation of women to a perceived lack of interest or initiative overlooks structural barriers, discriminatory stereotypes and the absence of temporary special measures to promote substantive equality between women and men. The Committee emphasizes the importance of meaningfully including independent, pluralistic civil society organizations in efforts to increase the participation of women in political and public life, ensuring that their perspectives are fully integrated into policymaking and decision-making processes.

38. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt and implement temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, such as parity quotas, preferential recruitment of women and targeted support for women candidates, such as campaign financing, leadership training and mentorship programmes, in order to accelerate gender parity in political and public life;**

(b) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to address gender stereotypes in political discourse, prevent and adequately punish harassment and gender-based violence against women in politics, and ensure the meaningful involvement of pluralistic civil society organizations in those efforts;**

(c) **Increase the number of women in key decision-making roles, including at higher levels of the judiciary, in diplomatic positions, such as ambassadors, and in regional governments (oblasts).**

Education

39. The Committee welcomes the State Party's efforts to integrate gender equality into school curricula and teacher training. However, it remains concerned that:

(a) School curricula and teaching materials continue to perpetuate gender stereotypes through, for example, "life skills lessons" with gender-specific content that reinforces traditional gender roles;

(b) Increased control and censorship of higher education, including the closure of private universities, restrictions on academic freedoms and censorship of education materials and research, are undermining pluralism in higher education and restricting access to independent sources of knowledge;

(c) Structural barriers deter women from pursuing non-traditional studies in fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology;

(d) Roma women are underrepresented in higher education;

(e) Mandatory, age-appropriate sexuality education in secondary schools insufficiently addresses responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases in a way that promotes respect for the bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls;

(f) Women university students who have been detained are unable to continue their studies.

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

(a) **Review and revise school curricula, textbooks and teacher training materials to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes;**

(b) **Safeguard academic freedom by ceasing politically motivated closures of higher education institutions, ensuring that universities operate independently from State interference and preventing censorship of educational materials;**

(c) **Ensure equal opportunities for women in higher education, in particular in male-dominated fields of study, and increase the participation of girls and women in fields of study related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT through career counselling and support for non-traditional academic and vocational paths;**

(d) **Strengthen efforts to address the underrepresentation of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of girls and women, including Roma girls and women, in higher education by implementing temporary special measures, including affirmative action programmes, conducting awareness-raising among parents on the importance of education for girls and providing financial support;**

(e) **Integrate age-appropriate, science-based sexuality education, including education on responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, that promotes respect for the bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls;**

(f) **Ensure that women students who have been detained are able to continue their studies while in detention.**

Employment

41. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's efforts to promote gender equality in employment. However, it remains deeply concerned about:

(a) The multiple intersecting barriers to the equal participation of women in the labour market, including the widening gender pay gap, which risks creating a gender pension gap; and the absence of a national action plan or targeted measures to address structural inequalities in the labour market and reduce the gender pay gap;

(b) The persistent occupational segregation, with a high concentration of women in lower-paid sectors, such as education and healthcare, and the underrepresentation of women in higher-paid sectors, including construction, manufacturing, science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT;

(c) The continued existence of a list of prohibited professions for women;

(d) Discriminatory practices in recruitment based on marital status and parenthood;

(e) The lack of affordable and adequate childcare facilities, which restricts the ability of women to remain in or return to the workforce;

(f) The existence of forced labour in labour treatment facilities and correctional institutions, including for women, which violates international human rights standards, including the Convention.

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

(a) **Adopt and enforce legislation requiring equal pay for work of equal value, regularly review wages in sectors in which women are concentrated and implement measures to close the gender pay gap, including through gender-neutral analytical job classifications and by ensuring that gender-disaggregated wage data are collected on a regular basis;**

(b) **Take targeted measures to address the underrepresentation of women in higher-paid sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT; and promote women's entry into those fields through career counselling, training and mentorship initiatives;**

(c) **Remove any restrictions on women's free choice of profession that are not based strictly on scientifically justified health and safety concerns, and facilitate women's access to those professions through temporary special measures and workplace adaptations;**

(d) **Prohibit discriminatory practices in recruitment, including interview questions about marital status and parenthood, and eliminate indirect gender-based discrimination in hiring and career advancement;**

(e) **Improve parental leave benefits by ensuring that both maternity and paternity leave are fully paid and non-transferable, that their duration is extended and that affordable, accessible childcare services are available across the State Party, so that both parents can equally share caregiving responsibilities and women can participate fully in the workforce;**

(f) **Abolish forced labour in labour treatment facilities and correctional institutions, including for women, and remove the undue restrictions on freedom of association, ensuring the right of women to form and join independent trade unions.**

Sexual harassment in the workplace

43. The Committee remains concerned about the absence of legislation specifically criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace beyond the narrow definition contained in article 170 of the Criminal Code, which fails to address non-physical forms of sexual harassment, including verbal and non-verbal harassment; and the absence of legal safeguards against retaliation or dismissal, which discourages reporting.

44. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt and enforce legislation specifically criminalizing all forms of sexual harassment in the workplace, including verbal and non-verbal harassment and physical misconduct, and shift the burden of proof to the alleged perpetrator in civil and administrative proceedings;**

(b) **Establish independent, confidential and accessible complaint mechanisms in workplaces and ensure institutional oversight to investigate and address complaints of sexual harassment;**

(c) **Ensure that effective safeguards are in place to protect women who report cases of sexual harassment from retaliation or dismissal and that victims have affordable and, if necessary, free access to legal assistance and psychosocial counselling; and raise awareness among employers about the criminal nature of, and their obligation to report, sexual harassment in the workplace;**

(d) Ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the right of all persons to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Health

45. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to improve women's health but remains concerned about:

(a) The influence of the anti-abortion movement, hostile campaigns against women seeking abortion, limited access to over-the-counter contraceptives for "moral reasons", the high costs of hormonal contraceptives and legal barriers to obtaining oral contraception;

(b) Mandatory pre-abortion psychological counselling, which undermines the free consent of women, in particular for women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women with disabilities and refugee and asylum-seeking women;

(c) The lack of reasonable accommodation, which undermines access to quality sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls with disabilities and disadvantaged groups of women, including women with HIV/AIDS, and reports of non-consensual sterilization and insufficient protection from forced abortion;

(d) Insufficient efforts to raise awareness about early cancer detection, the limited access by women and girls to cervical cancer screening, mammography screening and human papillomavirus vaccinations in rural areas and the lack of skilled obstetric health personnel.

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

(a) **Ensure affordable and autonomous access to a range of modern contraceptive methods, including hormonal and oral contraceptives, for all women and girls, including those with disabilities, and provide adequate sexual and reproductive health information free from discrimination and stigmatization;**

(b) **Ensure that women and girls can make free, informed decisions about their bodily autonomy and can exercise their legal right to abortion without interference from their partners and public, private or religious actors, and without the requirement of parental consent, and provide voluntary, non-coercive pre-abortion counselling;**

(c) **Ensure equal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services through reasonable accommodations in the healthcare system for women with HIV/AIDS and women with disabilities, including protection from non-consensual sterilization and forced abortion, through improved healthcare policies and oversight;**

(d) **Improve efforts to raise awareness about early cancer detection, increase access to cervical cancer screening, mammography screening and human papillomavirus vaccinations, in particular for rural women and girls, and ensure the availability of skilled healthcare personnel in obstetric and maternal health.**

Economic and social benefits

47. The Committee notes with concern the gender-neutrality of many economic and social benefit schemes, which fail to address the specific needs of women, in particular those in the informal economy. It remains concerned that:

(a) Women in unpaid care work and informal work are excluded from pension entitlements, exacerbating the economic insecurity of older women, with recent pension reforms, such as increased pensionable service years, further excluding many women;

(b) Family assistance benefits are inadequate, failing to reflect the real cost of living for caregivers and dependants, and the already low maternity benefits in the formal economy do not extend to women in informal work;

(c) There is insufficient support for entrepreneurship among women, including limited loans and financing, and an absence of a targeted allocation of national wealth funds to expand the economic opportunities of women in critical sectors, such as banking, energy and ICT;

(d) Private sector operations lack adequate regulatory measures in line with international standards set forth in the Convention and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

(e) Insufficient training is provided to bridge the digital gender gap and equip women and girls with skills for artificial intelligence-driven global economies and technology-driven jobs;

(f) Measures and funding to promote the participation and leadership of women in sports and cultural organizations are inadequate.

