



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 March 2025

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

1. The Committee considered the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland¹ at its eighth and ninth meetings,² held on 13 and 14 February 2025, and adopted the present concluding observations at its thirtieth meeting, held on 28 February 2025.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State Party of its seventh periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue with the State Party's delegation and thanks the delegation for the information provided during the consideration of the report.

3. The Committee notes the State Party's governance structure, which includes devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the distinct governance arrangements in its Crown dependencies and overseas territories. It is concerned, however, about the geographical disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights due to the varying financial and administrative capacities of the devolved governments and the limited availability of information on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the overseas territories and the Crown dependencies. The Committee reiterates that the State Party holds the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the Covenant across all of the territories under its jurisdiction, including its Crown dependencies and overseas territories.

4. The concerns and recommendations contained in the present concluding observations therefore apply to all of the aforementioned territories under the jurisdiction of the State Party and those under its international responsibility. The Committee calls upon the State Party to ensure that the recommendations contained herein are implemented effectively by the Government of the United Kingdom, the governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, including at the local authority level, and by the relevant authorities of the overseas territories and the Crown dependencies.

B. Positive aspects

5. The Committee welcomes the legislative, administrative and policy measures adopted by the State Party for the protection and progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-seventh session (10–28 February 2025).

¹ E/C.12/GBR/7.

² See E/C.12/2025/SR.7 and E/C.12/2025/SR.9.

³ E/C.12/GBR/RQ/7.



(Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the Third National Adaptation Programme 2023, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and other measures mentioned in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

6. The Committee remains concerned that not all Covenant rights are fully incorporated into domestic law, limiting their enforceability in courts. While acknowledging the decision to halt the Bill of Rights, the Committee remains concerned that similar efforts have been pursued through other legislative avenues. In addition, the Committee regrets the continued absence of a bill of rights in Northern Ireland.

7. **Recalling its previous recommendations,⁴ the Committee urges the State Party:**

(a) **To undertake an independent review of the legal and policy framework for economic, social and cultural rights, along with the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Crown dependencies and the overseas territories, to ensure that the rights in the Covenant are given full legal effect and that victims of violations of those rights have full access to effective judicial and non-judicial remedies, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant;**

(b) **To ensure that any amendments to the Human Rights Act 1998 reinforce the status of international human rights instruments and the Covenant provisions in all jurisdictions;**

(c) **To make progress on the legislative framework to incorporate economic, social and cultural rights in Scotland and Wales, including through the adoption of a human rights bill, and expedite the adoption of a bill of rights for Northern Ireland.**

Reservations

8. The Committee notes the State Party's position regarding its reservations to the Covenant. It remains concerned, however, that the reservations continue to be maintained, including some that have become obsolete.

9. **Recalling its previous recommendation,⁵ the Committee urges the State Party to reconsider and withdraw all its reservations to the Covenant, particularly those to articles 1, 2, 6, 7, 9 and 10 (2), to ensure the Covenant's full and effective application across all the territories under its jurisdiction and those under its international responsibility, including the Crown dependencies and overseas territories.**

Business and human rights

10. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to develop a national baseline assessment for implementing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. It remains concerned, however, about the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework for human rights due diligence and the limited access to remedy for non-nationals who allege that their rights have been violated by businesses domiciled in the State Party operating abroad.

11. **Recalling its previous recommendation,⁶ the Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:**

⁴ E/C.12/GBR/CO/6, paras. 6, 8 and 10; and E/C.12/GBR/CO/5, paras. 10 and 13.

⁵ E/C.12/GBR/CO/5, para. 40.

⁶ E/C.12/GBR/CO/6, para. 12.

(a) To establish a legal framework requiring businesses to conduct human rights due diligence, ensuring accountability for violations of economic, social and cultural rights in their operations and supply chains, both domestically and abroad, and guaranteeing effective access to remedies for victims, including non-nationals in the State Party, and to be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities. As a matter of priority, the State Party should require mandatory human rights due diligence in sectors that have caused extraterritorial impacts and concerns, particularly the financial and banking services;

(b) To update its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, taking into account the 2016 guidance on national action plans on business and human rights of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Climate change

12. While noting the climate change mitigation measures adopted, the Committee is concerned that the State Party is not on track to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement.

