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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 Sri Lanka*

1. The Committee considered the ninth periodic report of Sri Lanka (CEDAW/C/LKA/9) at its 2134th and 2135th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2134 and CEDAW/C/SR.2135), held on 13 February 2025. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/LKA/Q/9, and the responses of Sri Lanka are contained in CEDAW/C/LKA/RQ/9.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State Party of its ninth periodic report. It also appreciates the State Party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State Party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Women and Child Affairs of Sri Lanka, Saroja Savitri Paulraj, and included representatives of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, the Attorney General's Department, the Sri Lanka Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism, as well as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, Himalee Subhashini Arunatilaka, and other representatives of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka 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 2017 of the State Party's eighth periodic report (CEDAW/C/LKA/8) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Women Empowerment Act, No. 37 of 2024, introducing mechanisms to give effect to the Convention;

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



(b) Anti-Corruption Act, No. 9 of 2023, criminalizing sexual bribery.

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 or establishment of the following:

(a) National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for the period 2017–2021;

(b) National Policy Framework: Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour, in 2019;

(c) Multisectoral National Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender-based Violence for the period 2024–2028;

(d) National Strategic Plan for the Well Woman Programme for the period 2019–2023.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State Party has acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2017.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Parliament of Sri Lanka, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

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

9. The Committee notes with concern that women, especially Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, are often not aware of their rights under the Convention and the remedies available to claim those rights.

10. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Continue raising awareness among women of their human rights under the Convention and the legal remedies available to them to claim violations of those rights, and ensure that information on the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations is available to all women in accessible formats;

(b) Consider establishing a comprehensive mechanism for the implementation of the concluding observations of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, including the present recommendations, and involve non-governmental organizations promoting women's rights and gender equality in the work of the mechanism, taking into account the four key capacities of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up, namely engagement, coordination, consultation and information management;

(c) Ensure that the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's jurisprudence and its general recommendations are made an integral part of systematic capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and lawyers, with a view to enabling them to directly apply or invoke the provisions of the Convention in court proceedings and to interpret national legislation in the light of the Convention.

Constitutional and legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

11. The Committee notes with concern that:

(a) The Constitution lacks a comprehensive and explicit definition of discrimination against women that encompasses both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres;

(b) Under the existing legal framework, the principle of intersectionality is not applied, which leaves many women who belong to disadvantaged groups, including Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, without adequate protection;

(c) Article 16 (1) of the Constitution prevents the judicial review of discriminatory laws enacted prior to its adoption, including colonial-era and customary laws that continue to discriminate against women and girls;

(d) The continued application of colonial-era laws, such as the Vagrants Ordinance and the Brothels Ordinance, disproportionately affects marginalized women, including women in prostitution and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, and results in their being subjected to arbitrary arrests and harassment.

12. Recalling the links between articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Incorporate into its Constitution a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women that encompasses both 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;

(b) Fully incorporate the Convention into the domestic legal order and adopt anti-discrimination legislation to effectively address intersecting forms of discrimination against women belonging to disadvantaged groups, including

Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(c) Amend article 16 (1) of the Constitution to allow the judicial review of all laws, including those enacted prior to the entry into force of the Constitution;

(d) Repeal the Vagrants Ordinance and the Brothels Ordinance.

Women and peace and security and transitional justice

13. The Committee takes note of the adoption of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security for the period 2023–2027. It remains concerned, however, about the lack of effective representation of women, including representatives of women’s civil society organizations and women human rights defenders, in peace and security processes. The Committee further notes with concern the delay in the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms and reparations, despite the establishment of the Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms in 2016 and the subsequent establishment, in 2018, of the Office on Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations. That delay has resulted in continued impunity for conflict-related human rights violations and a failure to investigate cases of enforced disappearances effectively, which disproportionately affects the women-headed families of the disappeared. The Committee is particularly concerned that the Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-recurrence and the proposed judicial mechanisms, including a special court and an office of a special counsel, have not been fully operationalized, which further hinders accountability and reparations for conflict-affected women and girls.

14. In line with its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, and recalling its previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8](#), para. 17), the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Effectively implement and evaluate the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, in cooperation with representatives of women’s civil society organizations and women human rights defenders, and ensure that the plan takes into consideration the full spectrum of the Council’s agenda on women and peace and security, as reflected in its resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, and incorporate a model of substantive equality that addresses gender-based violence and discrimination against women, including intersecting forms of discrimination against women;

(b) Establish, without delay, an independent mechanism with adequate resources and authority to investigate and ascertain the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as part of its Sri Lanka accountability project, provide comprehensive protection measures for women victims and witnesses, ensure regular public reporting on progress, and conduct meaningful consultations with victims’ families throughout the process;

(c) Design and implement a comprehensive truth and reconciliation process in which the experiences and needs of women survivors are centred, adequate psychosocial support is provided and confidentiality and protection are ensured, and allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of such a process.

Women's access to justice

15. The Committee notes with concern the following:

(a) The persistent barriers to access to justice faced by women, in particular Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) The insufficient availability and accessibility of free legal aid, in particular for women belonging to disadvantaged groups;

(c) The lack of continuous awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes for the judiciary and law enforcement officials on women's human rights and gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods.

