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## **National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21\***

**Dominica**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## I. Introduction

1. This Report was prepared by the Commonwealth of Dominica (hereinafter referred to as Dominica) in fulfilment of reporting obligations under the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). It highlights major developments that have occurred since the last review (2019–2024). In particular, the report provides a status update on the implementation of the 86 accepted recommendations from the Third Cycle in 2019, encompassing thematic areas such as climate change, gender equality and social and child protection. Dominica remains steadfast in its commitment to respect, protect and fulfil human rights of all individuals within its territory and under its jurisdiction, and to uphold its international human rights obligations, including participation in the UPR of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

2. During the reporting period, general elections were held on 6 December 2019 and 6 December 2022, respectively, resulting in adjustments to ministerial portfolios and policy direction. The latter election occurred two years ahead of the constitutionally mandated deadline due to significant national and global challenges, and with a view to renew the mandate of the Government of Dominica.

3. Furthermore, on October 2, 2023, Her Excellency Sylvania was sworn-in as the eighth President of Dominica. This appointment is of historic significance, as she is the first woman and indigenous person to assume the role.

4. The period under review has been characterized by significant challenges, including the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017 which left Dominica grappling with extensive infrastructural damage and widespread devastation, a recovery effort that was still underway at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The pandemic further exacerbated economic and social challenges, highlighting the need for robust and innovative recovery strategies and resilience-building efforts. Additionally, in November 2022, the south-east of Dominica experienced torrential rainstorms resulting in damaging floods, thereby further evincing the climate crisis, and emphasizing the urgent need for initiatives for climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience building.

5. Despite these challenges, the Government of Dominica remained resolute in upholding human rights in its response and developmental initiatives. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and in efforts to mitigate the effects of future climatic events, Dominica has embarked on a transformative journey towards climate resilience that gives special attention to gender equality and inclusion. Notable initiatives such as the establishment of SMART Health Centres, resilient hurricane shelters, and the on-going housing revolution programme are collectively driving Dominica towards its goal of becoming the first climate-resilient nation in the world. In addition, considerable strides have been made in the implementation of initiatives that advance gender equality and empowerment, support vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and seniors, safeguard and empower families, and fostering entrepreneurship. In essence, these initiatives embody a multifaceted approach towards advancing human rights, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

## II. Methodology

6. The report was prepared in accordance with the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information for the UPR and Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 (18 June 2007), Resolution 16/21 (25 March 2011) and Decision 17/119 (17 June 2011).

7. Dominica's National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up (NMIRF), a standing inter-ministerial body chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and co-chaired by the Ministry of National Security, coordinated efforts to facilitate the completion of this report.

8. The NMIRF is tasked with the mandate of coordinating and preparing reports to, and engaging with, international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as supporting implementation gaps by initiating, coordinating, and tracking national follow-up and implementation of obligations and recommendations. Therefore, since its establishment in

2019, the NMIRF has functioned to this end, convening periodic working meetings, and hosting regular consultations with the relevant stakeholders in the intervening period of 2019 to present.

9. Further to the adoption of recommendations received from the third cycle in 2019, the NMIRF engaged with government ministries and departments and civil society and non-governmental organizations for discussions on the way forward regarding implementation.

10. In 2023, the NMIRF's efforts intensified in anticipation of the submission of the national report for the Fourth Cycle of the UPR. As such, engagements continued with the relevant stakeholders in order to gather data, updates, and diverse perspectives.

11. Subsequently, in March 2024, a consultation, supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, was convened to facilitate capacity development and scale-up data collection in preparation for the review.

12. From April to June 2024, special consultations were held with the relevant Government ministries and departments as well as the various civil society and non-governmental organizations, and more frequent meetings of the NMIRF were convened, in efforts to finalise the report. These interactions yielded valuable feedback and insights essential for the review process. Therefore, this report reflects a commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement in advancing human rights.

### **III. Developments since the previous review**

#### **A. Constitutional reform and legislations**

13. Dominica is committed to protect and maintain the rights of all citizens, as is enshrined and expounded in the Constitution. The 1978 Constitution of Dominica, Chapter 1, Section 1, provides for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons.

14. The Government of Dominica has continuously ensured that the rights of its citizens remain protected, particularly through legislation. Therefore, up-to-date laws which aim to address and protect the rights of citizens are passed regularly.

15. Since the last UPR review, there have been many amendments to existing legislation as well as the passage of new legislation, including the Suite of Family Laws. The latter<sup>1</sup> refers to a series of legislation aimed to strengthen legal protections for families and enhance the welfare of children and parents. Specifically, the Suite of Family Laws is intended to update the current legislation, redefine how the maintenance of children is managed by the Courts, make provision for childcare services and institutions, create legal visibility and rights for persons in cohabitating relationships, offer protection against domestic violence to all parties and many other changes that are considered modern and forward thinking. With the current national and international focus on gender issues, these laws significantly contribute to closing gaps, particularly centred on the issues of cohabitation, definition of spouse and spousal support, domestic violence and the protections offered by the law.

16. In April 2023, the Government of Dominica passed the following Suite of Family Laws in line with international human rights conventions:

- Status of Children Act No. 10 of 2023.
- Maintenance of Children Act No. 11 of 2023.
- Children (Care and Adoption) Act No. 12 of 2023.
- Maintenance Act No. 13 of 2023.
- Domestic Violence Act No. 14 of 2023.

17. The enactment of these laws exemplifies an investment in gender by promoting fair and balanced family dynamics and ensuring that all children receive the care and support they deserve, irrespective of gender or background.

18. Additionally, following a 26-year gap, a consolidated and revised version of all the Laws of Dominica from 1990 to January 2017 was made available to the public as of December 7, 2020. Considering the significant time that elapsed since the last revision in 1990, the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>2</sup> established a law commission office in 2015 to undertake a comprehensive law revision. This effort has modernized the national legal framework, ensuring adequate reflection of contemporary standards and attention to current issues. The updated legal corpus strengthens the national human rights framework by providing clearer, more accessible, and more relevant laws, thereby enhancing the protection and promotion of human rights across Dominica. Further to this work, the focus shifted to a three-year First Law Revision Supplement which incorporates all laws from January 1, 2017-2020.

19. The Government of Dominica has passed three amendments to enhance its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CFT) legal framework in alignment with regional and international standards. These are balanced with the commitment to uphold human rights, ensuring that security measures do not compromise the fundamental freedoms and dignity of individuals. The Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism Amendment is in line with these critical laws: the Proceeds of Crime Amendment Act, and the Money Laundering Prevention Amendment Act. Together, these laws aim to combat drug and sex trafficking, suppress financial crimes, and deprive criminals of the ability to use illicit funds, thereby enhancing national and international security and expanding enforcement agencies' abilities to combat terrorism financing. Dominica's notable progress in strengthening its AML/CFT framework and improving compliance with regional and international standards was underscored in the outcome of the Financial Action Task Force (FAFT) review conducted in 2022.