13. The Committee recommends that the State Party, pursuing a whole-of-government approach, take all measures necessary to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement and implement its net-zero strategy, particularly in the energy, transport, land use, agriculture and building sectors. It further encourages the State Party to enhance its decarbonization policy for dwelling stock and take into account the Committee's statement on climate change and the Covenant.

Obligations of a State Party under the Covenant as a member of international financial institutions

14. The Committee regrets that the State Party, as a member of such international financial institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, has not taken sufficient steps to ensure that the conditionalities that those institutions attach to loans and debt servicing do not result in unjustified retrogression in the enjoyment of the rights covered by the Covenant in borrowing States.

15. The Committee recommends that the State Party make every effort to ensure that the international financial institutions of which it is a member do not attach unsustainable loan conditionalities or impose excessive debt-servicing burdens that would undermine the capacity of borrowing States, particularly developing countries, to meet their obligations under the Covenant. In particular, such conditionalities should not lead to the adoption of unjustified retrogressive measures or a violation of the obligations under the Covenant or have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged individuals and groups in the borrowing States. In that regard, it also recommends that the State Party ensure that the international financial institutions of which it is a member carry out a human rights impact assessment prior to the provision of a loan. The Committee draws the attention of the State Party to its statement on public debt, austerity measures and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁷ and the letter on austerity measures sent by the Chairperson of the Committee to States Parties on 16 May 2012.

Official development assistance

16. While noting the State Party's constrained fiscal situation, the Committee expresses concern over the reduction of its official development assistance from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent of its gross national income. It is also concerned about the lack of effective mechanisms to assess the impact of operations funded by development assistance institutions on the enjoyment of Covenant rights. In that regard, the Committee is particularly concerned about

⁷ E/C.12/2016/1.

the funding provided by British International Investment for private, for-profit healthcare providers and low-cost private education projects, which have attracted strong criticism for their negative impact on Covenant rights in recipient countries (arts. 2, 12, 13 and 14).

17. The Committee encourages the State Party to reattain its official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of its gross national income as soon as possible and urges the State Party:

(a) **To strengthen the measures designed to analyse the impact that operations funded by development assistance institutions have on the enjoyment of Covenant rights in recipient countries, in particular the rights to just and favourable conditions of work and an adequate standard of living, health and education prior to their decisions;**

(b) **To establish a regular monitoring mechanism to assess the human rights impact of policies and projects in recipient countries and take preventive or corrective actions where necessary;**

(c) **To ensure that its official development assistance programmes prioritize supporting recipient countries in meeting their obligations under the Covenant, especially in guaranteeing to everyone access to free, quality, primary and secondary education and high-quality and affordable health care.**

Maximum available resources

18. The Committee is concerned that, despite the measures set out in the Autumn Budget 2024, the State Party's fiscal policy is not effectively addressing income inequality or reducing poverty, while also hindering the mobilization of the maximum available resources for the implementation of Covenant rights. It is further concerned that insufficient social spending, particularly in a context of rapidly rising inflation, hampers the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2 (1)).

19. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt a more efficient, progressive and socially just fiscal policy by ending the income tax thresholds freeze introduced in 2022 and by reviewing the share of corporate, capital gains, inheritance and property taxes in total State revenue to broaden the tax base and fiscal space for realizing economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Assess the impact of fiscal policy on economic, social and cultural rights, including its distributional effects on disadvantaged groups, in consultation with social partners;**

(c) **Increase the budget allocated to food programmes, social security, housing, health, education, employment services and other areas related to Covenant rights.**

20. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to combat tax evasion and cross-border tax abuse, including the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 and the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022. It remains concerned, however, that financial secrecy laws and lenient tax regimes in the Crown dependencies and overseas territories continue to hinder the ability of the State Party and other States to mobilize the maximum available resources for the implementation of Covenant rights (art. 2 (1)).

21. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments, the relevant authorities of the Crown dependencies and the overseas territories:

(a) **Strengthen efforts to combat illicit financial flows, tax evasion and fraud, particularly by wealthy individuals and businesses, by establishing public registries of companies and trusts with mandatory due diligence, thereby supporting international initiatives to that effect and helping other States to mobilize resources for realizing economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Prevent and punish the use of shell companies for profit-shifting, tax evasion and fraud by strengthening its legal framework and reinforcing whistle-blower protection measures;**

(c) **Conduct an independent, participatory impact assessment of the extra-territorial effects of its financial secrecy and corporate tax policies on the economies of developing countries.**

Austerity measures

22. Recalling its previous recommendation,⁸ the Committee regrets the lack of information on the cumulative impact of the decade-long austerity measures, which have eroded the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. It is also concerned that the ongoing fiscal consolidation could further reduce social spending, exacerbating inequalities and hindering the realization of Covenant rights, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups in society (art. 2 (1)).

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

(a) **To conduct an independent assessment of the cumulative impact of the austerity measures introduced since 2010 on economic, social and cultural rights, focusing on disadvantaged groups, regional disparities and the effects of subsequent policy shifts;**

(b) **To take all measures necessary to reverse the adverse impact of the austerity measures, particularly on employment services, social security, social care, housing, health, education, public transport and infrastructure, legal aid and local authorities' services;**

(c) **To assess the impact of the ongoing fiscal consolidation on Covenant rights and take measures to mitigate any adverse effects.**

Non-discrimination

24. The Committee notes the adoption of the Prevention of Discrimination (Guernsey) Ordinance 2022, the Equality Act 2017 in the Isle of Man and the Discrimination (Jersey) Law 2013. It remains concerned, however, that not all jurisdictions have comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. In addition, the Committee is concerned that, despite its previous recommendations,⁹ several provisions of the Equality Act 2010 remain unenforced and that equality legislation is inconsistently applied across jurisdictions, while socioeconomic, racial and gender inequalities, along with discrimination against disadvantaged groups, persist (art. 2 (2)).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments, the overseas territories and the Crown dependencies:**

(a) **Ensure the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination and equality law, particularly in Northern Ireland, in accordance with article 2 (2) of the Covenant and guided by the Committee's general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social, and cultural rights;**

(b) **Enact the outstanding provisions of the Equality Act 2010, in particular part 1 (1), on the public sector duty regarding socioeconomic inequalities, and section 14, on combined discrimination;**

(c) **Prevent and combat discrimination, racism, stereotypes and inequalities faced by persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, persons of African or Asian descent and members of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities, and migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers by implementing targeted awareness-raising campaigns and affirmative action measures in such areas as**

⁸ E/C.12/GBR/CO/6, para. 19.

⁹ Ibid., para. 23.

decent work, social security, adequate housing, healthcare and education to ensure that all persons fully enjoy Covenant rights without discrimination.

Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

26. The Committee notes the Refugee Employability Programme in England, the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024 in Scotland and the Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan 2019 in Wales. It is concerned, however, that discriminatory migration and asylum legislation, such as the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, the Illegal Migration Act 2023 and the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, combined with barriers to asylum claims and the “no recourse to public funds” rule, undermine the economic, social and cultural rights of migrants and asylum-seekers (arts. 2 (2) and 9).

27. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Review and repeal any laws that discriminate against migrant groups or limit access to rights for asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and stateless persons, ensuring full compliance with Covenant provisions;**

(b) **Guarantee access to asylum and statelessness determination procedures and to legal aid, without discrimination, and, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, enhance its integration strategies focusing on access to social security, healthcare and education, including language courses, family unity and access to the labour market and employment services;**

(c) **Review the “no recourse to public funds” rule to prevent an increase in poverty and precarity among migrants and asylum-seekers, taking into account the Committee’s statement¹⁰ on the duties of States towards refugees and migrants under the Covenant.**

Situation of British National (Overseas) visa holders

28. The Committee is concerned that British National (Overseas) visa holders face significant barriers to their economic, social and cultural rights, which exacerbate inequalities and hinder integration (arts. 2 (2), 6, 9, 13 and 14).

29. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments:

(a) **Remove barriers to labour market access for British National (Overseas) visa holders by ensuring the recognition of qualifications, job training opportunities and access to social security and public funds;**

(b) **Guarantee home fee status and eligibility for student finance for British National (Overseas) visa holders in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;**

(c) **Facilitate the transfer of pension benefits from the Hong Kong Mandatory Provident Fund;**

(d) **Strengthen integration measures through targeted support programmes and awareness-raising initiatives.**

Equality between men and women

30. While noting the adoption of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2022, the Committee remains concerned about persistent gender inequalities, gender-based violence and stereotypes, which hinder women’s full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (arts. 3 and 10).

31. Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee

¹⁰ [E/C.12/2017/1](#).

recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

(a) Intensify efforts to combat negative gender stereotypes and promote attitudinal change, including by addressing stereotypical imaging and the objectification of women in the media;

(b) Ensure women's access to justice and strengthen responses to gender-based violence through comprehensive legislation, public policies and investigation protocols, alongside robust protection, remedies and support for victims;

(c) Enhance gender-responsive budgeting to guarantee women's equal access to employment, social security, healthcare, education and decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors, with targeted measures for women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities, including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, women of African, Asian and Arab descent, women members of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and lesbian, bisexual, intersex and transgender women.

Right to work

32. The Committee notes the overall decline in unemployment rates. It remains concerned, however, about the relative high unemployment and underemployment rates among disadvantaged groups and in certain regions and the structural barriers that those groups face in access to the labour market and employment services (art. 6).

33. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved government of Northern Ireland, strengthen efforts to address unemployment and underemployment among women, persons with disabilities, young people, ethnic minorities and migrants by implementing targeted public sector employment schemes, enhancing vocational training and employment services, ensuring reasonable accommodation in recruitment and the workplace and developing private sector partnerships, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work.

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

34. While noting the proposed Employment Rights Bill, the Committee is concerned about the prevalence of part-time, temporary and zero-hour contracts and precarious self-employment, which undermine the right to just and favourable conditions of work. It is also concerned about reports of workplace discrimination and harassment and the heightened risk of exploitation faced by migrant workers on certain visa schemes. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about deficiencies in the enforcement of labour laws and disparities in their application (art. 7).

35. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved government of Northern Ireland:

(a) Intensify efforts to address precarious working conditions, including part-time, temporary and zero-hour contracts and self-employment, and create decent work opportunities, with a particular focus on women from ethnic minority groups and persons with disabilities, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work;

(b) Guarantee that labour and social security rights for workers in precarious employment, including part-time, temporary and zero-hour contracts and self-employment, are fully protected in law and practice;

(c) Ensure that migrant workers enjoy equal rights to other workers, in law and practice, in terms of wages, job security, rest and leisure, social security and trade union membership, and eliminate exploitative practices affecting migrant workers, particularly workers under such work visa arrangements as the Health and Care Worker, Overseas Domestic Worker and Seasonal Worker visa schemes, by banning recruitment fees, lifting restrictions on changing employers, extending wage protections,

protecting workers who report abuse and guaranteeing access to inspection and reporting mechanisms, including interpretation services and legal aid;

(d) Strengthen enforcement bodies for labour rights, including labour inspection and reporting mechanisms, by allocating the necessary powers and adequate financial, human and technical resources to effectively monitor working conditions and ensure that all workers, including migrant workers, have access to effective remedies;

(e) Enhance protections against discrimination in employment and occupation, including based on ethnicity and gender identity, and reinforce measures against harassment, including sexual harassment, with effective reporting and redress mechanisms.

Minimum wage

36. The Committee is concerned that, despite periodic increases, the minimum wage has not kept pace with the rising cost of living, making it insufficient to enable a decent living for workers and their families, particularly those in low-paid jobs, the public sector and precarious employment. Furthermore, while noting the introduction of gender pay gap reporting in 2017 and the plans for mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, the Committee remains concerned about persistent regional wage disparities and unequal pay for work of equal value, which continue to disproportionately affect women, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities (art. 7).

37. The Committee urges the State Party:

(a) To index the minimum wage to the cost of living and adjust it regularly, in collaboration with social partners, to ensure that workers and their families enjoy an adequate standard of living and to guarantee full compliance with minimum wage regulations across all sectors and forms of employment in all jurisdictions;

(b) To strengthen measures to guarantee equal pay for work of equal value, particularly for women, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, by enforcing mandatory pay transparency reporting, establishing cross-sectoral job valuation and introducing binding measures with appropriate sanctions with a view to closing the pay gaps;

(c) To ensure, in coordination with the devolved government of Northern Ireland, the implementation of the mandatory pay gap reporting provisions under the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Trade union rights

38. The Committee is concerned that the Trade Union Act 2016 and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 unduly restrict trade union rights, particularly with respect to collective bargaining and the right to strike, and weaken protections against blacklisting. It is also concerned about reports that electronic balloting remains unimplemented (art. 8).