16. The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, recommends that the State Party:

(a) Strengthen measures to remove barriers to access to justice for women, in particular Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, including by providing legal aid services, reasonable accommodations and interpretation services;

(b) Strengthen and institutionalize legal aid and public defence services that are accessible, responsive to the needs of women, in particular those belonging to disadvantaged groups, affordable and, if necessary, free of charge, and ensure that such services are provided in a timely and effective manner;

(c) Strengthen systematic capacity-building programmes for the judiciary and law enforcement officials on women's human rights and gender-sensitive interrogation and investigation methods, and address judicial gender bias.

17. The Committee is concerned that, although the State Party has maintained a de facto moratorium on executions since 1976, the death penalty remains legal, and courts continue to sentence women to death. The Committee notes with concern that women facing capital charges often lack adequate legal knowledge and resources to prepare their defence and are reportedly sometimes forced to make a confession. Furthermore, it notes with concern that courts routinely fail to consider gender-based violence when rendering sentences.

18. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Take the necessary steps towards the abolition of the death penalty, and establish a formal moratorium on executions pending its full abolition;

(b) In cases where women are charged with capital offences, ensure that full consideration is given, throughout the judicial system, to mitigating factors related to gender, such as experiences of gender-based violence, coercion and economic hardship;

(c) Provide mandatory capacity-building to judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials on the impacts of gender-based violence on decision-making by women and on the behaviour patterns of women, as well as on the importance of considering such impacts during trial and sentencing, taking into account the resultant psychological trauma and its manifestations;

(d) Ensure that women accused of capital crimes have the time and facilities necessary to prepare their defence, based on their specific circumstances, including history of abuse or coercion, and can communicate with counsel of their own choosing;

(e) Ensure that confessions in capital cases involving female defendants are admissible only when an independent judicial review has verified that the confession was voluntary, uncoerced and made with legal counsel present, with mandatory video recording of interrogations;

(f) Collect and analyse data on the application of the death penalty to women, disaggregated by factors such as age, socioeconomic status and history of gender-based violence.

National machinery for the advancement of women

19. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Women Empowerment Act, No. 37 of 2024, which provides for, among other measures, the establishment of an independent National Commission on Women, the appointment of an Ombudsperson for Women's Rights to oversee the protection and promotion of women's rights and the establishment of a National Fund for Women to support gender equality initiatives. The Committee is concerned, however, about the following:

(a) The limited human, technical and financial resources allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs;

(b) The limited use of gender-responsive budgeting across all government departments;

(c) The lack of comprehensive disaggregated data on women's access to rights and services, which hinders the adoption of targeted and informed policies.

20. **Recalling the guidance provided in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular regarding the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of national machineries, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Increase the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the national machinery for the advancement of women, in particular the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs;**

(b) **Ensure that the newly established National Fund for Women is equipped with the necessary authority and resources to effectively coordinate and implement an integrated gender-responsive budgeting process across all government departments;**

(c) **Strengthen the existing data collection system so that it can be used to generate comprehensive disaggregated data on women's access to rights and services, with a view to informing and evaluating the impact of public policies, strategies and programmes aimed at achieving gender equality, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women.**

National human rights institution

21. The Committee notes the reaccreditation of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka with A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in March 2024, reversing the downgrade of the Commission to B status in October 2022. The Committee notes, however, that the Alliance's Subcommittee on

Accreditation has identified specific areas requiring further strengthening through legislative or administrative reforms.

22. The Committee recommends that the State Party implement the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to strengthen the independence of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to be able to carry out its mandate effectively and independently, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), and seek the advice and technical support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in that regard.

Temporary special measures

23. The Committee notes with concern that the State Party has not adopted comprehensive temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in areas where women remain underrepresented or disadvantaged. It further notes with concern the information provided by the State Party's delegation, which indicated that there is no quota system for women in Sri Lanka and that positions in the public sector are filled on the basis of individual merit, regardless of gender, as a means of ensuring equal opportunities.

24. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State Party adopt temporary special measures, such as quotas, preferential recruitment and promotion of women, and gender-responsive public procurement, with time-bound targets, as a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in all areas under the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular for Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan women, women governed by the Thesawalamai law, rural women, older women, single women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

25. While the Committee recognizes the positive portrayals of women in the media and the impact of innovative social policies in reducing discrimination, it remains concerned that such advancements have not served to sufficiently dismantle deeply rooted stereotypes that undermine gender equality. The Committee also remains concerned about the persistence in the State Party of gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, in which the traditional roles of women as mothers, wives and caregivers are overemphasized, thereby undermining their social status, autonomy and career opportunities.