## **B. International human rights instruments**

20. Dominica acceded to both the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on 13 May 2019. As a result, Dominica is presently state party to seven out of nine of the core international human rights instruments.

21. In the period under review, Dominica also ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (13 May 2019), Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (18 Oct 2019), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (30 June 2022) and Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) (22 April 2024), and signed the Samoa Agreement (28 February 2024).

## **C. Engagement with regional and international human rights mechanisms**

22. Dominica continues to engage with regional and international mechanism and bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights, through participation in the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) among several others.

23. In June 2022, Dominica received the Rapporteur on the Rights of Older Persons and on the Rights of People of African Descent and against Racial Discrimination, as well as Country Rapporteur for Dominica of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for the body's first promotional visit to Dominica. This visit was conducted with the purpose of strengthening and deepening collaboration as well as promoting Inter-American human rights standards and collecting information on the State's human rights policies.

24. In March 2020, Dominica appeared before the Human Rights Committee for its first review of the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) since ratification of the treaty in 1993.

25. Dominica continues its efforts to submit outstanding UN human rights treaty body reports.

## D. Civil society

26. The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica remains committed to actively engage with civil society in the promotion of human rights. Two significant milestones underscore this commitment. Firstly, the Cabinet appointed the National Commission of Persons with Disabilities in 2022 with the primary objective of making recommendations to the Government on policies and laws aimed at enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities. Secondly, the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Senior Citizen Issues was formed in 2023 with the aim to provide policy and legislative recommendations to support enhanced care and protection for Dominica's aging population. These initiatives reflect the Government's dedication to fostering inclusivity and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups within society.

## IV. Promotion and protection of human rights in Dominica

### A. Acceptance of international norms

#### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.2, 104.5, 104.16, 104.17)**

27. Refer to paragraphs 20 and 21.

28. Dominica continues to take full advantage of technical and other assistance made available by regional and international bodies with a view to support the fulfilment of national, regional and international human rights commitments.

29. In 2024, the Government benefited from technical assistance provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat through a working session for the NMIRF which provided guidance and support towards the completion of the national report for the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of the UPR and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report. Additionally, in 2023, the Government of Dominica participated in the “Caribbean Regional Capacity-Building Workshop on Treaty Body Reporting and on the Strengthening of NMIRFs”, organized by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with the Government of Barbados.

#### **Partial implementation of recommendations (104.1, 104.10, 104.11, 104.12, 104.13, 104.14, 104.15, 104.18, 104.19)**

30. Efforts are on-going towards the ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), with active engagement with external bodies for technical support and capacity development. In 2019, a High-Level Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI) delegation visited the Dominica to exchange with Government officials and other relevant stakeholders. During that visit, the CTI delegation also visited the Dominica State Prison and hosted a full-day seminar on UNCAT for 20 participants from the relevant ministries and departments. Dominica holds a firm anti-torture, anti-inhumane and anti-cruelty stance and has held this position from its very inception as a free state and recognizes that these principles are encoded in the Constitution.

### B. National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF)

#### **Full implementation of recommendation (104.27)**

31. In 2019, the Government of Dominica established the NMIRF by a Cabinet decision.

32. The NMIRF operates as a standing inter-ministerial structure, housed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its members consist of Permanent Secretaries and designated Focal Points from key Ministries, including Foreign Affairs, National Security, Health,

Social Services, Gender, Education, Environment, Youth, Kalinago Upliftment and Finance. The co-chairs of the NMIRF are representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Security. The structure facilitates coordination and collaboration among government entities to implement, report, and follow up on international and regional human rights mechanisms effectively.

33. The NMIRF convenes periodically to discuss updates, progress, challenges, and monitoring and evaluation activities in fulfilment of its mandate.

### **C. Cooperation with treaty bodies and other international mechanisms and institutions**

#### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.23, 104.24, 104.25)**

34. Refer to paragraphs 28 and 29.

#### **Partial implementation of recommendations (104.22, 104.26)**

35. Dominica continues to face challenges with respect to fully meeting its reporting obligations under the various international human rights instruments due to limited resources and capacity. However, the Government is seeking to remedy this challenge through active engagement with international bodies for technical support and capacity building.

36. Specifically, with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat, advanced efforts are underway for the submission of the CEDAW and the finalization of the Common Core Document.

37. Priority is being given to completion of the report for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

### **D. Cooperation with international organisations, inter-state agencies and development assistance, institutions and policies**

#### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.55, 104.58, 104.59, 104.61, 104.62, 104.63, 104.64, 104.65, 104.66, 104.67)**

38. Given that Dominica is one of the most vulnerable countries globally to climate change and climate related hazards<sup>3</sup>, the Government continues to prioritize the enhancement of climate resilience and comprehensively addressing the impacts of climate change across all sectors, in a manner that upholds and promotes human rights.

39. Following the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017, the Government committed to rebuild Dominica as the First Climate Resilient Nation in the World<sup>4</sup> in a quest to not only recover from the disaster, but build back better, thereby ensuring resilience against future shocks.

40. This vision to become the first climate resilient nation in the world is captured in the National Resilience Development Strategy (NRDS) 2030,<sup>5</sup> a multi-sectoral policy document, outlining Government priorities in forty-three (43) targets, for the pursuit of sustainable economic progress amidst global challenges, particularly climate change. This strategic framework is marked by three main pillars: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), building the first climate resilient country in the world vision and people-centred development. It builds on a previously existing policies and strategies, including the Growth and Social Protection Strategy (2014-2018), the Climate Change Adaptation Policy 2001, and the Low Carbon Climate Resilience Development Strategy 2018, by integrating climate resilience and disaster risk management into the National Growth and Development Planning Framework.

41. Aligned to the NRDS is the Comprehensive Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP) 2030 which was approved by Government in 2020 and operationalises the NRDS.

This plan translates the vision of becoming the first climate resilient nation and the NRDS, into initiatives and activities. Specifically, the CRRP converts the forty-three (43) targets contained in the NRDS, into twenty (20) specific climate resilience targets framed within six (6) major results areas:

- Strong communities;
- Robust economy;
- Well planned and durable infrastructure;
- Enhanced collective consciousness;
- Strengthened institutional systems; and,
- Protected and sustainably leveraged natural and other unique assets.