39. The Committee urges the State Party to review the Trade Union Act 2016 and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 to ensure compliance with article 8 of the Covenant and safeguard trade union rights without undue restrictions. It also calls upon the State Party to effectively enforce the Employment Relations Act 1999 and its Regulations 2010 to prevent the blacklisting of trade union members and to ensure access to legal remedies and compensation for affected workers. In addition, the Committee recommends the prompt implementation of electronic balloting for industrial action, with adequate technical support and consultation with trade unions and employers.

Right to social security

40. The Committee is concerned that measures introduced through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, including benefit cuts and temporary reductions in or the suspension of benefits, have eroded the rights to social security and to an adequate standard of living, disproportionately affecting persons with disabilities, low-income

families and workers in precarious employment. The Committee expresses concern that those reforms have resulted in severe economic hardship, increased reliance on food banks, homelessness, negative impacts on mental health and the stigmatization of benefit claimants (arts. 9 and 11).

41. The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

(a) **To assess the impact of the welfare reforms introduced since 2010 on the most disadvantaged groups and to take corrective measures, including reversing such policies as the two-child limit, the benefit cap and the five-week delay for the first Universal Credit payment;**

(b) **To increase its budget allocation for social security and ensure that social benefits, including unemployment benefits and the daily allowance for asylum-seekers, are regularly indexed to the cost of living through an independent and transparent mechanism to provide recipients with an adequate standard of living;**

(c) **To conduct an independent review of the eligibility criteria for social security, including the temporary reduction and suspension of benefits, and the reliance on a digital-only, automated approach to ensure that those measures are reasonable, comply with due process and do not create barriers to the uptake and maintenance of benefits;**

(d) **To ensure that disability-related benefits, including the Personal Independence Payment and the Employment and Support Allowance, adequately cover additional disability-related costs, in line with the human rights model of disability, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;¹¹**

(e) **To be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security and refer to its statement on social protection floors as an essential element of the right to social security and of the Sustainable Development Goals,¹² as well as the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.¹³**

Protection of the family and children

42. The Committee is concerned that the high cost and limited availability of childcare services, coupled with an inadequate shared parental leave framework, continue to hinder equal caregiving responsibilities between men and women. It also notes with concern the impact of welfare reforms on the social care sector. The Committee is further concerned about allegations of widespread child sexual exploitation and abuse by organized gangs and in institutional settings (art. 10).

43. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

(a) **Adopt or strengthen measures to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare through increased public funding and targeted financial support, such as childcare allowances;**

(b) **Strengthen paternity leave policies by ensuring adequate paid, non-transferable leave;**

(c) **Adopt legislative measures to establish a comprehensive, inclusive care and support system that promotes shared caregiving responsibilities for children, persons with disabilities and older persons and integrates a gender-sensitive, intersectional, intercultural and human rights-based approach;**

¹¹ CRPD/C/GBR/CO/1, para. 59.

¹² E/C.12/2015/1.

¹³ A/HRC/41/39/Add.1, paras. 95–97.

(d) **Strengthen measures aimed at tackling the sexual exploitation of and violence against children, including by implementing the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales, the Gillen Review in Northern Ireland, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and other relevant inquiries and investigations conducted by independent bodies, as also recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.**¹⁴

Poverty

44. The Committee is concerned about rising poverty rates across regions and cities, which disproportionately affect children, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrants, female-headed households and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, particularly those in low-paid or precarious employment. It also notes with concern the insufficient social security support in current anti-poverty measures, the lack of a comprehensive child poverty eradication strategy and the growing number of households unable to afford electricity, gas, water, sanitation, heating and clothing (art. 11).