26. Drawing attention to joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, as revised, and in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy with proactive and sustained measures targeted at women, men, girls and boys at all levels of society, including community and religious leaders, aimed at eliminating patriarchal attitudes, discriminatory stereotypes and social norms concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, allocate sufficient**

resources to the implementation of that strategy, and ensure that it is monitored and evaluated;

(b) **Build the capacity of public officials and media professionals to address gender stereotypes, including by using gender-responsive language, to combat the objectification of women and to promote positive media portrayals of women as active agents of change.**

Gender-based violence against women and girls

27. The Committee acknowledges the recent steps taken by the State Party to combat gender-based violence against women and girls, including the establishment of children and women desks in police stations and the expansion of the network of shelters. It also recognizes the efforts of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus in advocating for institutional reforms, such as its proposal to establish a grievance mechanism for sexual harassment within Parliament. The Committee notes with concern, however, the following:

(a) The high prevalence of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence against women, with at least one in five women having been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, and the low rates of prosecution and conviction;

(b) The weak implementation of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, No. 34 of 2005, and the delay in the adoption of the proposed amendments to that Act aimed at enhancing the legal protection of victims, which were submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers in 2020;

(c) The fact that the definition of rape in the Penal Code is limited to penile-vaginal penetration by men;

(d) The fact that marital rape and intimate partner violence are not specifically criminalized, except when spouses are legally separated or the victim is under 12 years of age;

(e) The high prevalence of domestic violence, the low rates of prosecution and the prevalence of underreporting due to fear, economic dependence, legal illiteracy and distrust in the authorities among victims;

(f) The increased use of new digital technologies for online gender-based violence, including cyberstalking, harassment, doxing and non-consensual sharing of intimate images, as well as the proliferation of sexually explicit media generated by artificial intelligence, deepfake videos, synthetic media and cyberporn, which commodify and objectify women's bodies;

(g) The lack of sufficient victim support services for women seeking to leave violent relationships, in particular in rural areas.

28. **Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8, para. 23) and in line with its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, as well as target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Intensify public awareness campaigns on the criminal nature of all forms of gender-based violence against women, including sexual violence, emphasizing the importance of reporting cases, protecting survivors from reprisals, addressing stigmatization and revictimization, and enforcing a zero-**

tolerance policy on gender-based violence against women, with a particular focus on women from marginalized groups;

(b) Expedite the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, No. 34 of 2005, to ensure stronger legal protection for victims of domestic and intimate partner violence;

(c) Amend the Penal Code to align the definition of rape with international standards, basing it on the lack of freely given consent rather than on use of force, threat or deception, and ensure that coercive circumstances are taken into consideration;

(d) Amend the Penal Code to explicitly criminalize marital rape in all circumstances, and amend article 363 of the Code to ensure that statutory rape protections apply to all girls under 18 years of age, without exception;

(e) Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute cases of gender-based violence against women; reduce case backlogs and ensure timely justice for survivors, in particular children affected by sexual violence; encourage reporting of domestic violence against women and girls by conducting media campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the criminal nature of gender-based violence against women, challenging the social legitimization of gender-based violence and destigmatizing victims; and protect women from reprisals for reporting incidents of gender-based violence;

(f) Strengthen measures to prevent and adequately punish online sexual violence, and ensure that providers of online platforms and distributors of online content are held accountable for failure to report, delete or block criminal content on their platforms;

(g) Adequately fund victim support services, expand the network of specialized, inclusive and accessible shelters for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence and the provision of psychosocial counselling, and provide women and girls who cannot safely return to their homes with financial support, education, professional training, income-generating opportunities and affordable housing.

Conflict-related sexual violence

29. The Committee notes with grave concern the persistent impunity for sexual violence perpetrated during the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, including by members of the State security forces. It notes with concern that, while the State Party has strengthened its legislative framework addressing gender-based violence, the implementation of such measures remains inadequate, and the requisite mechanisms to ensure accountability for conflict-related sexual violence are not in place. The Committee remains concerned that the continuing absence of adequate legal and institutional mechanisms for addressing historical and systematic sexual violence constitutes a substantive impediment to both national and international justice processes, thereby depriving survivors of their fundamental rights to truth, access to justice and reparations.

30. Recalling its previous recommendation ([CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8](#), para. 25), the Committee urges the State Party:

(a) To ensure that all allegations of sexual violence committed during the conflict, including by members of the State security forces, are promptly and impartially investigated to ensure criminal accountability;

(b) To establish an independent investigative body to address historical conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure that adequate financial resources are provided, independent experts with relevant expertise are appointed, and robust safeguards against political interference are included in its mandate and terms of reference;

(c) To establish an independent prosecutorial authority for cases of conflict-related sexual violence, separate from the Attorney General's Department, with a mandate to evaluate evidence and make autonomous prosecutorial decisions;

(d) To ensure time-bound, transparent investigations of conflict-related sexual violence, with mandatory reporting mechanisms and systematic public disclosure of the status of cases;

(e) To ensure that conflict-related sexual violence is explicitly addressed within each pillar of its transitional justice system, including mechanisms for truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence;

(f) To ensure that all complaints of conflict-related sexual violence are promptly and thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators receive sentences commensurate with the gravity of their crimes, with a view to addressing impunity and the normalization of such crimes.

Trafficking

31. The Committee takes note of the State Party's efforts to strengthen its legal and policy framework to combat trafficking in women and girls, including through the national action plan on combating trafficking in persons for the period 2023–2026. It notes with concern, however, the persistent and increasing prevalence of trafficking in women and girls, which is exacerbated by the current economic crisis. In particular it notes with concern that:

(a) Many women and girls from rural areas are trafficked to urban areas for sexual exploitation and forced labour;

(b) The trafficking of Sri Lankan men for forced recruitment into the Russian armed forces has an impact on women, resulting in casualties and disappearances that force them to sustain households while facing both the emotional trauma of having missing family members and the financial burden of fraudulent recruitment debts;

(c) There is a lack of comprehensive training for law enforcement officials on the investigation of trafficking cases and on the early identification and referral of victims of trafficking to appropriate support services;

(d) Despite the existence of support services, victims face substantial structural barriers to gaining access to assistance, including the mandatory requirement of obtaining a magistrate order for shelter access, the limitation of shelter stays to 48 hours and the inadequate geographical distribution of support centres, which particularly affects victims in rural areas;

(e) There is a lack of adequately funded, inclusive and accessible shelters for women, including women with disabilities, who are victims of trafficking in the State Party.