42. Notably, the updated national climate resilience policy framework takes a strong gender transformative and inclusive approach which is aligned to the SDGs, ensuring that no one is left behind. This approach recognizes the need to address social and economic differences between men and women, boys and girls, as well as the challenges faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to guarantee fair and intended results and protect the rights of marginalized individuals.

43. The Government of Dominica also recognises that the vision of climate resilience cannot be achieved alone, and requires a collaborative approach, including support from partners in the international community. Therefore, in the period under review Dominica has participated in numerous regional and international convenings that seek to address climate change and its impacts, and bring to light the concerns and needs of the most vulnerable states, particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Additionally, in March 2023, Dominica hosted a Development Partners Coordination Meeting which brought together development partners, government officials and non-government stakeholders. This Meeting served as a forum for dialogue on coordination of development assistance to Dominica for the achievement of its climate resilience goals.

44. The Climate Resilience Execution Agency of Dominica (CREAD), which operated over a 5-year period (2018 to 2023), played a fundamental role in post-Hurricane Maria recovery and advancing the vision of becoming the first climate resilient nation, through its leadership and coordination of strategic initiatives across sectors in Dominica.

45. CREAD's activities were guided by the CRRP, focusing on areas such as providing support and advice to Ministries, developing and upgrading legal and institutional frameworks, and contributing to the execution of initiatives and projects contained in the CRRP. The agency facilitated the integration of resilience into strategic plans, policies, and regulations of government ministries, ensuring alignment with CRRP targets. Additionally, CREAD played a key role in developing a resilience results framework template for strategic plans and securing funding for initiatives such as the climate finance proposal writing training and electronic monitoring and evaluation framework development. In addition to policy and institutional support, CREAD was actively involved in executing projects within the CRRP, ranging from supporting the MSME sector in business planning to launch innovative initiatives like the Flexible Hurricane Protection (FHP) insurance product and the Community Emergency Readiness Initiative (CERI). Through these efforts, CREAD has significantly contributed to Dominica's progress towards becoming a climate-resilient nation, fostering sustainable development and enhancing the well-being of its citizens. More specifically, some of CREAD's achievements include:

- The Project – Enhancing Smart Sustainable Agriculture and Agro-processing for Climate Resilience in Dominica, funded by the Government of Italy, aims to support the sustainable and integrated management of resources, in particular water. It offers gender responsive capacity-strengthening programs in climate-smart agriculture to empower vegetable farmers in the Morne Prosper community, enabling them to tackle climate-related challenges and improve food and water security. Gender sensitive stakeholder engagement is a core component, ensuring that the project aligns with local needs and priorities.

- The successful completion and handover of the Roseau/Pottersville Hazard Management Manual provides strategic direction to manage climatic and other risks in Roseau and the adjoining community of Pottersville. Additionally, the Roseau Risk Management & Resilience Strategy, commissioned by CREAD, with resources from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), plays a pivotal role in assisting the Local Government Division and the Roseau City Council.
- The Community Emergency Readiness Initiative (CERI) sought to build capacity and develop or revitalize community disaster management committees, plans, and ensuring the requisite emergency equipment and supplies to ensure 15 days autonomy before each hurricane season. This initiative aimed to build community resilience and ensure adequate support for vulnerable persons during and post disasters. One of the important actions under the CERI initiative was the carrying out of a vulnerability study which aimed to identify the most vulnerable communities and categorize them into four distinct groups, based on their scores out of 100. This study was conducted in 41 villages across Dominica and identified 13 communities as 'most vulnerable,' 29 as 'more vulnerable,' 11 as 'vulnerable,' and 14 as 'least vulnerable.'

46. With the support of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economic Development, Climate Resilience and Social Security among others, CREAD also established several partnerships which served to remedy the effects of Hurricane Maria with particular attention to vulnerable groupings, as well as to mobilise technical support and resources to advance Dominica climate resilience ambitions.

47. In December 2023, CREAD's mandate concluded, and its functions and responsibilities were integrated into the Ministry of Finance, through the establishment of the Resilience Unit, to continue Dominica's inclusive efforts towards a climate resilience Dominica.

48. Substantial work has been undertaken to address the linkages between climate change and gender, recognizing the crucial need to integrate gender perspectives in climate action to ensure that the unique vulnerabilities, needs, and contributions of women and men are effectively addressed. For example, through the EnGenDER project funded by the governments of the United Kingdom and Canada and carried out by UNDP and UN Women, initiatives have been implemented to ensure that responses to climate change and disaster risk reduction are guided by an analysis of gender inequalities during crises. The overarching goal of the project is to support improved climate resilience for women, girls, other vulnerable populations and future generations in Dominica. Key achievements consistent with national goals include but are not limited to: (i) Review of the Draft National Gender Policy to ensure conformity with Dominica climate resilience objectives, (ii) the development of the draft Nationally Determined Contributions Gender Mainstreaming Roadmap and (iii) conducting a knowledge exchange for white bait or "titiwi" fishers aimed at empowering them with the knowledge and skills to make the value chain more sustainable and appealing as a market and livelihood option for future generations.

## **E. Constitutional and legislative framework**

### **Full implementation of recommendations**

**(104.29, 104.122, 104.81, 104.95, 104.105, 104.107, 104.109, 104.130)**

49. The legislative framework of Dominica is in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In April 2023, Dominica passed several bills in Parliament to improve the lives and prospects of children including: (i) Children Care and Adoption Act no. 12 of 2023, (ii) Maintenance of Children Act no. 11 of 2023, (iii) Status of Children Act no. 10 of 2023 and (iv) Maintenance Act no. 13 of 2023.

50. The Children (Care and Adoption) Act 2023 serves two primary purposes: protecting children from abuse and neglect and facilitating adoption when it is in the child's best interest. Administered by the Minister, with the support of the Director of Social Services, an Advisory Committee and an Adoption Committee, the Act emphasizes partnerships with agencies or corporations to ensure children's welfare. The Act identifies various scenarios



where a child may need protection, ensuring comprehensive coverage. Additionally, the Act prioritizes the child's best interests, considering factors such as age, needs, views, and security. Investigation and assessment procedures are outlined, focusing on child safety and well-being. Options for permanency plans, including adoption, foster care, or returning to parents, are detailed, ensuring a child-centric approach.

51. The Status of Children Act 2023 eliminates the concept of "illegitimate" children, ensuring equality among all offspring. It establishes paternity criteria and succession rights, guided by the best interests of the child. Paternity is attributed to a man under various circumstances, including marriage or cohabitation with the mother before birth, acknowledgment of paternity, or court determination. The Act ensures fair distribution of assets among children, regardless of marital status, emphasizing inclusivity and fairness in succession matters.