45. **Recalling its previous recommendation,¹⁵ the Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:**

(a) **To develop or enhance measures to address the multidimensional determinants of poverty, particularly in Northern Ireland, by focusing on poverty eradication through clear, measurable targets, paying particular attention to groups disproportionately affected, including migrants, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, female-headed households and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, in the regions and cities most affected and ensure sufficient resources for effective monitoring and implementation;**

(b) **To expedite the adoption or enhancement of measures, including necessary fiscal reforms and increased budget allocations, to end child poverty, including in Jersey, ensuring that they comply with a child rights-based approach, setting clear targets and timelines, establishing reporting obligations and oversight and participatory mechanisms and providing adequate resources for implementation;**

(c) **To allocate sufficient resources to the children's social care system across all jurisdictions with a view to supporting low-income families, to prevent the separation of children from their family environment and their institutionalization or placement in alternative care and, in coordination with anti-poverty strategies and social security policies, to take into account the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁶ in that regard;**

(d) **To step up measures to ensure that everyone has access to affordable electricity, gas, water, sanitation, heating and clothing.**

Right to adequate housing

46. While acknowledging the investments, policies and legislative measures aimed at affordable housing, the Committee remains concerned about the critical challenges in the availability, affordability and accessibility of adequate housing, which are further compounded by inadequate housing benefits, rising rental costs and inadequate property taxes. It is particularly concerned that those issues have pushed many into precarious living conditions or homelessness, with surging numbers of individuals, particularly single mothers with children, living in substandard conditions or inadequate temporary accommodation for extended periods. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about persistent barriers to culturally appropriate housing for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and reports of discrimination and intimidation faced by migrants and ethnic minorities, which hinder their access to adequate housing (art. 11).

¹⁴ CRC/C/GBR/CO/6-7, para. 33.

¹⁵ E/C.12/GBR/CO/6, para. 48.

¹⁶ CRC/C/GBR/CO/6-7, para. 38.

47. Recalling its previous recommendation,¹⁷ the Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

(a) To take all measures necessary to ensure the availability of affordable and social housing units by streamlining planning regulations, prioritizing funding for new construction, rehabilitating substandard housing and ensuring accessibility for disadvantaged groups, in particular persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, ethnic minorities and low- and middle-income households, with a focus on single mothers;

(b) To review property tax rates with a view to increasing the supply of housing units for sale or long-term rental and carry out an assessment of the economic and social impacts of the complete exemption from tax on profits and capital gains by real estate investment trusts;

(c) To ensure the greatest possible security of tenure to tenants, including by amending section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, and guarantee that evictions, when unavoidable, comply with due process, involve consultation with the affected persons, consider alternatives, allow for appeal and result in adequate compensation or adequate alternative housing;

(d) To address the root causes of homelessness by ensuring adequate resources for local authorities, prioritizing long-term solutions that enable the exercise of other Covenant rights, guaranteeing safe and adequate living conditions in temporary accommodation, including through a comprehensive regulatory framework, and ending the punitive approach towards rough sleeping;

(e) To ensure access to adequate housing for individuals with intellectual disabilities, enabling those residing in inpatient units to be discharged and preventing their institutionalization;

(f) To ensure adequate, culturally appropriate accommodation and stopping sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, including access to water, sanitation and electricity, in coordination with local authorities and review and repeal laws or policies that undermine their traditional ways of life, such as section 83 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, which criminalizes unauthorized encampments in England and Wales, and the Unauthorized Encampments (Northern Ireland) Order 2005;

(g) To ensure safe, healthy and adequate living conditions for migrants and asylum-seekers in temporary and dispersed accommodation, including, in particular, by ending the use of hotel accommodation for unaccompanied children and by improving oversight and enforcement mechanisms to prevent exploitation and discrimination by landlords in access to housing, including for refugees;

(h) To strengthen measures to prevent and combat intimidation by paramilitary groups against ethnic minorities and migrants in Northern Ireland in order to ensure their access to adequate housing and to prevent de facto segregation, to collect data on such acts and to ensure that they are promptly and effectively investigated.

Right to food

48. The Committee acknowledges the several measures taken to provide for food and the necessary resources to ensure food security. It remains concerned, however, that significant challenges remain, including increasing food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and limited access to affordable and nutritious food, which disproportionately affect low-income households, in particular families with children (art. 11).

49. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security and recommends

¹⁷ E/C.12/GBR/CO/6, para. 50.

that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

- (a) Expedite the adoption of a comprehensive national strategy for the protection and promotion of the right to adequate food, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to address food insecurity and reduce reliance on food banks, setting clear, time-bound targets and establishing appropriate mechanisms to assess progress;
- (b) Take measures to address the triple burden of malnutrition (under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity);
- (c) Ensure that social protection programmes target those most in need;
- (d) Promote balanced diets through effective social and behavioural change communication strategies and ensure the affordability of diversified diets;
- (e) Introduce higher taxes on junk food and sugary drinks and strengthen regulations on the marketing of such products.