32. With reference to its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration and recalling its previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8](#), para. 27), the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Strengthen efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls by ensuring enhanced coordination between different agencies and allocating adequate funds for the effective implementation of its national action plan on combating trafficking in persons, and intensify efforts aimed at bilateral, regional and international cooperation to prevent trafficking, including by exchanging information and harmonizing legal procedures for the prosecution of traffickers;

(b) Investigate and prosecute networks trafficking Sri Lankan men for forced recruitment into the Russian armed forces, ensuring that (i) a specialized investigation unit is established and provided with adequate resources and gender expertise; (ii) such cases are fast-tracked through the judicial system; (iii) asset seizure provisions are utilized to provide compensation to victims' families; and (iv) diplomatic channels are activated to secure the immediate release and repatriation of trafficked men;

(c) Provide capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials, border police, healthcare providers and other first responders on the early identification of victims of trafficking and their referral to appropriate services, as well as on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods, and ensure the implementation of the instructions for the police on early identification of trafficking victims;

(d) Establish an immediate-response mechanism to provide trafficking victims with direct access to comprehensive support services without requiring prior judicial authorization, ensuring that such services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that they are staffed by qualified personnel trained in trauma-informed care, and allocate adequate financial and human resources to establish mobile outreach units and satellite support centres in underserved areas, staffed by multidisciplinary teams that include social workers, healthcare providers and legal professionals, with a view to ensuring that services are accessible to victims regardless of their geographical location or economic status;

(e) Increase the number of and funding for inclusive and accessible shelters for victims of trafficking, including women with disabilities, in both urban and rural areas and ensure that trafficking victims have access to free legal aid, interpretation services, medical assistance, psychosocial counselling, financial support, education, professional training, income-generating opportunities and temporary residence permits irrespective of their ability or willingness to cooperate with prosecution authorities.

Equal participation in political and public life

33. The Committee remains concerned about the persistent underrepresentation of women in political and public life in Sri Lanka, despite the country's historic achievement of having had the world's first woman Prime Minister and the recent election of a woman Prime Minister. It further notes that women comprise 32 per cent of the diplomatic corps, which is above the regional average. The Committee notes with concern, however, that:

(a) The current proportion of women in the Parliament remains alarmingly low at 9.78 per cent, less than half the regional average of 22.1 per cent, and there is a lack of electoral quotas, apart from a 25 per cent quota for the representation of women in local government bodies;

(b) There is a growing pattern of digital violence and online harassment against women in political life, as demonstrated by data from 2023 showing that more than half of documented harmful online speech targeted women, by the intensification

of this phenomenon during the 2024 parliamentary campaign period and by the targeted attacks against women's rights organizations as well as the discriminatory personal attacks against the Prime Minister;

(c) The representation of disadvantaged groups of women, in particular women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, in decision-making positions is limited.

34. Recalling its general recommendations No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Introduce statutory quotas requiring political parties to ensure fifty-fifty parity, subject to fines in the event of non-compliance, in the nomination of candidates for elections to the Parliament and provincial and local councils, and promote the appointment of Indigenous and Afrodescendent women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women to decision-making positions in political and public life;**

(b) **Introduce specific policies to prevent hate speech against women politicians and women candidates in public discourse, including online, and prevent harassment and threats against them, including by requiring political parties to adopt internal regulations on gender equality and on combating harassment of women candidates and activists, as well as by holding social media companies accountable for discriminatory user-generated content;**

(c) **Provide capacity-building on political leadership and campaigning skills, as well as access to campaign financing, to women candidates standing for election or appointment to public office, including women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.**

Nationality

35. The Committee notes with concern that:

(a) Women face discrimination in transmitting their nationality to children born abroad or to a foreign father because they are subjected more exacting administrative requirements than men;

(b) The requirement that women with children under two years of age who are seeking overseas employment provide a report on their family background may compel such women to migrate through irregular channels, forcing them to use tourist visas, unauthorized agents or falsified documents when they are unable to obtain official approval, which places them and their children at risk of statelessness and exploitation;

(c) Women who acquire foreign nationality through marriage abroad encounter significant obstacles in maintaining or recovering their Sri Lankan nationality upon return, in particular in cases of divorce or widowhood.