52. The Government of Dominica remains committed to the principles of the CRC to promote the best interests of the child, survival, and development. As part of a broader initiative to establish a new centre to streamline and enhance the quality and efficiency of all social services, in 2023, the Government established a Department of Social Services which includes specialized units focused on specific areas including gender, child protection, probation and juvenile justice, counselling and social welfare. Significantly, the specialized unit has a renewed mandate aimed at actively working towards the implementation of these Acts.

53. In 2013, the Dominica ratified the Palermo Protocol, an agreement among nations to suppress and punish those who traffic children and women, and consequently enacted the Transnational Organized Crime (Prevention and Control) Act to suppress and punish such traffickers. In addition, Dominica's Sexual Offences Act which governs sexual offences, including sexual interference with children, criminalises those who would involve children in any sexual acts, including child pornography.

54. The age of consent for any sexual relations is sixteen (16). The Sexual Offences Act prohibits commercial sexual exploitation of children for prostitution, and related activity may be prosecuted under laws against prostitution or trafficking. The said law protects all persons from "unlawful sexual connection", rape, procurement for prostitution, and incest. The maximum sentence for sexual intercourse with a person younger than 14 is 25 years in prison.

55. Regarding combatting sexual violence against women and children and strengthening support mechanisms for survivors of child abuse, neglect and domestic violence, a Child Protection Unit as part of the Department of Social Services supports advocacy and raises awareness of child abuse and child protection. Since then, significant initiatives have been established. In May 2024, the Ministry of Social Services launched a Communication Campaign to increase the visibility of the work of the Department and created educational materials in various languages, including French, Mandarin, and Spanish, to ensure inclusive messaging among migrant communities. The Wrap Around Program (WAP) focuses on juvenile rehabilitation, aiming to improve self-esteem and provide counselling. The Department also continues to conduct regular community outreach to sensitize frontline service providers, including the police, education, and health sectors, on key issues of child abuse, domestic violence, and juvenile justice. One of the objectives of these sensitization sessions is to strengthen the protocol for reporting among key stakeholders.

56. The Government acknowledges the significant risks faced by children exposed to domestic violence or abuse, including long-term physical and mental health issues and a potential for perpetuating violence in future relationships. Tackling domestic violence is therefore recognized as crucial for preserving family stability, harmony, and overall societal resilience. Directly aligned with CEDAW, Dominica also passed the Domestic Violence Act 2023. Through the Domestic Violence Act 2023, the definition of domestic violence has been expanded, granting new rights such as children and dependents applying for court protection orders. The act emphasizes the prohibition of domestic violence and ensures victims have access to police assistance, legal protections, and support services. Victims, including adults in domestic relationships, children, and dependents relying on either the victim or the accused, have rights to police protection, medical care, confidentiality, counselling and other

services. The Act prioritizes victim safety, legal recourse against perpetrators, and access to support services for those affected by domestic violence.

57. Significant strides have been made in combatting violence against women and children in Dominica. In 2020, the Government established a Social Assistance program for survivors of domestic violence who required a safe space away from their perpetrators as well as essential supplies. Since its inception, the program has assisted over 50 families. Also, in alignment with the Domestic Violence Act of 2023, two social workers have also been placed within the Bureau of Gender Affairs to provide direct support to survivors of gender-based violence.

58. Furthermore, to enhance the response and understanding of the police, the Bureau of Gender Affairs, through the Build Back Equal project, conducted training sessions for sessions for police officers on the provisions of the new Domestic Violence Act. Through this training, officers are better equipped to identify and address instances of domestic violence more effectively. There are also designated police officers for child abuse and domestic violence matters, and they are continuously trained and assigned to deal with these issues.

#### **Partial implementation of recommendations (104.90, 104.138)**

59. The Education Act guarantees the right to education for all compulsory school age children i.e. from 5 to 16 years of age, including children with special needs.

60. The Act stipulates that special education programmes are to be provided for students of compulsory school age whom ‘by virtue of intellectual, communicative, behavioural, physical or multiple exceptionalities are in need of special education’, and that these programmes may take the form of an individual education plan tailored to the specific needs of the students. Therefore, in the education system, there are specialized schools that cater exclusively for students with special needs. As well, special needs students are integrated into mainstream schools.

61. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has a long-established Special Education Unit that continues to provide learning support for students with disabilities. However, the Government recognizes that more needs to be done to support these students. Therefore, with this acknowledgement, plans underway for the creation of a curriculum for special needs students, as part of the new Education Sector Plan, launched in 2020.

62. Furthermore, public pronouncements by the Prime Minister mandate that all public buildings and infrastructure should be made accessible for individuals with disabilities. The Building Regulations 2022 provides accessibility guidelines for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) which includes barrier free access for public and institutional buildings. Also, the Ministry of Education mandates that all newly constructed schools include ramps and washroom facilities for PWD.

## **F. Right to an adequate standard of living, right to work, health, housing, justice, social security and education**

### **Full implementation of recommendations**

#### **Right to health (Recommendations – 104.86, 104.87, 104.88)**

63. According to the Human Development Index 2020, Dominica has the highest life expectancy in the Caribbean and records the highest number of centenarians per capita globally. With a life expectancy at birth of 78.2 years, this statistic reflects positively on the quality of life for the country's population.

64. The Government of Dominica is committed to achieving universal health care for all its citizens with access to primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

65. Primary care services are delivered through a network of forty-nine (49) health centres across seven (7) districts. These services include but are not limited to immunization, maternal and child health care, cancer screenings, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) checks, which are accessible free of charge to all, including migrants.

66. At primary health care facilities, there are specialised clinics for older persons and to facilitate quality service without lengthy waiting periods. Also, within the rural communities, primary health care practitioners collaborate with local community persons to identify older persons who may be unable to visit the health care centres who are then visited regularly by the health practitioners at no cost.

67. The Government is focused on constructing 12 new SMART health centres, 6 of which have already been commissioned. This initiative expands access to healthcare for Persons with Disabilities. These centres are designed to integrate sustainable energy solutions, ensuring continuity of services during emergencies and enhancing overall healthcare delivery.

68. Secondary and tertiary healthcare are accessible and have been enhanced, particularly with on-going efforts to upgrade two hospitals, and the completion of the new state-of-the-art national hospital, the Dominica China Friendship Hospital in 2022. The new national hospital provides the population with access to a variety of specialized health services. Its services are also free of charge for persons from infant to 18 years and age 60 and above.

69. In June 2024, the Ministry of Health, Wellness, and Social Services, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched the comprehensive healthcare standards for quality healthcare services specifically designed for adolescents, making Dominica the first country in the region to adopt these standards. These standards aim to provide equitable, respectful, and comprehensive healthcare services covering physical, mental, and social health aspects for adolescents, with a focus on bridging gaps in healthcare delivery and preventing non-communicable diseases.

