



# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General  
14 November 2023

Original: English

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of France\*

1. The Committee considered the ninth periodic report of France (CEDAW/C/FRA/9) at its 2011th and 2012th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2011 and CEDAW/C/SR.2012), held on 17 October 2023.

#### 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/FRA/CO/7-8/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group in relation to the ninth periodic report (CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/9). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in writing in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by the Minister delegate to the Prime Minister responsible for equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination, Bérandère Couillard, and included representatives of the Ministry responsible for equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories, the Ministry of Health and Prevention, the Ministry of National Education and Youth, the Ministry of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Ministry of Transformation and Civil Service and the Ministry of Labour, Full Employment and Integration, as well as representatives of the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Victims of Violence and for Combating Human Trafficking and of the interministerial delegation for combating racism, antisemitism and hatred towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. The delegation also included the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Jérôme Bonnafont.

\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-sixth session (9–27 October 2023).



## **B. Positive aspects**

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2016 of the State party's previous report in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Decree of 25 February 2022 on measures aimed at eliminating the pay gap between women and men in enterprises, which created new obligations relating to corrective measures and progress objectives for enterprises;

(b) Act No. 2021-1774 of 24 December 2021 on accelerating economic and professional equality, which contains provisions in favour of the fair representation of women in the economy and the professional world and of their financial and banking autonomy;

(c) Act No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020 on the protection of victims of domestic violence, which recognizes the undue influence resulting from the control exerted by perpetrators of violence and allows health professionals to break medical secrecy when the domination exerted by the aggressor means that the victim is unable to turn to the authorities;

(d) Act No. 2020-766 of 24 June 2020 on combating hateful content on the Internet, which establishes an observatory of online hate;

(e) Act No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on taking action against domestic violence, which compels judges to issue a protection order within a maximum of six days if the victim or the victim's children are likely to be at risk of violence;

(f) Act No. 2019-1461 of 27 December 2019 on participation in community life and local public rights of action, which compels political parties to place women and men candidates in alternating order on electoral lists in municipalities with more than 1,000 inhabitants;

(g) Act No. 2019-828 of 6 August 2019 on civil service reform, which provides for the establishment in administrations, local authorities and public institutions of a mechanism to collect reports from staff who feel that they have been the victims of an act of violence, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour and which requires selection panels and nominating bodies involved in recruitment, advancement or internal promotion, as well as the presiding officers of such bodies, to meet gender balance requirements;

(h) Act No. 2019-486 of 22 May 2019 on the growth and transformation of companies, known as the PACTE Act, which strengthens penalties for companies that fail to comply with the minimum quota of 40 per cent for both women and men on the boards of directors and supervisory boards;

(i) Decree No. 2019-134 of 26 February 2019 on modifying the composition of the High Council for Gender Equality, which ensures that women and men will have equal representation on the Council;

(j) Act No. 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, which requires employers to implement a gender equality index that makes it possible to measure wage inequalities on a scale of 100 points in enterprises with at least 50 employees and which also requires employers to eliminate the wage gap between women and men;

(k) Act No. 2018-703 of 3 August 2018 on strengthening the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, criminalizing harassment and creating specific offences for sexist insult;

(l) Act No. 2017-399 of 27 March 2017 on the duty of care of parent companies and contracting companies, which establishes that parent companies of multinational companies with more than 5,000 employees bear responsibility in the event that an accusation is made regarding human rights violations;

(m) Act No. 2017-86 of 27 January 2017 on equality and citizenship, which doubles the penalties for discriminatory insults and makes sexism an aggravating circumstance.