36. In line with article 9 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women and No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Amend, without delay, the Citizenship Act to ensure that women and men have equal rights with respect to acquiring, transferring, retaining and**

changing their nationality, and to conferring their nationality on their children, regardless of their marital status or the nationality of their spouse;

(b) Abolish the discriminatory requirement that women with children under two years of age provide a report on their family background, and ensure that women and men have equal rights with respect to seeking employment abroad;

(c) Review and revise procedures for maintaining and recovering Sri Lankan nationality to eliminate discriminatory barriers faced by women who have acquired foreign nationality through marriage abroad, in particular in cases of divorce or widowhood, and ensure that such women have equal access to expedited procedures for nationality retention or restoration, including by (i) simplifying documentary requirements and eliminating additional procedural barriers not imposed on men; (ii) establishing clear guidelines and training for consular and immigration officials on the equal nationality rights of women and men; and (iii) providing legal aid and support services to women seeking to maintain or recover their nationality;

(d) Accede to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

37. The Committee notes with concern the persistent and multiple barriers faced by women, in particular those from marginalized communities, in obtaining essential documentation in the State Party, including national identity cards. In particular the Committee notes with concern the following:

(a) The barriers preventing women tea plantation workers from obtaining national identity cards, including geographical isolation, restrictive leave policies and language barriers, and the fact that approximately 2,000 women workers were left undocumented in 2023 due to shared accommodation addresses or documentation errors;

(b) The State Party's administrative requirements for gender recognition certificates and residence verification, which effectively prevent transgender women from obtaining national identity cards, with a particularly severe impact on those estranged from their families, and which deprive such women of legal recognition, their right to vote and access to basic services.

38. The Committee recommends that the State Party eliminate administrative and practical barriers that prevent disadvantaged groups of women from obtaining national identity cards and other essential documentation by establishing mobile registration units with multilingual staff, accepting alternative forms of proof of identity and residence, implementing simplified procedures for women facing multiple forms of discrimination and providing free legal aid and documentation services for economically disadvantaged women. It also recommends that the State Party:

(a) Address the specific barriers faced by women tea plantation workers by establishing permanent documentation centres, staffed with Tamil-speaking officials, in plantation areas, implementing special administrative procedures to resolve errors in birth certificates, mandating paid leave for workers to obtain documentation, creating a specialized task force to clear the backlog of undocumented women plantation workers within one year and developing alternative address verification systems for workers in shared accommodation;

(b) Reform the legal and administrative framework governing gender recognition and documentation for transgender women by removing the requirement to obtain family consent for changes to documentation; establishing

an accessible and rights-based process for obtaining gender recognition certificates; training local government officials on the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and non-discrimination; implementing an expedited procedure for updating identification documents to match gender identity; and ensuring that all documentation processes respect the dignity, privacy and autonomy of transgender women.

Education

39. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's achievements in ensuring high overall literacy rates and near-universal enrolment at the primary level. The Committee notes that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated educational inequalities, particularly affecting rural girls with limited connectivity and access to digital devices. The Committee is particularly concerned about the following:

(a) The persistent educational disparities affecting girls from marginalized communities, the low literacy rate among women who work on tea plantations and the fact that only 53 per cent of girls complete primary education, only 24 per cent enrol in secondary education and a mere 4 per cent graduate;

(b) The persistent educational barriers faced by rural girls and girls in conflict-affected areas in the northern and eastern provinces, where inadequate transportation, economic difficulties and child marriage significantly impede educational attainment and contribute to dropout rates;

(c) The persistent gap between the rates of completion of secondary education and enrolment in tertiary education (18 percentage points) among women, as well as the stark underrepresentation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technologies, including artificial intelligence;

(d) The limited effectiveness of existing sexual and reproductive health education in secondary schools, as evidenced by the persistently high rates of early pregnancy and unsafe abortion;

(e) The lack of basic water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, as well as the fact that most schools do not have private spaces for menstrual hygiene management;

(f) The specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in the education system, including (i) the inadequate provision of accessible environments and learning materials; (ii) the lack of reasonable accommodations; (iii) insufficient support for girls with auditory disabilities following the phasing out of specialized schools; (iv) low transition rates to tertiary education among girls and women with disabilities; and (v) the failure to provide accessible online or televised educational content for girls with auditory disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic;

(g) The persistence of gender stereotypes in textbooks and the lack of systematic capacity-building for teachers on women's human rights and gender equality.

40. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Implement a time-bound strategy aimed at addressing the education of girls in tea plantation areas through the provision of mobile schools, literacy programmes and financial support, attendance monitoring and provision of mother-tongue education with qualified Tamil-speaking teachers;**

(b) Take immediate measures to enhance educational access in rural and conflict-affected regions through the establishment of a comprehensive transportation network, including dedicated school buses and safe walking routes, the establishment of community-based protection mechanisms to prevent child marriage, the provision of boarding facilities for girls from remote areas and the implementation of flexible learning programmes to accommodate girls who have dropped out due to child marriage or economic hardship;

(c) Continue the implementation of and further strengthen measures aimed at addressing gender stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter or discourage young women and girls from pursuing studies and careers in traditionally male-dominated fields, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology, including artificial intelligence;

(d) Integrate comprehensive age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health, including on responsible sexual behaviour, modern forms of contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, into curricula at all levels of education;

(e) Ensure that girls have access to adequate water and sanitation, sex-segregated restrooms and menstrual hygiene products and facilities in schools;

(f) Eliminate gender stereotypes from textbooks at all levels of education, and ensure that school curricula, academic programmes and professional training for teachers include education on women's human rights and gender equality;

(g) Strengthen access to inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities, including by ensuring that educational facilities are physically accessible and equipped with the necessary learning materials and assistive devices; providing reasonable accommodations for all types of disabilities; developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to support girls with auditory disabilities in mainstream education; and ensuring that distance learning platforms and materials are fully accessible to girls and women with disabilities, including during emergency situations.