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

(a) **Ensure that unpaid care work and informal work are recognized in social protection schemes, including pension entitlements, and account for women's caregiving roles and contributions in the informal economy; and strengthen pension reforms to protect older women, in particular those affected by changes to pensionable service requirements, ensuring adequate minimum pension entitlements;**

(b) **Review family assistance benefits to adequately reflect caregivers' and dependants' real cost of living and ensure that those benefits cover an adequate standard of living, including food, housing and healthcare;**

(c) **Expand programmes that support the entrepreneurship of women through improved access to financing, training and networking, and allocate a designated percentage of national wealth funds to enhance the economic independence and participation of women in key sectors;**

(d) **Implement regulatory and compliance frameworks to ensure private sector operations meet international human rights standards, in line with the Convention and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;**

(e) **Offer targeted training programmes to address the digital gender gap and equip women and girls with skills for artificial intelligence-driven global economies and technology-driven jobs;**

(f) **Increase budgetary provisions and introduce targeted measures to promote sports and recreational programmes for women and girls, including initiatives to boost the representation of women in leadership positions within those fields.**

Rural women

49. The Committee notes with concern the persistent gender pay gap in agriculture despite some improvements, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in agricultural enterprises and the lack of childcare facilities in rural areas, preventing women from reconciling their family and professional lives. It also notes with concern the lack of data on rural women's access to land, credit and basic services, including sexual and reproductive health services.

50. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Reduce the gender pay gap in agriculture and introduce measures to enhance the participation of women in leadership positions in agricultural enterprises, including through temporary special measures in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention;**

(b) **Increase the availability of childcare facilities in rural areas in order to support women in balancing their work and family lives;**

(c) **Collect disaggregated data on rural women's access to land, credit, health services and social services, and include such information in its next periodic report.**

Disadvantaged groups of women and girls*Women and girls with disabilities*

51. The Committee is deeply concerned about discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, their exclusion and limited access to reproductive health services and restrictions on their exercise of parental rights. It notes with concern reports of forced abortion and placement of girls with disabilities in institutions. The Committee is concerned that the liquidation of independent organizations supporting women with disabilities has further reduced the provision of necessary services and that women with disabilities face barriers to employment due to the requirement of obtaining approval from a medical expert commission and persistent stereotypes about their capabilities.

52. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure that women and girls with disabilities have full access to reproductive health services and that all medical procedures, including abortions and sterilizations, are subject to their free, prior and informed consent;**

(b) **Eliminate the coercion of, or pressure on, women with disabilities to renounce custody of their children and ensure that they have full parental rights, without discrimination;**

(c) **Strengthen the implementation of the National Plan of Action to Implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Act No. 183-Z and incorporate measures to promote the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of society, in collaboration with independent organizations for persons with disabilities;**

(d) **Remove undue restrictions on the right to work for women with disabilities, ensuring that regulations reflect current knowledge and practice, eliminate discriminatory barriers and provide reasonable accommodation to support their professional autonomy.**

Women in detention

53. The Committee remains gravely concerned about:

(a) The reported inhumane conditions of detention for women, including overcrowding, poor hygiene, inadequate medical care and arbitrary punitive measures, such as solitary confinement, public humiliation and instigation of fights among detainees; and the State Party's failure to conduct meaningful investigations;

(b) The restricted access of women detainees to effective and affordable legal assistance, including the denial of confidential meetings with lawyers; coercion to record false confessions under duress; and incommunicado detention of women without access to legal counsel;

(c) Persistent reports of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and ill-treatment, against women in detention, with perpetrators treated with impunity;

(d) The absence of independent and confidential complaint mechanisms;

(e) The mandatory nature of forced labour as a criminal punishment, without regulation or guarantees of fair remuneration or compliance with decent work standards;

(f) The State Party's failure to fully implement the recommendations of ILO supervisory bodies and the International Labour Conference resolution on Belarus adopted in June 2023, including insufficient access for ILO missions to detention facilities;

(g) The continued imprisonment of women arrested in relation to human rights cases, including cases relating to the exercise of freedom of expression, association or assembly, or those arrested because of their affiliation with civil society organizations, as well as those whose incarceration poses an immediate threat to their health or life, without release on humanitarian grounds being considered.

54. **The Committee urges the State Party:**

(a) **To bring conditions of detention for women into line with international standards, including the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), and conduct effective, prompt and transparent investigations into all reported deaths of women in custody since May 2020;**

(b) **To ensure that detained women have effective, affordable and, if necessary, free access to legal assistance, including private communication with counsel;**

(c) **To abolish strip-searches conducted by guards of the opposite sex and prohibit all forms of degrading treatment, including invasive body searches and other practices that constitute gender-based humiliation;**

(d) **To establish a confidential and effective mechanism for receiving complaints of sexual violence, ensure that law enforcement personnel are trained on the absolute prohibition of violence against convicted women and on how to receive such complaints, and guarantee independent investigations of such complaints;**

(e) **To abolish forced labour as a criminal punishment and regulate voluntary labour with guarantees of fair remuneration, safe working conditions and compliance with decent work standards;**