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) The interministerial plan for equality between women and men for the period 2023–2027 known as “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux”, covering four areas: violence against women, women's health, professional and economic equality, and a culture of equality, which was presented to the Council of Ministers on 8 March 2023;

(b) The interministerial agreement for equality between girls and boys in the education system, which supports a culture of equality and insists on collaboration among the various ministries signatories to the agreement and their partners, signed on 28 November 2019;

(c) The report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action ahead of the 25-year anniversary of its adoption, submitted to the Economic Commission for Europe in 2019;

(d) The national action plan to eradicate female genital mutilation, in 2019;

(e) The second national action plan against trafficking in persons 2019–2021, aimed at better identifying victims of trafficking through a national referral mechanism;

(f) The fifth interministerial agreement for 2019–2024 on equality in the education system, which sets out the pedagogical and educational measures that are integrated into school or institutional projects and aimed at combating gender violence;

(g) The national strategy for the reception and integration of refugees, the third pillar of which aims to ensure appropriate assistance for vulnerable refugee women, in 2018;

(h) The fifth plan for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women (2017–2019), which consolidates the pathway out of violence and broadens reporting methods, in 2017;

(i) The gender diversity plan for the digital sector, signed on 31 January 2017;

(j) The first interministerial plan for achieving gender equality in the workplace for 2016–2020, aimed at addressing the wage and employment gap between women and men and promoting gender diversity in the workplace.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization, in April 2023.

## 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 France and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a working group composed of representatives from several ministerial departments and civil society organizations, under the supervision of the Ministry responsible for equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination, to monitor the national implementation of Goal 5.

## 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, 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

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

9. The Committee notes that an emergency plan to protect victims of domestic violence was adopted in 2020 and that specific measures aimed at perpetrators of domestic violence were adopted during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It also notes the measures taken by the State party to promote equality between women and men in professional life as part of the economic recovery, including the Act No. 2021-1774 of 24 December 2021 on accelerating economic and professional equality; the “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux” for the period 2023–2027, presented to the Council of Ministers on 8 March 2023, which aims to strengthen support for girls and women to enter so-called “future” professional sectors; and the wage increase of 200 euros per month for care sector professionals, benefiting 1.5 million women. However, the Committee is concerned about the long-term impact of the pandemic on women's employment and health, including their mental health.

10. The Committee, in line with its guidance note on the obligations of States parties to the Convention in the context of COVID-19, issued on 22 April 2020, recommends that the State party:

- (a) Collect data to analyse the differential impact of the pandemic on women;
- (b) Implement institutional, legislative and policy measures to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men and to give renewed impetus to efforts to achieve gender equality by placing women at the centre of COVID-19 recovery strategies as a strategic priority for sustainable change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) **Ensure that, in the context of post-crisis recovery plans, mental health concerns are included and that women and girls are not relegated to stereotypical gender roles;**

(d) **Ensure the equal participation of women and girls, including from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in the design and implementation of COVID-19 recovery programmes;**

(e) **Ensure that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care work, aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.**

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

11. The Committee welcomes the dissemination of the Committee's previous concluding observations, the publication of an interministerial guide to fighting discrimination, in particular against women, and the provision to government officials of training on gender equality and the protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence. However, it notes with concern that the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations are not widely known in the State party and the lack of court decisions making reference to the Convention, which covers gender-based discrimination more comprehensively than the general prohibition of discrimination.

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

(a) **Provide systematic capacity-building and training for judges, prosecutors, the police and other law enforcement officials, government officials, as well as lawyers, on the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations;**

(b) **Step up its efforts and use more effective outreach methods to raise awareness of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations.**

#### **Access to justice**

13. The Committee notes that, between 2017 and 2021, 526 people were prosecuted and 213 were convicted for acts of discrimination based on gender. It also notes that, of the 324 sentences imposed, 50 per cent led to imprisonment or reclusion and 24 per cent to fines or day-fines. The Committee is nevertheless concerned about the low rates of prosecution and conviction in cases of discrimination based on gender. It is also concerned about the absence of a legal definition of femicide in the Penal Code, despite it being covered by other criminal law provisions, which hampers the identification of all cases of femicide and victims' access to justice.