70. In 2023, a national strategic plan for health was developed with the support of the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), with a focus on enhancing the healthcare workforce, strengthening the institutional framework, providing responsive health services, supporting vulnerable groups, and managing diseases through early detection and prevention.

71. As part of efforts to promote increased access to the health insurance for mothers and children, in April 2017, the Government facilitated the introduction of a pilot Health National Insurance Programme of the Dominica Social Security (DSS) targeting mothers and expectant mothers aged 35 and under and children three years and under. The programme seeks to assist in relieving the burdens that mothers and mothers-to-be encounter in financing their healthcare needs and that of their children.

### **Right to education (Recommendations – 104.91, 104.37)**

72. The Government of Dominica recognises education as a crucial avenue for improving the wellbeing and life chances of its population. This commitment is underscored by the Government's yearly allocation of approximately 5% of its total GDP to education in the years 2019 to 2022, surpassing the global average of 4.5%. By investing in education, the Government acknowledges the significant role it plays in human development and, consequently, contributes to the overall advancement of national development.

73. Per the Education Act, education in Dominica is compulsory for all students age 5 to 16 and is offered free of charge through public schools. While early childhood and tertiary education are highly encouraged, they are not mandatory for Dominican children and adolescents.

74. For the 2023-24 school year, a total of 5,496 students enrolled in primary schools including 2,735 males and 2,761 females, and 4,400 students enrolled in secondary schools, including 2,267 males and 2,133 females.

75. In efforts to improve the overall quality and efficiency of the education sector, in 2020, the Ministry of Education launched the Education Sector Plan of the Commonwealth of

Dominica 2020-2025. This plan outlines the Ministry of Education's mission, vision, and overall direction for Dominica's education sector over the medium term and was designed with a particular focus on gender disparity and building climate resilience.

76. To improve access and equity to education, the Government has in place a school safety net programme which includes focus on special needs education, cash transfers, school grants, uniform and text-books provisions, and school feeding.

77. Regarding strengthening education access for Kalinago children, the Government through the Ministry of Kalinago Upliftment with support from international partners is currently constructing the Sineku Primary School which will serve as one of the four government primary schools specifically for the children in the Kalinago territory. There have also been several scholarships allocated for Kalinago students. In 2024, 20 university scholarships were allocated for Kalinago students to study in China and Cuba.

78. Hurricane Maria significantly impacted schools in Dominica in 2017, with 83% of educational facilities reporting damage of varying degrees, and 100% of all students i.e. 13,575 students being affected. As part of the process to restore educational services and build back better, the Government sought to reconstruct Smart Schools with the support of various bilateral partners including the Governments of Canada and China.

79. In May 2022, with support of the Canadian Government and the Caribbean Development Bank, three primary schools were commissioned. All three were developed with climate-resilient infrastructure, compliance with safety standards, and features for Persons with Disabilities. These schools also incorporate renewable energy technologies and have disaster risk reduction management plans.

80. Dominica has been pursuing the incorporation and use of technology in education and in classrooms as a means of remodelling classroom learning and enhancing education outcomes. Following Hurricane Maria, the Ministry of Education sought to replace equipment destroyed and upgrade computer labs to enhance teaching and learning and to meet the standards for online assessment. Therefore, presently every primary and secondary schools in Dominica have access to computers and devices available for teaching and learning, including online learning.

**Right to justice  
(Recommendation – 104.78)**

81. Concerning the right to justice, the Ministry of National Security and Home Affairs continues to take critical steps to ensure access to justice within a reasonable timeframe, thereby alleviating the backlog of cases. These measures have included the implementation of the 2019 decision of Government to expand the Dominica Police Force from 500 to 600 officers as well as the provision of regular and continuous training to prosecutors in key areas such as criminal law. An additional magistrate has also been hired to support more timely handling of court cases, and the hiring of a Registrar to support administration in the Magistrate's Courts is under consideration.

82. To further complement efforts to support the proper dispensation of justice, \$200,000.00 was invested in the rehabilitation of the Magistrate Courts, resulting in the creation of two additional courtrooms in mid-2022. Also, a judge specifically dealing with caveats will soon be hired to address land ownership and land tenure issues, allowing other judges to focus on other matters. Furthermore, discussions are on-going to establish a Paper Committal Unit which will remove the need for pre-trials in certain cases and hasten justice in line with human rights.

83. Dominica is also a beneficiary country to the on-going European Union (EU) funded Regional Justice Project ("PACE"– Partnership of the Caribbean and European Union on Justice), launched in 2023. The project aims to reduce current and prevent future backlogs of criminal justice cases in Caribbean countries with integrated software, hardware, training and capacity development, procedural reforms and community awareness interventions to address the causes of the backlog.

**Right to an adequate standard of living and right to work  
(Recommendations – 104.56, 104.60, 104.68, 104.69, 104.82, 104.83, 104.85, 104.89,  
104.92, 104.140)**

84. The Government's emphasis on social protection has been designed to promote equity, build resilience, and enable opportunities for the most vulnerable by providing them with benefits and services such as non-contributory social assistance or social safety nets (SSN), active labour market programs, social care services and contributory social insurance. This approach to social protection is not only geared at reducing poverty, but the long-term transformation towards more adaptive and resilient households and society.

85. Currently, Dominica has over thirty safety net programmes, including school feeding programmes, in-kind assistance, housing assistance and labour market programmes.<sup>6</sup> The Public Assistance Programme (PAP) is the largest programme, accounting for 18.7% of total assistance expenditures. The World Bank reported that the generosity of PAP and Social Pension benefits is greater than the average in Latin America and the Caribbean. A notable recent inclusion was Government's introduction of the payment of non-contributory pension to persons aged 70 and over, effective January 2023.

86. The right to work and the right to social protection continue to be upheld and have been largely supported by the National Employment Programme (NEP) and several other Social Protection Programmes (SPPs) which were maintained post Maria and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The country's NEP offers internships, community employment, and education mentorship.

87. Also, two major policy frameworks were developed i.e. the National Resilience and Development Strategy (NRDS) 2030 and the Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP) 2030. The climate resilience vision is a developmental paradigm which seeks to climate proof (to be resilient against the destructive impacts of extreme weather events) the key pillars of national policy which are economic diversification, sustained sustainable and inclusive growth, employment creation and revenue generation, social development, social protection and poverty reduction, environmental management, and cultural preservation.

88. Dominica is one of the first countries in the Caribbean to indicate that it will develop a shock responsive social protection policy and strategy that links social protection to disaster risk management. Such a strategy will ensure that social protection systems are adaptive and contribute to improved resilience with focus placed on sound institutions, delivery, and resourcing.