Right to physical and mental health

50. While noting the announced ten-year health plan, the Committee expresses concern about the inadequate funding for the health sector, the long waiting times for medical appointments, procedures and operations, the shortages of medical staff and equipment and the barriers to access to healthcare for the most disadvantaged and those living in remote areas. In addition, while noting the Mental Health Bill 2025 and the new mental health strategies, the Committee remains concerned about the high number of deaths by suicide and due to drug use and the rising levels of anxiety and depression (art. 12).

51. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:**

- (a) Strengthen measures to ensure universal health coverage in practice by increasing resources for the National Health Service, securing sufficient qualified medical staff, ensuring access to adequate medical equipment and infrastructure, reducing waiting times, improving health services in remote and rural areas and removing stigma and informational and technological barriers to access to health for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers and to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in relation to gender identity-related healthcare, particularly in Scotland, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health;
- (b) Strengthen mental health services and support systems by allocating sufficient resources, strengthening community-based support, undertaking initiatives to destigmatize mental health issues and implementing targeted measures for groups disproportionately affected by mental health problems.

Right to sexual and reproductive health

52. The Committee is concerned about the high rates of maternal mortality and disparities in access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, which adversely affect women and girls from disadvantaged groups and in peripheral and remote areas (art. 12).

53. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:**

- (a) Increase efforts to ensure equal access to maternal health services for migrant women and women from ethnic minority groups with a view to reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and to adequately equip facilities for antenatal, perinatal and postnatal care, particularly in rural areas;
- (b) Strengthen measures to ensure the accessibility and availability of appropriate, good-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services and information, such as access to safe abortion services, including abortion medication, contraception and emergency contraception, for all women and adolescent girls in the State Party, particularly those living in rural or remote areas;

(c) **Be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health and the *Abortion Care Guideline* (2022) of the World Health Organization (WHO) and take into account the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its inquiry¹⁸ concerning the State Party.**

Drug policy

54. The Committee is concerned about the high rate of drug-related deaths, the punitive approach to drug use and the limited availability and accessibility of harm reduction and rehabilitation programmes (art. 12).

55. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, review its legislative framework to adopt a human rights-based approach to drug use, including by:

(a) **Conducting preventive awareness-raising on the serious health risks associated with drug abuse, particularly among young people;**

(b) **Ensuring the treatment of drug use disorder and the provision of healthcare services, psychological support, rehabilitation services and harm reduction programmes for persons who use drugs and considering the adoption of alternatives to the punitive approach and criminal penalties for drug use.**

Right to education

56. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The disparities in coverage of early childhood education between different regions and different income groups;

(b) The lasting negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on educational attainment, leaving many children behind in the transition back to in-person education;

(c) The limited impact of existing programmes on improvement in educational attainment gaps and the persistence of significant disparities, in particular for children belonging to ethnic, religious or other minorities and for children from low-income families, limiting social mobility;

(d) The persistent obstacles faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, children with disabilities, migrant children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds in access to education without discrimination;

(e) Serious cases of violence, bullying and cyberbullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and race and the persistence of gender stereotypes in the school environment (arts. 13 and 14).

57. The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

(a) **Guarantee high-quality and affordable early childhood education for all children, across all jurisdictions, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds;**

(b) **Adopt effective measures to mitigate learning opportunity loss in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular for disadvantaged children, and effectively prevent the further disruption of education;**

(c) **Evaluate, in a comprehensive manner, the impact of the existing programmes, including Jersey Premium, on improvement in the educational attainment gaps and adopt effective measures, with a view to raising the educational attainment levels of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from low-income families to promote social mobility;**

¹⁸ CEDAW/C/OP.8/GBR/1, paras. 84–86.