#### **14. In line with its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend the Penal Code to specifically criminalize femicide;**

(b) **Enhance women's knowledge and awareness of their rights and the remedies available to claim them;**

(c) **Ensure that all cases of gender-based discrimination against women are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished.**

### National machinery for the advancement of women

15. The Committee notes the creation in July 2020 of the entity currently known as the delegated Ministry for equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination, whose mandate is to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination, ensure equality in all areas and coordinate gender equality policies at all levels of government, as well as the issuance of the “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux”. It also notes the increase in budgetary allocations from 50.7 million euros in 2022 to 65.4 million euros in 2023 specifically for the promotion of equality between women and men. However, the Committee notes with concern the weak mechanisms for financing and monitoring the implementation of the “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux”, its limited implementation and the lack of civil society involvement in such implementation.

**16. The Committee recommends that the State party establish a clear, robust and efficient monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux” and that it allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for its implementation and evaluation with the participation of civil society organizations.**

### Temporary special measures

17. The Committee notes that the legislation of the State party provides for quota systems for the equal representation of women. However, it notes with concern that the State party has not adopted any new temporary special measures during the reporting period to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in decision-making and leadership positions in political and economic life.

**18. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in decision-making and leadership positions in political and economic life, and in any other areas where women remain underrepresented, with time-bound targets and benchmarks, and sanctions for non-compliance.**

### Stereotypes

19. The Committee notes the “Plan Toutes et Tous Égaux” launched on 8 March 2023, which includes measures to combat gender stereotypes. The Committee also notes the adoption of the charter of voluntary commitments for the fight against sexual, sexist and sexual stereotypes in advertising, an initiative of the Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication. The Committee further notes the strengthening of the Authority’s powers to combat sexism and stereotypes in audiovisual media through the charter of commitments for the prevention of exposure of minors to online pornographic content, signed by the State party and Internet service providers and operators, which is aimed at promoting a culture free from gender-based violence against women by limiting minors’ access to pornography, as well as by extending the reach of the mechanism for reporting illegal content to include acts of gender-based hate speech. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The persistent discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in the State party, including with regard to women and girls with disabilities, women belonging to racial,

ethnic and religious minorities, women victims of sexual assault and women victims of revenge pornography;

(b) That implementation of the recommendations of the High Council for Gender Equality is not mandatory.

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

(a) **Strengthen its strategy aimed at eliminating discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups of women, and equip it with a dedicated budget and time-bound targets and objectives;**

(b) **Ensure that implementation of the recommendations of the High Council for Gender Equality is made mandatory and that the recommendations it has issued are implemented.**

**Gender-based violence against women**

21. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Acts No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on taking action against domestic violence and No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020 on the protection of victims of domestic violence, the fifth plan for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women (2017–2019), which broadens reporting methods, the launch of a training policy on the psychological processes underlying domestic violence to develop the skills of officers of the national gendarmerie when interacting with victims, and the provision of a matrix to all law enforcement agencies to assess the danger faced by women victims of gender-based violence and their children. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The persistence of gender-based violence against women in the State party, where the number of victims of such violence committed by a partner or ex-partner increased by 21 per cent in 2022;

(b) The overly restrictive definition of rape, which is based on lack of consent due to violence, threat, surprise or coercion, limits the possibility of conviction and makes the criminal process difficult for complainants;

(c) The “Romeo and Juliet” clause, according to which sexual relations between an adult and a minor are permissible as long as the age gap does not exceed five years.