Employment

41. The Committee notes with concern the following:

(a) The persistent and severe gender gap in labour force participation, where the participation of women remains critically low at 31.9 per cent, compared with 70.4 per cent for men, and the concentration of women in the informal economy (60 per cent of women in the labour force);

(b) The lack of mechanisms for enforcing existing equal pay legislation in the informal economy and of comprehensive measures to address both vertical and horizontal occupational segregation;

(c) The exclusion of women who work in the informal economy, including women domestic workers, from labour and social protections;

(d) The inadequacy of the current legal framework addressing sexual harassment in the workplace;

(e) The unequal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women.

42. In accordance with target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Increase access by women to formal employment, including by facilitating their transfer from informal to formal employment;
- (b) Effectively enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in order to narrow and eventually close the gender pay gap by (i) conducting regular labour inspections; (ii) conducting regular pay surveys; and (iii) assisting employers in submitting their gender pay gap data to the authorities and in making voluntary efforts to close the gap, with a view to better understanding the reasons for the gender pay gap and gender pension gap;
- (c) Ensure that women who work in the informal economy, including women domestic workers, have access to social protections, and extend the application of labour protections to the informal sector;
- (d) Introduce and enforce strict penalties in cases of sexual harassment in the workplace, and collect data on the number of complaints, investigations, convictions and penalties imposed on perpetrators, as well as on the reparations provided to victims of sexual harassment;
- (e) Recognize, reduce and redistribute the disproportionate burden of unpaid care on women by providing incentives to men to avail themselves of paternity leave, by strengthening policies that support work-life balance, including flexible working arrangements, and by increasing the number of affordable and quality childcare facilities and care services for older persons;
- (f) Ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization.

Health

43. The Committee notes with concern the following:

- (a) The restriction, under the Penal Code, on access to legal abortion to cases in which the life of the pregnant woman is at risk, which compels women and girls to resort to unsafe abortions;
- (b) The reports of women, in particular those belonging to disadvantaged groups, including women with disabilities, being subjected to coerced sterilization without their free and informed consent;
- (c) The severe challenges faced by women in obtaining menstrual hygiene products due to prohibitively high taxation;
- (d) The inadequate mental health services available for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence and who are in State care;
- (e) The reports of obstetric violence, especially against young women;
- (f) The limited access to contraceptives, family planning services, gynaecological services, mental health services and non-emergency medical care, in particular for rural women and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.

44. In accordance with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and with targets 3.1 and 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on reducing the global maternal mortality ratio and on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, respectively, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) **As a matter of priority, legalize and decriminalize abortion in all cases and, in the interim, remove requirements for judicial authorization, restrictive time limits and other barriers to access for women and girls to free, legal and safe abortion, in particular in cases of rape;**
- (b) **Immediately put an end to the practice of coerced sterilization, and require that free, prior and informed consent be obtained from women and girls for any medical intervention affecting their sexual and reproductive health or rights;**
- (c) **Address period poverty in all communities, with a special focus on disadvantaged groups of women and girls, and provide menstrual hygiene management support and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in all schools, hospitals and State-run facilities;**
- (d) **Adopt measures to ensure that women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence and who are in State care have free and adequate access to mental health services;**
- (e) **Prevent and protect women and girls from obstetric violence, strengthen capacity-building programmes on women's human rights and gender-responsive treatment for medical practitioners, and ensure that women who are victims of obstetric violence have effective access to justice and adequate reparations;**
- (f) **Ensure that all women and girls, in particular women belonging to disadvantaged groups and women and girls in rural areas, have adequate access to mental health services and to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including modern and emergency contraceptives.**

Economic empowerment of women

45. The Committee notes with concern that:

- (a) The implementation of austerity measures has resulted in reduced social protection benefits, retirement benefits and critical public services, which predominantly affects women, in particular those living in poverty, women working in the informal sector and rural women;
- (b) Adequate gender impact assessments are not performed for fiscal reforms and International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities, leading to reductions in government expenditure for essential services, and there is a lack of comprehensive mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the gender-differentiated impacts of economic policies and programmes;
- (c) The value added tax (VAT) has been raised from 7 to 18 per cent, which has created a disproportionate burden on women and girls, particularly affecting their access to essential items, including sanitary products, medicines, school supplies and basic commodities;
- (d) The representation of women in decision-making positions remains critically low in both public and private companies;
- (e) The lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data to inform policymaking regarding the social security system, including the Aswesuma welfare benefit programme, as well as the lack of clear mechanisms to ensure that the system benefits women and girls, particularly those from marginalized groups;
- (f) Despite their significant achievements in international competitions, women athletes continue to face structural and practical barriers limiting their economic opportunities and professional advancement in the sports sector.