(d) **Ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, children with disabilities, migrant children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality education that is culturally appropriate and adapted to their needs;**

(e) **Take effective measures to ensure the protection of all children from bullying, including cyberbullying, and violence in schools and strengthen efforts to prevent those phenomena and promote understanding and tolerance;**

(f) **Take effective measures to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes in educational materials and the school environment and ensure that educational institutions and teachers do not perpetuate such stereotypes, including through the provision of appropriate training programmes for teachers.**

Cultural rights

58. The Committee is concerned by the inadequate funding for culture and culture-related activities, which hampers the right of all to participate in cultural life, to express one's own identity, values and way of life without fear of discrimination and to have access to and enjoy the arts, sciences and sports. Furthermore, while noting the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, the Committee regrets that the institutions created to protect and promote the Irish language and to promote and develop the Ulster-Scots tradition have not yet been established (art. 15).

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

(a) **Take the steps necessary to strengthen the protection of cultural rights and respect for cultural diversity, in particular in Northern Ireland, by increasing the budget allocated to promote the development and dissemination of science and culture, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life;**

(b) **Increase resources and improve programmes for the development of accessible recreational, art and leisure spaces, in both rural and urban areas, for persons with all types of disabilities and make the existing sports and recreational infrastructure accessible to all persons with disabilities, in line with the promotion of independent living;**

(c) **Ensure non-discrimination in cultural participation and sports, particularly based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and guarantee that all individuals, including transgender persons, are supported in sports participation, in line with the principles of reasonableness, proportionality and equality;**

(d) **Expedite the establishment of the institutions and policies envisaged for the protection and promotion of the Irish language and Ulster-Scots culture and heritage, ensuring the meaningful participation of minority language groups and their representative organizations.**

Right to participate in cultural life and constructive intercultural relationships

60. The Committee is concerned that the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 undermines the right to participate in cultural life by impeding the conditions necessary for intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. It notes with particular concern that the Legacy and Reconciliation Act has attracted strong criticism for its breach of the Good Friday Agreement and the international human rights obligations of the State Party, as also noted by the Human Rights Committee¹⁹ (art. 15).

61. **The Committee recommends that the State Party repeal the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 and implement measures to create conditions conducive to constructive intercultural relations based on mutual**

¹⁹ CCPR/C/GBR/CO/8, para. 10.

understanding, tolerance and respect. It also urges the State Party to refer to the recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee²⁰ in that regard.

Right to participate in and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress

62. The Committee is concerned that the State Party does not support: (a) a full temporary waiver of intellectual property rights for vaccines, diagnostics, treatment and other necessary medical products relating to COVID-19; or (b) the WHO Pandemic Agreement (art. 15).

63. **The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that trade agreements are implemented in a manner consistent with its obligations under the Covenant with regard to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in other countries. In that regard, it recommends that the State Party give its firm support and cooperation to: (a) the full temporary waiver on the implementation of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights as it pertains to vaccines, diagnostics, treatments and other necessary medical products relating to COVID-19; and (b) the WHO Pandemic Agreement negotiations, as they affect the availability, accessibility, affordability and benefit-sharing of essential life-saving treatment, especially in developing countries. The Committee also recommends that the State Party be guided by paragraph 82 of the Committee's general comment No. 25 (2020) on science and economic, social and cultural rights and the Committee's statements on the COVID-19 pandemic and economic, social and cultural rights²¹ and on universal and equitable access to vaccines for COVID-19.²²**

D. Other recommendations

64. The Committee encourages the State Party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

65. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider ratifying the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely 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, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

66. The Committee also recommends that the State Party consider ratifying the Revised European Social Charter, which will foster compliance with human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

67. The Committee further recommends that the State Party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State Party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State Party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.²³

²⁰ CCPR/C/GBR/CO/8, para. 11.

²¹ E/C.12/2020/1.

²² E/C.12/2020/2 and E/C.12/2021/1.

²³ E/C.12/2019/1.

68. The Committee recommends that the State Party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State Party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State Party to, inter alia, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.²⁴

69. The Committee requests that the State Party, along with the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Crown dependencies and the overseas territories, disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State Party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State Party to continue to engage with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and other national human rights institutions in the Crown dependencies and the overseas territories, as well as with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society, in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

70. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State Party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 March 2027), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 21 (c) (maximum available resources), 23 (a) (austerity measures) and 41 (a) (social security) above.

71. The Committee requests the State Party to submit its eighth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2030, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. In addition, it invites the State Party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties.²⁵

²⁴ [HRI/MC/2008/3](#).

²⁵ [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I.