**22. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and in line with target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Urgently adopt a sixth plan for preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for its implementation and regular monitoring and evaluation;**

(b) **Ensure adequate victim support services, including a sufficient number of adequately funded shelters providing legal, medical and psychological assistance, as well as skills training and education to women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence;**

(c) **Amend the Penal Code to ensure that the definition of rape is based on the absence of consent, covers any non-consensual sexual act and takes into account all coercive circumstances, in line with international human rights standards;**

**(d) Amend the “Romeo and Juliet” clause to prohibit sexual relations between an adult and a minor below the age of sexual consent.**

23. The Committee notes with appreciation that the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons seeks to provide protection to more than 20,000 children to reduce the risk of them being subjected to female genital mutilation upon return to their country of origin, the adoption in 2019 of the national action plan to eradicate female genital mutilation and efforts to increase awareness among professionals and train them on the prevention of female genital mutilation. The Committee welcomes the launch in 2023 of a new study on the prevalence of female genital mutilation among the female population. However, the Committee notes with concern the lack of monitoring of the progress made in the protection of women and girls from harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

**24. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the committee charged with monitoring the implementation of the national action plan to eradicate female genital mutilation is independent, operates effectively and assesses the situation regularly and in a transparent manner.**

**Extraterritorial State obligations**

25. The Committee commends the State party for its feminist foreign policy and notes the information provided by the State party on its strict and responsible control of exports of war and similar equipment. However, the Committee notes the 18 recommendations contained in the 2023 report of the High Council on Gender Equality on the State party’s feminist foreign policy. It also notes with concern the potentially negative impact on women’s rights of arms transfers to countries where the situation is volatile and marked by armed conflict or at risk of such conflict. It further notes that the State party is yet to use its universal jurisdiction to address gender-based crimes. The Committee is concerned that the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders will, absent sufficient safeguards, increase the vulnerability of women human rights defenders to threats and backlash from their Governments.

**26. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to include national and international women’s rights and feminist groups and civil society in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its feminist foreign policy. The Committee also recommends that the State party increase human and financial resources to effectively implement projects and programmes under its feminist foreign policy. It further recommends that the State party use its universal jurisdiction to address crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of genocide committed against women in different jurisdictions. The Committee recommends that an assessment be carried out of the risks to women human right defenders working with the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders and that the Marianne Initiative create safeguards and provide support on a continuum throughout a human rights defender’s life cycle.**

**Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

27. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the second national action plan against trafficking in persons 2019–2021 and notes that a third action plan is under preparation. It also notes the introduction, in 2019, of an interdepartmental training course of the national gendarmerie and the National School for the Judiciary on combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lower prosecution and conviction rates in cases of trafficking in women and girls in the State party compared to earlier years;



(b) The lack of adequate mechanisms to identify and refer victims of trafficking in need of protection, in particular minors, and the lack of sufficient data on victims of trafficking;

(c) The lack of attention paid to exploitation in the form of forced labour;

(d) The reduced resources allocated to combating trafficking in women and girls.

**28. In line with its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Increase its efforts to identify victims of trafficking in human beings and to investigate, prosecute, convict and adequately punish perpetrators;**

**(b) Reinforce the national referral mechanism for all forms of trafficking;**

**(c) Systematically collect data on trafficking in women and girls across relevant State agencies, disaggregated by sexual, labour and other forms of exploitation;**

**(d) Increase funding and resources specifically for anti-trafficking coordination and victim assistance, including adequate funding for non-governmental organizations providing assistance.**

29. The Committee takes note of the 2019 evaluation of Act No. 2016-444 of 13 April 2016 on strengthening action to combat the prostitution system and support prostitutes and the publication of an interministerial circular in 2022 on strengthening the pathways out of prostitution. It notes the announcement made by the Minister delegate to the Prime Minister responsible for equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination on 13 April 2023 concerning the development of a national strategy to combat the phenomenon of prostitution. The Committee notes with concern the high number of adolescent girls engaged in prostitution in the State party.