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

(a) **Increase social and retirement benefits; restore critical public services that have been downsized under austerity measures, paying particular attention to women living in poverty, those working in the informal economy and rural women; and ensure that future fiscal consolidation measures do not further reduce expenditure on services essential to the economic security of women;**

(b) **Establish a requirement that gender impact assessments be performed for all fiscal reforms and IMF conditionalities before their implementation, and ensure that any proposed reductions in government expenditure are evaluated for their impact on the economic empowerment of women;**

(c) **Review and revise the VAT system to reduce rates on or exempt essential items that particularly affect women and girls, including sanitary products, medicines and educational materials, and implement targeted subsidies or compensation mechanisms for low-income women and women-headed households;**

(d) **Strengthen the participation of women in decision-making positions in public and private companies by adopting temporary special measures, including quotas, with a view to achieving parity; provide leadership training and mentoring programmes for women in economic sectors; and establish mechanisms to track progress with respect to the representation of women in senior management roles;**

(e) **Reform the social security system to better serve women by developing comprehensive gender-disaggregated data collection systems, establishing clear eligibility criteria that recognize unpaid care work performed by women, creating dedicated mechanisms within the Aswesuma welfare benefit programme to reach women from marginalized groups and implementing mobile and digital platforms to facilitate access for women to social security benefits;**

(f) **Promote the participation of women in sports by allocating adequate resources to sports programmes and facilities for women, implementing equal pay policies for male and female athletes, creating professional development pathways for women in sports administration and coaching and establishing scholarships and support systems for women athletes.**

Rural women

47. The Committee remains concerned about the limited involvement of rural women, in particular tea plantation workers, in decision-making on rural development programmes and their limited access to government subsidies and microcredit opportunities due to lack of land ownership.

48. **In accordance with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and target 5.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, on undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt a national action plan on rural women and girls;**

(b) **Promote the entrepreneurial activities of rural women, and facilitate their access to low-interest loans without collateral and other forms of financial credit, including for women with disabilities;**

(c) **Ensure that rural women, including tea plantation workers, have adequate access to income-generating opportunities, social benefits and healthcare, and that they are equally represented in decision-making processes, including those pertaining to rural development programmes.**

Non-governmental organizations and women human rights defenders

49. The Committee is deeply concerned about the increasing restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including women's organizations, and on women human rights defenders in the State Party. It notes with concern the following:

(a) The funding restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles that disproportionately hinder the work of women's rights organizations, in particular those operating in conflict-affected areas;

(b) The requirement that clearance be obtained from the Ministry of Defence for the registration of NGOs, and the directive issued on 12 December 2024 by the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations, which stipulates that all foreign and domestic NGOs operating in the State Party are required to register with the National Secretariat, establishing excessive regulations that place a disproportionate burden on smaller organizations;

(c) The further restrictions on civil society activities proposed in the 2024 draft amendment to the Voluntary Social Services Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, No. 31 of 1980, which pose a direct threat to the autonomy and effectiveness of organizations working on women's human rights and gender equality;

(d) The information received by the Committee suggesting that the Prevention of Terrorism Act, No. 48 of 1979, has been used as a pretext to arrest women human rights defenders.

50. The Committee urges the State Party:

(a) **To eliminate funding restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles that disproportionately affect women's rights organizations, in particular in conflict-affected areas, by ensuring unimpeded access to financial resources and streamlining administrative procedures;**

(b) **To remove the requirement of obtaining clearance from the Ministry of Defence for registration of NGOs and rescind the directive of 12 December 2024 mandating compulsory registration of NGOs, with a view to ensuring that registration procedures are transparent, non-discriminatory and free from undue governmental interference;**

(c) **To withdraw the proposed amendments to the Voluntary Social Services Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, No. 31 of 1980, and engage in genuine consultations with civil society organizations to develop legal frameworks that serve to support rather than suppress advocacy for women's human rights;**

(d) **To amend the Prevention of Terrorism Act, No. 48 of 1979, to ensure that women human rights defenders are not subject to arrest for carrying out their legitimate work and to establish a comprehensive gender-responsive reparation mechanism with dedicated funding so that legal, medical, psychosocial and livelihood support can be provided to women victims of counter-terrorism measures and their families.**

Women migrant workers

51. The Committee notes with concern that the surge in labour migration to Gulf countries and the Middle East under the *kafalah* system exposes Sri Lankan women migrant domestic workers to heightened risks of forced labour and abuse, as evidenced by the crisis in Lebanon in October 2024, when 7,600 predominantly female garment workers were left without consular assistance following bombing incidents.

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

(a) **Strengthen and expand its consular assistance services in Gulf countries and the Middle East by establishing 24-hour emergency hotlines, increasing the number of labour attachés at diplomatic missions and ensuring adequate staffing and resources to respond to crisis situations;**

(b) **Develop and implement emergency evacuation protocols and crisis response mechanisms specifically designed for migrant domestic workers, including dedicated emergency funds for repatriation;**

(c) **Establish a comprehensive tracking system to maintain updated contact information and employment details for all Sri Lankan women migrant domestic workers, with a view to enabling a swift response during emergencies;**

(d) **Create bilateral agreements with receiving countries to ensure that Sri Lankan domestic workers can be reached immediately during crises, overcoming the restriction of the *kafalah* system;**

(e) **Provide regular training to consular staff on gender-sensitive approaches to assisting domestic workers, including on handling cases of abuse, wage theft and forced labour;**

(f) **Establish a dedicated unit within diplomatic missions to monitor employers and recruitment agencies and maintain a database of complaints and blacklisted employers.**

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and girls

53. The Committee notes with concern that:

(a) Despite the views adopted by the Committee in 2022 in *Rosanna Flamer-Caldera v. Sri Lanka* ([CEDAW/C/81/D/134/2018](#)), the State Party continues to maintain laws criminalizing consensual same-sex relations by virtue of sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code of 1883;

(b) There are no legal or policy measures to protect lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women from gender-based violence and discrimination or to address deep-rooted prejudices against them.