89. To build resilience in the sector, the Government through its Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the USD 25 million World Bank funded, Dominica Emergency Agriculture Livelihoods Climate Resilience Project. This project has provided inputs (including fertilizers, materials for building greenhouses, provision of water tanks to farmers to allow for and promote rainwater harvesting etc.), quality seeds and planting materials of suitable crop varieties to farmers and has promoted the involvement of rural youth and women in agriculture. The project also provides technical assistance, and investment in small mechanization tools and advanced technologies which have already begun to enhance production and productivity in the sector.

90. Some programmes and projects that are being implemented or have been recently completed to support food security, rural developments, jobs and advance the country's growth prospects include (i) the national backyard gardening programme, supported by the Dominica-China Modern Agricultural Centre which has the dual objectives of supporting national beautification and good security with the planting of vegetables, horticultural produce, and fruit-trees. Over the period January 2020 to May 2021, over 490,000 high-quality vegetable seedlings, 17,768 flower seedlings and 2,289 fruit trees were propagated, (ii) distributing citrus plants and trees to backyard farmers, schools, and small subsistence farmers. In 2020 for example, a total of 4235 citrus plants were distributed and 60 acres of farmland was established among 111 farmers and (iii) providing small-scale farmers with access to affordable inputs, quality seeds and planting materials of suitable crop varieties. This initiative has also contributed to bringing rural youth and women into agriculture as well as enhancing production and productivity.

**Right to adequate housing  
(Recommendation 104.57)**

91. Access to housing is a key priority for the Government, aligning with human rights, poverty reduction, and social protection. Recognizing the right to housing, several initiatives have been undertaken to increase housing access for Dominicans.

92. Post-Hurricane Maria, the Government set a goal of building 5,000 resilient homes and has currently achieved 39% of this target. Under the Housing Recovery Project, 231 homes have already been delivered. Additionally, 336 housing units were provided to residents whose communities were destroyed by Tropical Storm Erika in 2015. Within the overall mandate of building a sustainable, resilient, Dominica, 113 pre-cast concrete sustainable homes to families have been delivered under the overarching Sustainable Housing Solutions initiative.

93. Under the Modern Resilient Development Housing program, 951 families have already been housed through renovation, labour, and reconstruction efforts. Significant repairs were completed at no cost to beneficiaries, including single female-headed households. Importantly, efforts have been geared towards installing ramps, railings, and other assistive features to support persons with disabilities and the elderly in accessing these homes.

94. To further support ownership, especially among vulnerable families and those living in poverty, housing grants of up to XCD\$10,000 have been provided to individuals under 40 years of age to improve youth homeownership, with 52% of beneficiaries being female.

95. Within the Kalinago Territory, 36 out of 50 resilient homes were delivered to indigenous families, strengthening homeownership within the indigenous population. This project also prioritized the preservation of cultural heritage through architectural designs.

96. The Government of Dominica, via the Ministry of Housing, continues to participate in regional and international forums to support a climate-resilient agenda and to strengthen gender-responsive urban planning. Since 2020, with the aim of increasing land and housing ownership for vulnerable families, the Government made a policy decision to decrease land title fees and regularize squatters. Through various projects, 142 beneficiaries have received government support to remedy land tenure issues.

**G. Women (domestic violence, advancement, discrimination, participation in political life)**

**Full implementation of recommendations**

**(104.93, 104.94, 104.96, 104.97, 104.98, 104.99, 104.100, 104.101, 104.102, 104.104, 104.106, 104.107, 104.108, 104.111, 104.113, 104.115, 104.116, 104.117, 104.118, 104.120)**

97. As per the national census 2011, Dominica's population is 49% female and 51% male.

98. The Government of the Dominica fully participated in the OECS Family Law and the Domestic Violence Legislative Reform Project, following which, Dominica passed the Domestic Violence Act, 2023 as part of its Portfolio of Family Laws. The Act covers physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and cyber abuse, aiming to safeguard and empower families, including children, and strengthen society's responses to domestic and gender-based violence.

99. In December 2023, the Government hosted a three-day workshop for police and other frontline service providers on how to apply the new Domestic Violence Act, 2023. Social workers and other NGOs have been trained on these laws, so they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in providing support to survivors.

100. A study completed in 2019 by the Bureau of Gender Affairs titled "Attitudes and Beliefs about Domestic Violence: Results from Four Focus Group Discussions" informed the Government on the public's knowledge and perception of gender-based violence. Plain

language educational materials have been created to increase the public's awareness of this new law - their rights and responsibilities.

101. The introduction of legal aid has helped simplify the process of taking domestic violence matters to court. Funds have been allocated to provide refuge and/or safe accommodation and integrated services for women exposed to domestic violence in all its forms. It has a temporary protocol in place and is working to create an enduring solution. With the updated Domestic Violence Act, the Government through the Bureau of Gender Affairs, worked to increase awareness of the Act and its benefits for survivors of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a serious violation of human rights and can impede national development in many intricate ways. The Domestic Violence Act No. 14 of 2024 is a critical piece of legislation aimed at curbing domestic violence and ensuring the safety of individuals and families. This act firmly prohibits any behaviour that constitutes domestic violence and lays out clear guidelines for law enforcement officers to inform victims of their rights and take necessary actions, including arresting suspects without warrants when required. Notably, it also includes provisions specifically designed to safeguard children who may find themselves in police custody. More specifically, this updated law allows an adult victim to request a protection order, or, if unable, a police officer, the Director of Social Services, or an assigned officer (with the victim's consent) can do so on their behalf. For child victims or those with disabilities, the application can be made by a parent figure, any adult in their household, or the Director of Social Services. To support implementation of the recently enacted Domestic Violence Act, two permanent positions of social workers have been added to the organizational structure of the Bureau of Gender Affairs. These social workers are qualified and equipped to provide psychosocial support to clients of domestic violence, female-headed households in dysfunctional situations, and men who need support. To complement this work, in 2024, the Government launched a project supported by the IRC facility to develop a National Domestic Violence Action Plan to ensure that frontline service providers and key stakeholders – such as the police, the judiciary, social workers, community workers, and NGOs – are fully aware of the provisions of the new law and understand the critical roles they play in its implementation and in raising awareness. The goal is to foster seamless collaboration among all service providers to support survivors efficiently and compassionately.

102. Significant work has been done to raise awareness and increase understanding of gender-based violence. Over 5,000 Dominicans have been sensitized on the issue between 2019 and 2024 through various projects, including the Build Back Equal project funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by UN Women and UNFPA, as well as the EnGenDER project funded by the UK government and implemented by UNDP and other UN agencies in partnership with the Government of Dominica. Unique methods have been used to engage various groups, including radio discussions, webinars, family fun days, song competitions, and an audio docu-series.