**30. The Committee recommends that the State party address the root causes of prostitution, such as structural gender inequalities, as well as the demand for prostitution, and continue to protect women and adolescent girls from being exploited in prostitution, including by expanding exit programmes and alternative income opportunities for women who wish to leave prostitution.**

#### **Equal participation of women in political and public life**

31. The Committee notes that women represent 37.6 per cent of elected members of Parliament and 32.9 per cent of Senators, and that Act No. 2019-1461 of 27 December 2019 on participation in community life and local public rights of action requires political parties to place women and men candidates in alternating order on electoral lists. It also notes that Act No. 2012-347 of 12 March 2012 (also known as the “Sauvadet Law”) has required, since 2017, public employers to ensure a minimum representation of 40 per cent of persons of each sex in first-time appointments for senior management and civil service executive positions. It further notes that, in 2020, 42 per cent of first-time appointees for leading positions in State administrations were women. The Committee notes that Act No. 2021-1774 of 24 December 2021 on accelerating economic and professional equality requires a balanced representation of women and men among senior executives and members of the governing bodies of companies with at least 1,000 employees. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) That women hold only 35 per cent of ministerial cabinet positions and, according to a 2017 study, accounted for only 4 per cent of the speaking time in Parliament before 2017;

(b) That parity laws do not apply to the election of mayors, 19.8 per cent of whom are women;

(c) That the recommendation contained in the 2023 report of the High Council for Gender Equality to establish an independent authority to combat sexist violence in politics has yet to be implemented.

**32. Recalling its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure 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) **Provide capacity-building opportunities to women politicians and candidates on political campaigning, leadership and negotiation skills, and raise awareness, in collaboration with the media, among politicians, the media and the general public, of the importance of gender parity in political and public life as a requirement for fully implementing the human rights of women;**

(b) **Adopt compulsory gender parity provisions for mayoral elections;**

(c) **Implement the recommendation contained in the 2023 report of the High Council for Gender Equality to establish an independent authority to combat sexist violence in politics.**

### **Education**

33. The Committee notes with appreciation the interministerial agreement for equality between girls and boys in the education system for the period 2019–2024, which includes mandatory training for the educational community aimed at deconstructing bias and preventing harassment and gender-based and sexual violence, and that the methodological guide “Sexist Behaviour and Sexual Violence: Prevent, Repair, Act”, which provides definitions and legal information related to sexism, sexual violence, forced marriages and female genital mutilation, was updated in 2020 for middle and high school educational teams. It welcomes the digital toolbox of inclusive activities developed as part of the Hypatia Project, which has been used to introduce more than 3,000 high school students to a variety of science and technology courses. It also welcomes the “no to harassment” programme launched in 2017, which has included the establishment of a dedicated website and a toll-free number to report harassment. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The limited assessment of the Hypatia Project and the continued underrepresentation of women and girls in non-traditional fields of study and career paths, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in information and communications technology;

(b) The unprecedented number of cases of cybersexism and cyberbullying in schools, often targeting girls, in the State party;

(c) The lack of measures to prevent girls from dropping out of school, especially girls belonging to disadvantaged groups, due to the COVID-19 pandemic;

(d) The limited implementation of the national sexual health strategy for 2017–2030 and the limited availability of guidance materials and systematic training on sexual and reproductive health and rights for teachers.

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

(a) **Strengthen the promotion of the participation of girls and women in non-traditional fields of study and career paths, in particular in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in information and communications technology;**

(b) **Urgently introduce new regulations on the protection of minors at schools from harassment and cyberbullying, raise awareness of the risks among students, teachers and the general public, and monitor the establishment of zero-tolerance mechanisms for handling cases of harassment and cyberbullying of students, including girls;**

(c) **Ensure that girls and women belonging to disadvantaged groups have access to mainstream education at all levels, and include in its next periodic report disaggregated statistical data on school enrolment and completion and dropout rates among girls;**

(d) **Strengthen the delivery of gender-sensitive, age-appropriate and accessible education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible sexual behaviour at all levels of education, provide systematic training to teachers on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensure the implementation and monitoring of the national sexual health strategy.**