(f) **To fully implement the recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies and the International Labour Conference resolution on Belarus, including by receiving an ILO mission with effective access to detention facilities;**

(g) **To reconsider criminal cases and release all women in detention whose incarceration poses an immediate threat to their health or life, on humanitarian grounds.**

Refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls

55. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's efforts to reduce statelessness and the State Party's legal framework for granting refugee status. It is concerned, however, that gender-specific risks faced by refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls are insufficiently addressed. The Committee also notes with concern that refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls have limited access to basic services, such as adequate housing, food, water, medical care, free legal assistance and protection from gender-based violence, in the State Party. It further notes with concern that women without permanent residence permits face exclusion from social assistance and healthcare, further marginalizing them.

56. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen gender-sensitive protection measures to ensure that all refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls have free access to adequate housing, food, water, medical care, legal assistance and protection from gender-based violence, regardless of residence status;**

(b) **Provide accessible information on human rights, asylum procedures and support services available for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls through effective outreach programmes in appropriate languages and formats;**

(c) **Guarantee that asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls are not denied social assistance and medical treatment, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, while their asylum claims are processed;**

(d) **Ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women

57. The Committee remains deeply concerned about the persistent societal discrimination, stigmatization and gender-based violence faced by lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) women, including harassment, surveillance, intimidation and arbitrary arrest and detention, forcing many into exile. It is particularly concerned that hate crimes and discrimination against LBTI women are rarely investigated or prosecuted, which fosters a culture of impunity. The Committee is alarmed that the State Party's revised definition of pornography equates "homosexuality" and "transsexualism" with paedophilia, bestiality and necrophilia, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and justifying censorship. Furthermore, the Prosecutor General has announced a draft law under which administrative penalties for "propaganda for abnormal relations, paedophilia and voluntary refusal of childbirth" could be imposed and that disproportionately targets LBTI women and contributes to their marginalization.

58. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Cease the surveillance, intimidation and arbitrary detention of LBTI women and ensure that law enforcement authorities do not use homophobic and transphobic rhetoric to discredit political opponents or activists;**

(b) Ensure that hate crimes, violence, harassment and discrimination against LGBTI women, as well as human rights defenders acting on their behalf, are promptly investigated, prosecuted and punished; and that both private and public actors, including law enforcement officials, are held accountable;

(c) Establish and implement effective reporting mechanisms and legal remedies that are equally accessible by LGBTI women, while considering the compounded discrimination that they face, especially those with disabilities or from marginalized groups, in order to ensure their effective access to justice;

(d) Repeal any laws, including the Prosecutor General's draft law, and policies that discriminate against LGBTI women, restrict their access to information about their rights, promote harmful stereotypes, incite hate crimes, limit the sexual and reproductive health rights of LGBTI women or criminalize the expression of LGBTI identities;

(e) Conduct public awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes, stigma and discrimination against LGBTI women, and provide targeted training for law enforcement officials and other State actors on the human rights of LGBTI women.

Marriage and family relations

59. The Committee is concerned that the legal regime for marital property rights does not adequately protect women in cases of domestic violence, as the requirement for mutual agreement between spouses may prevent women from securing their fair share of property upon divorce. It notes with concern that, while spouses have equal rights to jointly acquired property, women in de facto unions and children born from such unions lack sufficient legal protection in the event of separation. The Committee is deeply concerned about exceptions to the minimum marriage age of 18, which allow girls to marry under that age in cases of pregnancy or acquired legal capacity, exposing young girls to potential coercion and child marriage.

60. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, in line with its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, take the following measures:**

(a) Amend the legal framework to ensure that the economic rights of women, including marital property rights, are fully protected during marriage and upon its dissolution, in particular in cases of domestic violence;

(b) Guarantee legal protection of the economic rights of women in de facto unions and their children, including provisions for the division of property and financial support in cases of separation;

(c) Repeal all exceptions to the minimum legal age of marriage, with a view to eliminating child marriages and ensuring that no girl is married before the age of 18, including in cases involving pregnancy or the acquisition of legal capacity.

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

61. **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.**

Dissemination

62. **The Committee requests the State Party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State**

Party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, the parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

Ratification of other treaties

63. 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 ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a Party.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

64. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs, 20 (a), 26 (a), 32 (a) and 54 (a) above.

Preparation of the next report

65. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the tenth periodic report of the State Party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by State Parties (General Assembly resolution 79/165, para. 6) and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State Party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

66. 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).

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.