103. In 2006, the Dominica was one of the first Caribbean nations to formally implement a national Gender Policy and Action Plan. The draft updated National Gender Policy has undergone various revisions, with a recent special focus on the nexus between climate change and gender.

104. In Dominica, a significant investment in women is evident with 36.8% of the Cabinet and 37.5% of Parliament being women. Approximately 70% of Permanent Secretaries are women. The Cabinet Secretary and the Financial Secretary are also women. Women in Dominica have the right and have had opportunities to represent the Government at international levels and to participate in the work of international organizations on equal terms with men. Over the years, women within and outside the Foreign Service have been appointed to various levels of diplomatic and consular posts.

105. Dominican women have held top positions in various regional and international organisations, including: PAHO, the Commonwealth, International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Maritime University, International Maritime Organization (IMO).

106. Also, in July 2024, the Kalinago Territory elected its first female Kalinago chief.

107. Over the past five years, Dominica has made substantial progress in women's economic empowerment by providing targeted support and training. Women have been

trained in climate-smart agriculture, equipping them with the necessary tools and equipment to enhance their productivity and resilience especially in the agricultural sector. Additionally, the Government has offered livelihood training and connected rural women with essential business services to help them establish and grow their enterprises. These initiatives have not only improved the economic status of women but also contributed to their overall empowerment, fostering self-sufficiency and boosting the local economy. By focusing on rural women, the Government of Dominica ensures that the benefits of these programs reach the most marginalized and vulnerable, thereby promoting inclusive growth and sustainable development.

## **H. Children (Protection, alternative care, national plans of action)**

### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.129, 104.130)**

108. The Family Suite of Laws protects women, men, and children facing violence, or needing maintenance (financial support), and ensure children's physical, emotional, financial and inheritance rights are protected. These laws require reporting of any abuse of women, men or children.

109. The Ministry of Health, Wellness and Social Services via the Department of Social Services embarked on an exercise to sensitize members of the public on matters related to the care and protection of children. The passage of the Suite of Family Laws required a shift from direct engagement with members of the public to interfacing with health officials with a view to disseminate information on the Children (Care and Adoption) Act. Emphasis was placed on their role in the care and protection of children based on the provisions of the Act and to attend to other matters pertaining to children. The Department therefore commenced a series of dialogue with health practitioners in the various health districts. To date 95 health professionals, in four health districts have been engaged in 2024.

### **Partial implementation of recommendations (104. 84, 104.123)**

110. The Department of Social Services is in the process of engaging partners to support the development of a road map for implementation of a national action plan on child sexual abuse.

## **I. Indigenous people – The Kalinago**

### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.133, 104.134)**

111. Dominica is the only Caribbean Island with a remaining population of pre-Colombian Carib Indians, known as the Kalinago. The majority of this indigenous population – about 2,000 persons – live in a series of small rural settlements that make up the Kalinago Territory on the north-eastern coast of the island.

112. The Government continues to adopt a people-centred approach to development to improve the quality of life of all Dominicans. Given the unique needs of the Kalinagos, the Government continues to ensure that they are part of the development dialogue and that they are integrated within the country's development while at the same time, considering their own unique development needs and thrusts. The Government of Dominica has ratified the ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To this end, the Government and the Kalinago community has been engaging in several initiatives as part of a process to ensure that the Kalinagos are beneficiaries of Dominica's development and have a voice in deciding their future as well as the future of Dominica. Several initiatives are being implemented to support Kalinago development.

113. Post-Hurricane Maria, a portfolio of projects is currently underway to increase access to housing in the Kalinago Territory. Over 400 families have benefited from the construction of new homes, the rehabilitation of existing homes, or the provision of prefabricated homes.



All new and reconstructed homes are designed to align with the architectural and cultural heritage of the Kalinago Territory.

114. In March 2022, the Kalinago Development Fund (KDF) was officially launched to facilitate borrowing by the indigenous people for residential and commercial development, cultural development, enterprise development, crop production and processing, education, climate resilience and renewable energy development. An amount of eight hundred and sixty thousand dollars has been disbursed to the Agricultural Industrial Development (AID) Bank to provide easier access to credit for people of Kalinago ancestry at a concessionary interest rate of 2%. Since then, 39 individuals have benefited, with young women in particular gaining increased access to tertiary-level education.

115. In 2019, the Ministry of Kalinago Affairs secured grant funding for the construction of the Kalinago Multi-Purpose Centre and Emergency Shelter as part of the project "Building Resilience and Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Kalinago Territory," funded by the Caribbean Development Bank. The Grant Agreement, totalling US\$2,132,718 for the entire project, was signed. Out of this sum, US\$1,028,160.00 is designated for the construction of the centre and shelter. Additionally, equipment, supplies, and training in shelter management and disaster risk management will be provided for the facility.

116. The Social and Behavioural Change Project by UNICEF aims to support 20 vulnerable homes with children through a comprehensive mentorship program. This initiative includes backyard gardening as a means of curbing poverty, enhancing quality of life and standard of living, and ending violence against women and girls through targeted parenting programs and mentorship.

## **J. Persons with disabilities**

### **Full implementation of recommendations (104.135, 104.109, 104.136, 104.83)**

117. In 2012, Dominica ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signalling its commitment to promoting and safeguarding the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the country.

118. With over 4,800 PWDs in Dominica, the Government has taken active steps to protect and support this segment of the population, despite not having a specific national policy dedicated to PWDs. For example, the Government continues to take deliberate steps to ensure the provision of inclusive education for all children with disabilities. The Government also provides financial assistance and duty-free concessions for equipment purchased by, or donated to, the Dominica Association of Persons with Disabilities.

119. The Government is currently making provisions for persons with disabilities through its 'build back better concept' following the devastating Hurricane Maria, including access to buildings etc. In 2019, the Government adopted the OECS Regional Building Code for the creation of accessible public buildings and spaces for PWDs. The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) has played an active part in assisting PWDs in Dominica by providing a range of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment. The Government also provides stipends to cover educational expenses in private special education schools for children with intellectual or mental disabilities and provides funding to the Dominica Association for PWDs (DAPD) to support the roll-out of programmes.

120. In 2020, the Cabinet established a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, with the main goal of assisting the government in formulating policies, programs, activities, and other initiatives that cater to the needs, opportunities, aspirations, and potential of persons with disabilities. This includes aligning with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

121. Between 2020 and 2022, three Regional Emergency Shelters were commissioned to provide safe, secure, and temporary shelter, essential services, and support to individuals and

families affected by emergencies and natural disasters. The shelters in Layou, Castle Bruce, and Jimmit have all been constructed with disability access, including accessible bathrooms, to ensure the protection and support of persons with disabilities before, during, and after natural disasters.