### **Employment**

**35. The Committee notes Act No. 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, which requires companies to measure themselves against a gender equality index. The Committee also notes that, in 2023, 72 per cent of enterprises published their ratings; the strong involvement of labour inspection services in the gender equality index; and the 695 formal notices and 49 penalty decisions notified to companies for failure to publish results or failure to define adequate and relevant corrective measures since 2019. It also notes the increase in paternity leave from 14 to 28 days, including 7 compulsory days to be taken upon the birth of the child, which took effect on 1 July 2021. The Committee nevertheless notes with concern:**

(a) **That women are overrepresented in front-line and care professions, and that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in employment, especially among women in informal and part-time employment;**

(b) **The limited use of paternity leave by fathers;**

(c) **The persistent gender wage gap in the State party, and that employers are exempted from taking corrective measures if they score 75 points or more out of 100 on the gender equality index, while the indicators already leave considerable latitude to employers;**

(d) **The reproduction of gender biases by recruitment algorithms;**

(e) **The high rate of sexual harassment and underreporting by women, and weak implementation of the prevention legislation;**

(f) **The high unemployment rates among disadvantaged groups of women, including undocumented migrant women, women belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, women with disabilities and older women.**

**36. Drawing attention to its general recommendation No. 13 (1989) on equal remuneration for work of equal value and to target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve, by 2030, full and productive employment and**

decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Upgrade the evaluation grids and classification systems for professions predominantly exercised by women, particularly in the health-care, teaching and social sectors;
- (b) Strengthen programmes to encourage men to avail themselves of paternity leave;
- (c) Revise the gender equality index in order to raise the minimum score allowing exemption from corrective measures;
- (d) Carry out impact studies to address the discriminatory effects of recruitment algorithms to the detriment of women and support research to develop measurement studies and bias prevention methodologies;
- (e) Raise awareness among employers and employees of sexual harassment and the relevant provisions relating to protection against violence and moral or sexual harassment, ensure that all reports of sexual harassment are effectively investigated and that those responsible are adequately punished;
- (f) Train law enforcement officials on the procedures for the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace and reform legislation to increase the effectiveness of prevention procedures;
- (g) Take measures to combat the structural barriers faced by women belonging to disadvantaged groups, such as migrant women, women belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, women with disabilities and older women, and ensure that they have access to formal employment, enjoy decent conditions of work and receive equal pay for work of equal value;
- (h) Reform the system for collecting data on women in the informal employment sector and on girls and migrant women in the labour sector;
- (i) Ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization.

## Health

37. The Committee notes with appreciation the initiative of the State party to make abortion a constitutional right and the adoption of Act No. 2022-295 of 2 March 2022, which extends the period during which an abortion can legally take place from the twelfth to the fourteenth week of pregnancy. The Committee also notes that since January 2022 contraception has been available free of charge to all women under 26 years of age and that since January 2023 emergency contraception has been available free of charge and without a prescription for all women. However, the Committee notes with concern:

- (a) That therapeutic guidelines in the medical system are predominantly based on a male model despite the fact that women are more vulnerable to cardiovascular diseases than men and that such diseases are in fact the leading cause of death among women in the State party;
- (b) That disparities remain in the provision of health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, between rural and urban areas in mainland France and between mainland France and the State party's overseas territories, affecting women and girls disproportionately, and that some parts of the State party lack the minimum number of health professionals performing abortions;

(c) That the pesticide chlordane, which disproportionately affects women's health, has been detected in the blood of approximately 90 per cent of the population in Guadeloupe and Martinique;

(d) Women's limited access to drinking water in Guadeloupe and the limited effectiveness of the water plan for overseas territories to support the creation and modernization of infrastructure;

(e) That women with disabilities have limited access to sexual and reproductive health services, particularly gynaecological services;

(f) The lack of measures taken by the State party to address the impact of the 30 years of French nuclear testing on the health of women and girls in French Polynesia.