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

(a) **Repeal sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code, decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between women who have attained the age of consent, and take all measures necessary to fully implement the views adopted by the Committee in *Rosanna Flamer-Caldera v. Sri Lanka*;**

(b) **Develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy to combat prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women that includes (i) regular collection of data, disaggregated by relevant factors, on gender-based violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; (ii) mandatory capacity-building programmes**

for judicial officers, law enforcement officials and healthcare providers on protecting the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; (iii) public awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes of and prejudices against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, developed in consultation with organizations that advocate for the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; and (iv) support services, including shelters and counselling services, specifically designed to meet the needs of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.

Women and girls with disabilities

55. The Committee notes with concern that women and girls with disabilities face intersecting forms of discrimination in the State Party, particularly with respect to limited access to public transport, justice, education, employment and healthcare.

56. **The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that women and girls with disabilities have adequate access to justice, inclusive education, employment and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, and that they are provided with reasonable accommodations, state-of-the-art assistive technologies and accessible services and facilities in all regions of the State Party.**

Women in detention

57. The Committee notes with concern the poor conditions of detention for women deprived of liberty in the State Party.

58. **The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt and implement measures to improve the conditions in detention facilities and to ensure that women in detention have adequate access to healthcare and personal hygiene items, in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), ensure immediate access to adequate health services for all pregnant women in detention, including during childbirth, and consider non-custodial measures for pregnant women and mothers with young children, prioritizing the best interests of the child.**

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

59. The Committee notes that the State Party, which is consistently ranked as one of the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, lacks gender-responsive approaches to climate-related disasters and environmental degradation. It also notes with concern that:

(a) There is a lack of meaningful participation of women in climate change-related policymaking, as well as a lack of recognition of the contributions of women to environmental sustainability;

(b) Women are disproportionately affected by climate-induced disasters, such as floods, cyclones, droughts and landslides.

60. **In accordance with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State Party review its climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies, taking into account the negative effects of climate change on the livelihoods of women, and ensure that women and men are equally represented in the development, adoption and implementation of legislation, policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction, in particular by:**

(a) **Developing gender-responsive early warning systems and disaster management mechanisms that address the specific needs of women, allocate adequate resources for climate resilience initiatives that target women in vulnerable situations, and establish comprehensive data collection systems to assess the impact of climate change on women;**

(b) **Implementing targeted programmes to support women small-scale farmers through climate-adaptive agricultural training, sustainable technology transfer, access to climate finance and provision of agricultural resources;**

(c) **Increasing climate change and disaster risk management literacy and awareness among communities to enable women and girls to participate effectively in climate change-related decision-making and the development of adaptation strategies and actions aimed at building the resilience of women and girls to the impact of climate change.**

Marriage and family relations

61. The Committee welcomes the State Party's proposal to reform the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951, in particular the proposed amendment of the Civil Procedure Code, No. 2 of 1889, to allow Muslims to marry under the Marriage Registration Ordinance, No. 19 of 1907. It notes with concern, however, the continued delay in implementing these reforms and the absence of a clear timeline for their adoption. It reiterates its previous concerns ([CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8](#), para. 44) and, given that the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act establishes the exclusive and compulsory jurisdiction of Quazi courts over Muslim marriages, notes with concern that:

(a) The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act does not specify a minimum age for marriage, allowing girls under the age of 12 to marry;

(b) Under the Act, eligibility for legal and judicial positions, including Quazis, members of the Board of Quazis, marriage registrars and adjudicators is restricted to Muslim men.

62. **Recalling its general recommendations No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, and joint general recommendation No. 31/general comment No. 18, as revised, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8](#), para. 45) and recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt, within a clear time frame, a unified family code that ensures equality between women and men in marriage and family relations by explicitly prohibiting child marriage, polygamy and discriminatory customary practices, with a view to ensuring the equal rights of women with respect to marriage and divorce, inheritance and property, including land ownership, as well as equal parental rights and responsibilities;**

(b) **Amend the General Marriage Registration Ordinance to ensure that Muslim women have the right to choose to marry under either the general law or Muslim personal law, and eliminate any discriminatory barriers or practices that may prevent them from exercising their choice;**

(c) **Increase the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both women and men, without exception;**

(d) **Repeal any restrictions on the eligibility of women for appointment as Quazis, members of the Board of Quazis, marriage registrars and adjudicators.**

Data collection and analysis

63. The Committee notes with concern the lack of data collection in many areas relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

64. **The Committee recommends that the State Party promote and build capacity for the use of relevant technology in the collection of statistical data, including data on the prevalence of gender-based violence against women and trafficking in women and girls, access to education and the socioeconomic status of women, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, race and disability status, for the design and implementation of tailored and gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and budgets.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

65. **The Committee calls upon the State Party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.**

Dissemination

66. **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 Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Ratification of other treaties

67. **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 Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, to which it is not yet a Party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

68. **The Committee requests the State Party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 28 (b)–(d), 30 (c), 34 (a) and 62 above.**

Preparation of the next report

69. **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 States Parties (General Assembly resolution [79/165](#),**

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.

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.

70. 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).