#### **Partial implementation of recommendations (104.137)**

122. Developing a more comprehensive policy or legislation in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is crucial for ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Dominica has taken significant steps in this direction by establishing a national Commission for Persons with Disabilities, which includes representatives from various sectors such as gender, social services, judiciary, and education, among others. The main role of this committee is to recommend and draft policies and legislation aimed at supporting and enhancing the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities. However, to further strengthen the implementation of the CRPD, it is essential for Dominica to engage in close collaboration with other States parties, particularly those in the developing world.

## **V. New and emerging issues**

### **Government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic**

123. The Government responded quickly to reduce the overall socio-economic impacts on the population and the economy, announcing a fiscal stimulus package, focused on strengthening its public health systems supporting families, vulnerable individuals and households through cash transfers, and shoring up the production structures through liquidity measures. The World Bank for example, approved US\$25 million as part of its first COVID-19 Response and Recovery Development Policy Credit to the Government of Dominica to support Dominica's COVID-19 response to save lives, livelihoods, and jobs, while laying the foundation for longer-term economic recovery. It was aligned with the National Resilience Development Strategy and COVID-19 response strategy.

124. The government also introduced the Livelihood and Income Support to Employees and Self-Employed Persons, which provided employees and self-employed persons with dependents under the age of 18, US\$222, while other eligible employees and self-employed individuals with no minor dependents under the age of 18 received US\$148. This transfer was provided monthly for a maximum of three months.

125. Overall, the Government of Dominica introduced several measures including:

- Reduction in the corporate income tax rate (from 25% to 17%) to companies which commit to continue to employ at least 80% of their staffing as of January 1, 2020, for a period of 12 months.
- Reduction to zero% in the import duty and the value-added tax charged on disinfectants, cleaning supplies, protective gears and face masks.
- Increased budgetary funding to the Ministries of Health and Agriculture.
- Cash grants to approximately 2,500 individual crop farmers, based on the size of the farmers holding.
- Pay to small contractors and merchants with amounts owed by the Government of EC\$100,000 and less.
- Launch of the social cash transfer assistance programme in conjunction with the World Food Program, which provided temporary income support to eligible vulnerable individuals and families whose income had been impacted by the pandemic. The programme supported low-income communities and vulnerable individuals and was designed to build on Dominica's main national social assistance programmes.

- Income support for heads of families and single persons who were currently unemployed, extended through June 2021.
- Closure of borders which were reopened in July 2020 for the arrival of nationals and residents, and in August for all travellers including non-nationals.
- The World Bank approved US\$25 million COVID-19 Response and Recovery Development Policy Credit and was Dominica's first World Bank budget support operation aimed at supporting Dominica's COVID-19 response to save lives, livelihoods, and jobs, while laying the foundation for longer-term economic recovery. It is aligned with the country's National Resilience Development Strategy and COVID-19 response strategy.
- Also, the World Bank mobilized rapid support for Dominica's emergency response activities to limit the impacts of COVID-19, protect the people of Dominica, and lay the groundwork for recovery, providing US\$5.1 million to bolster the capacity of Dominica's public health system to manage COVID-19. These funds were used to purchase drugs, medical supplies and equipment, and laboratory supplies to boost testing capacity and for minor retrofitting of isolation units. Another US\$1.5 million was used to support agriculture and strengthen national food security during the pandemic. The intervention was targeted to reach an estimated 3,200 farmers to ensure that the local food supply chains are better able to meet the needs of the island<sup>7</sup>.
- The IMF Executive Board approved emergency financial assistance under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) to help address the challenges posed by COVID-19, in the amount of US\$14 million or 89.4% of Dominica's quota<sup>8</sup>.

## VI. Requests for support from the international community

126. **Dominicans with Disabilities:** The Government recognizes the valuable contributions individuals with disabilities can make to national development with adequate support. To enable greater contributions to society and national development, the Government acknowledges the need for a national policy to protect their human rights and promote their integration into society. Dominica therefore welcomes technical assistance from international partners for this endeavour.

127. **Implementation of the Family Suite of Laws:** With the passage of the Family Suite of Laws in April 2023, the Government recognizes that significant work required to support their implementation. This includes developing standard operating procedures and policies to ensure these laws are carried out effectively. In line with the focus of Sustainable Development Goal 16 on fostering fair, peaceful, and inclusive societies, establishing consistent procedures for reporting child abuse to authorities will be advantageous. This support will streamline and enhance the effectiveness of child abuse reporting mechanisms.

128. **A policy guiding foster care** would promote the protection of human rights for children in foster care, complementing the current Child and Adoption Act. Additionally, in alignment with the updated Domestic Violence Act, support is needed for establishing safe homes to provide secure housing and support for survivors of gender-based violence.

129. **Promoting Kalinago Upliftment:** To promote the right to work and an adequate standard of living for the indigenous Kalinago population, the Government of Dominica is actively seeking resources to support livelihood development for the Kalinago people. One specific initiative is the Kalinago Climate Smart Agricultural Centre, which aims to safeguard the cultural heritage, livelihoods, and economic development of Dominica's indigenous community.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Suite of Family Laws came about as part of an ongoing initiative of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) dating back to 2000 which seeks to harmonize family laws (maintenance of children and childcare), custody laws and domestic violence laws in the countries of the sub-region.

- <sup>2</sup> The Cabinet of Ministers, or Cabinet, is a body of high-ranking government officials, selected by the Prime Minister, responsible for advising the head of government on matters of policy and administration.
  - <sup>3</sup> During the period of 1997-2017, Dominica was identified as the country with the highest GDP losses due to climate-related natural disasters and ranked in the top 10% among 182 countries for climate-related fatalities. Furthermore, the World Bank Risk Index 2020 ranks Dominica as the third most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change worldwide, based on its exposure and vulnerability to disasters.
  - <sup>4</sup> On September 23, 2017, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit declared before the UN General Assembly, that Dominica would become the world's first climate resilient nation.
  - <sup>5</sup> The NRDS was developed and approved by the Government of Dominica in 2018.
  - <sup>6</sup> Oxford Policy Management & World Food Programme. 2018. Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean: Dominica case study.
  - <sup>7</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/dominica/world-bank-strengthen-dominica-s-covid-19-response-us66-million>.
  - <sup>8</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/04/28/pr20192-dma-grd-lca-imf-executive-board-approves-us-million-disbursements-address-covid-19-pandemic>.
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