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

(a) **Take steps to ensure that biomedical research by both State and non-State actors includes a gender perspective and that women are adequately represented in clinical trials, to ensure that medical treatment takes into account the specific needs of women;**

(b) **Ensure full geographical coverage of health services, in particular sexual and reproductive health-care services, and family planning throughout the State party, especially in rural areas and in the overseas territories, with a specific focus on disadvantaged groups of women;**

(c) **Continue to monitor chlordane poisoning in Guadeloupe and Martinique and provide redress to victims;**

(d) **Take the measures necessary to urgently supply the Guadeloupean population with adequate drinking water and sanitation, including by completing the renovation of water and sanitation systems;**

(e) **Ensure that women with disabilities have adequate access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, and train health-care personnel on the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities;**

(f) **Conduct a rigorous, transparent and gender-sensitive impact assessment of nuclear testing on women's health in French Polynesia and accelerate the processing of claims for the compensation of victims.**

#### **Economic empowerment**

39. The Committee welcomes the fourth framework agreement for women's entrepreneurship, signed in 2021, and Act No. 2021-1774 of 24 December 2021 on accelerating economic and professional equality, including by removing barriers in access to loans and other forms of financial credit for women entrepreneurs. It notes the partnerships with networks of associations established to deliver on the women's equality guarantee system, a national system that supports women entrepreneurs by facilitating their access to credit for financing the establishment, acquisition or development of their enterprises, and improve women's participation in entrepreneurial activities, as well as the "One entrepreneur, one mentor" programme of Banque de France providing free mentorship for women entrepreneurs. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lack of information on the long-term impact of these initiatives and their limited duration;

(b) The absence of measures to promote gender-responsive procurement and diversify supply schemes across value chains to expand economic opportunities for women's economic empowerment;

(c) The unavailability of sufficient mechanisms and regulatory provisions to stimulate private sector support for and investment in women's sporting skills and talents, including in preparation for the 2024 Olympic Games;

(d) The lack of research on the impact of the tax share and tax capping policies on single mothers and intrafamily relations among low-income and disadvantaged families across its territories;

(e) The absence of inclusive social benefits, buffers and safety nets for poor, vulnerable and marginalized women.

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

**(a) Assess the impact of its initiatives to strengthen women's participation in entrepreneurial activities and ensure that such initiatives continue and that financial strategies incorporate a comprehensive gender perspective;**

**(b) Continue to strengthen women's economic empowerment by expanding their access to low-interest loans without collateral and other forms of financial credit, as well as to start-up funds and other entrepreneurship opportunities;**

**(c) Adopt policies on gender-responsive procurement and the diversification of supply schemes across value chains to expand economic opportunities for women and promote their economic empowerment;**

**(d) Strengthen mechanisms and regulatory provisions to stimulate private sector support for and investment in women's sporting skills and talents and utilize the preparations for the 2024 Olympic Games to raise the profile of women's sporting potentials and promote private sector investment in women and sports;**

**(e) Undertake research on the impact of the tax share and tax capping policies on single mothers and intrafamily relations among low-income and disadvantaged families across its territories;**

**(f) Strengthen and expand inclusive social benefits, buffers and safety nets for poor, vulnerable and marginalized women.**

**Rural women**

41. The Committee welcomes the extension, in 2019, of the social security financing law to women farmers, ensuring a minimum maternity leave of eight weeks for women farmers and self-employed workers. It also welcomes the publication by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion of a resource guide for local authorities to promote access to employment for women in rural areas. Considering that women represent a quarter of agricultural workers, the Committee is concerned, however, that the women's equality guarantee system does not extend to farms. The Committee acknowledges the recent steps taken on a uniform pension plan as a means to close the rural and urban divide in its overhaul of the pension system. The Committee is concerned, however, that the divide between rural and urban pensions persists and that the pension gap is even worse for women in agriculture.

**42. The Committee recommends that the State party extend the women's equality guarantee system to women wishing to set up or take over a farm; that it pursue, develop and implement comprehensive rural policies with a gender perspective; and that it allocate sufficient long-term resources to ensure the**

**effective social protection and economic empowerment of rural women. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue to work towards closing the rural and urban divide, demonstrating special sensitivity to the manner in which the new pension plan may affect women.**

#### **Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

43. The Committee commends the State party for its progressive policies and the measures it has taken to mitigate the impact of climate change, including the national climate change adaptation plan, and for recognizing the advancement of women as an indispensable factor for peace and social, economic and environmental progress, as reflected in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. However, the Committee notes with concern that additional efforts are required to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and ensure parity in decision-making on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction.

**44. In line 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 ensure that women are equally represented and participate meaningfully in the development of legislation, policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction. It also recommends that the State party integrate a gender perspective into such plans and policies, including its foreign policies, and ensure that women, in particular rural women, women with disabilities, and refugee and migrant women, are consulted in their development and implementation. It further recommends that the State party take measures to increase access to resources, livelihoods and water supplies that withstand climate change for all women, including those in all French overseas territories.**

#### **Disadvantaged groups of women**

45. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a national strategy for the reception and integration of refugees, the third pillar of which provides for assistance to vulnerable refugee women. It notes the training provided to law enforcement officers on the early identification of gender-based vulnerabilities in asylum procedures; the availability of specialized housing for vulnerable asylum-seeking and refugee women; the publication of a guide on asylum for unaccompanied minors; and the availability of information on female genital mutilation as a ground for seeking asylum. It also notes the vulnerabilities plan published by the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories in 2021, which strengthens assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees, and the carrying out of preliminary assessments by agents at facilities for the initial reception of asylum-seekers, which are responsible for reporting persons identified as vulnerable to the French Office for Immigration and Integration and the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. However, the Committee remains concerned about the lack of measures to facilitate the integration into society of asylum-seeking and refugee women in the State party. It is also concerned about the risk of poverty among older women and the way in which quality care is ensured for them, given the country's high life expectancy and the fact that, on average, women live six years longer than men, and that the Constitution prohibits the collection of ethnic and religious statistics.

**46. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen and implement programmes for the integration and social inclusion of refugee and asylum-seeking women, and for their economic empowerment. The Committee also recommends that the State party develop and strengthen programmes to allow older women to age in their homes and community while being provided with the care they need; ensure that the Labour Code applies to women with disabilities**

**and migrant women in the workplace; and carry out a strategic data collection effort that includes ethnic minorities as a way to address the underrepresentation of women in public life.**

#### **Marriage and family relations**

47. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a toll-free hotline for victims of forced marriage. It notes with concern, however, that:

(a) Child and/or forced marriages in the form of customary or religious unions, as well as polygamous unions, still exist in the State party;

(b) Decisions on the legal and physical custody of children, as well as on unsupervised visitations, might be made in cases of parental separation that include domestic violence in ways that have a negative impact on women who are victims of gender-based violence and their children, demonstrating a lack of sensitivity on this issue;

(c) There is a very high rate of poverty among single-parent households headed by women.

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

(a) **Collect and analyse disaggregated data on criminal charges related to child and forced marriage, as well as polygamy, in the French mainland and in the overseas territories of the State party;**

(b) **Establish mechanisms to detect child and forced marriage and de facto unions and ensure the prosecution of those responsible;**

(c) **Support services for women victims of child and/or forced marriage, as well as polygamy, and train social workers and police officers on gender-sensitive protocols for dealing with victims;**

(d) **Ensure that family courts and family mediation take incidents of domestic or other forms of gender-based violence into consideration when deciding on child custody and visitation rights upon the dissolution of a marriage or union, and that capacity-building is provided;**

(e) **Undertake a study of how family law procedures, in particular child support orders and their enforcement, could contribute to countering poverty among single-parent households headed by women.**

#### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

49. **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**

50. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the de facto 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**

51. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments<sup>1</sup> would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a party.

### **Follow-up to the concluding observations**

52. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 12 (a), 22 (c), 38 (f) and 40 (d) above.

### **Preparation of the next report**

53. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the tenth periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

54. 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).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.