



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Turkmenistan*

1. The Committee considered the sixth periodic report of Turkmenistan (CEDAW/C/TKM/6) at its 2037th and 2038th meetings (CEDAW/C/SR.2037 and CEDAW/C/SR.2038), held on 2 February 2024. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/TKM/Q/6, and the responses of Turkmenistan are contained in CEDAW/C/TKM/RQ/6.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its sixth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/TKM/FCO/5) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in 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 Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mahri Bashimova, and included representatives of the State Statistics Committee, the National Centre of Trade Unions of Turkmenistan, the Women's Union of Turkmenistan, the Committee of the Milli Geňeş (parliament) for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, the Institute of State, Law and Democracy, the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2018 of the State party's fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/TKM/5) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-seventh session (29 January–16 February 2024).



(a) New version of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes the coercion of a person to acts of a sexual nature in the workplace, in April 2022;

(b) New Social Services Act, which introduces specialized services for vulnerable populations, in December 2021;

(c) New version of the Education Act, which promotes new standards of education, in June 2021.

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) Framework for cooperation on sustainable development for 2021–2025, which includes the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment, in 2020;

(b) National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025, which includes seven strategic areas: strengthening and improving the legislative framework to achieve gender equality; ensuring gender-oriented health care; promoting access to education; combating violence against women and children; expanding the economic empowerment of women and girls; increasing the participation of women at all levels, including in the political and public spheres; and strengthening institutional arrangements to promote gender equality, in 2020;

(c) Special working group composed of representatives of various ministries, as the main national mechanism for the development of effective measures to prevent violence against women, in particular the development of measures and standards for inter-agency responses to gender-based violence, the promotion of legal protection of victims through improved legislation and the drafting of a special law on the prevention of gender-based violence, in 2018.

6. The Committee welcomes the ratification by the State party of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education on 2 April 2021.

C. Sustainable Development Goals

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

D. Parliament

8. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Milli Geňeş of Turkmenistan, 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 welcomes the vaccination campaigns against coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in 2021 and 2022, which also covered pregnant women. However, the Committee notes that no specific measures have been adopted to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the enjoyment by women of their human rights.

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

(a) **Implement institutional, legislative and policy measures to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men and to give renewed impetus to the achievement of 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;**

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

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

(d) **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 information provided by the delegation during the dialogue that the Convention has been translated into Turkmen. It notes, however, that many women in the State party, including rural women and women with disabilities, are unaware of their rights under the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations.

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

(a) **Intensify its efforts to widely disseminate and raise awareness of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promoting women's rights and gender equality, and publish the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the official web pages of the authorities responsible for the protection of women's rights;**

(b) **Ensure that information on the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations is accessible to all women, including rural women and women with disabilities;**

(c) **Provide systematic capacity-building and training on the Convention for government officials, judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials, as well as lawyers.**

Legal framework for the prohibition of discrimination against women

13. The Committee notes that the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025 provides for an analysis of relevant legislation and for the development of gender audits of draft laws. However, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) The State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (2015) does not cover direct and indirect discrimination;

(b) The Convention has not been directly applied or invoked in court proceedings, despite the existing provisions ensuring the precedence of international treaties over national legislation and related capacity-building provided to judges and lawyers.

14. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/5, para. 9) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend its definition of discrimination against women in the State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (2015) to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres and intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention;**

(b) **Ensure that all discriminatory provisions against women in legislation and legislative amendments are repealed;**

(c) **Strengthen capacity-building for members of the judiciary and legal professionals regarding the direct application of the Convention in legal proceedings and the interpretation of national legislation in the light of the Convention, and apply a gender-sensitive, rather than gender-neutral, approach in the implementation of its legislation.**

Women's access to justice

15. The Committee notes that individuals may be fully or partially exempted from legal costs, depending on their financial situation. However, it notes with concern the lack of information on the number of court cases on discrimination against women; the limited number of legal aid centres, particularly in rural and remote areas; and persistent barriers to women's and girls' access to justice, including their limited knowledge of their rights and the remedies available to claim them.

16. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party address the barriers to women's and girls' access to justice, including by:**

(a) **Developing a comprehensive, adequately funded legal aid scheme for women, including procedural accommodation, and ensure free legal aid to women without sufficient means, in particular victims of domestic violence;**

(b) **Increasing the number of legal aid centres, particularly in rural areas, ensuring adequate funding;**

(c) **Strengthening awareness-raising among women and girls about the legal remedies available to claim violations of their human rights.**

Women, peace and security

17. The Committee notes with concern the lack of a national action plan on women and peace and security.

18. **The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, and recommends that the State party, in cooperation with representatives of women’s civil society organizations, consider the adoption of a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, taking into consideration the full spectrum of the Council’s agenda on women and peace and security, as reflected in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

19. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025 and the holding in Ashgabat of the first Central Asian Women’s Dialogue with representatives of the five countries of the region, the agenda of which included issues related to women’s participation in public and social affairs. It notes with concern, however, the absence of a dedicated national machinery for the advancement of women with a mandate to ensure gender mainstreaming across all government departments. It also notes with concern the lack of dedicated human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality, as well as the general lack of publicly available information on its implementation, such as the conclusions of the most recent review regarding the Plan’s alignment with the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals; the targets and priorities achieved; the Plan’s outreach into rural areas; public awareness campaigns to popularize its policy and programmes among all women, especially vulnerable women; and mechanisms used to ensure that its implementation is effectively coordinated.

20. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 6 (1988) on effective national machinery and publicity, as well as the guidance provided in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, notably regarding the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of national machineries for the advancement of women, reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/TKM/5, para. 13) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Establish, without further delay, a national machinery for the advancement of women, with a strong mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources, to coordinate all public policies and strategies for gender equality and the advancement of women, including gender-responsive budgeting, and with gender units at the regional and local levels;**

(b) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality, as well as for its monitoring and evaluation against time-bound measures, indicators and targets;**

(c) **Publicize the conclusions of the most recent review regarding the alignment of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality with the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the objectives and priorities achieved; undertake public awareness campaigns to popularize the Plan, its policy and its programmes among all women, particularly vulnerable women and rural women; and establish mechanisms to ensure effective coordination of its implementation.**

National human rights institutions

21. The Committee notes the re-election of the Ombudsperson by secret ballot in parliament in 2022. However, it notes with concern the selection and appointment

process, the limited mandate and independence of the Ombudsperson and the lack of engagement with civil society organizations, including women's organizations.

22. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Ensure the independence of the Ombudsman in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles);**

(b) **Expand the mandate of the Ombudsman to include monitoring the implementation of the Convention and ensuring the protection and promotion of women's human rights, including protection from gender-based violence against women and sexual and reproductive health and rights;**

(c) **Enhance and strengthen the Ombudsperson's cooperation with civil society organizations, in particular women's organizations.**

Temporary special measures

23. The Committee notes with concern the limited understanding among public officials and the general public in the State party of the non-discriminatory nature and importance of temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented, including in political and public life, particularly in decision-making and leadership positions.

24. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Raise public awareness and sensitize and train parliamentarians and other relevant officials on the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures within the meaning of article 4 (1) and general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures;**

(b) **Adopt and implement temporary special measures, including statutory quotas and preferential recruitment of women, to achieve substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as in political and public life, in particular at decision-making levels. Such measures should include time-bound targets and benchmarks, and sanctions for non-compliance;**

(c) **Adopt temporary special measures and collect data on the implementation of legislation with positive discrimination for both the public and private sectors.**

Stereotypes

25. The Committee notes the information provided by the delegation during the dialogue on activities that have taken place to eliminate gender stereotypes, including gender equality education and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at eliminating stereotypes concerning the roles of women and men in the family and in society. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) Reports of pressure faced by women and girls to conform to gender stereotypes relating to dress and appearance, and restrictions on their freedom to travel alone and to drive a car;

(b) Stereotypical and discriminatory portrayals of women in the media, including social media;

(c) The absence of a comprehensive strategy aimed at eliminating discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society.

26. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Repeal restrictions on women's freedom to travel alone and to drive a car, and conduct awareness-raising campaigns to eliminate gender stereotypes and religious and cultural misconceptions;**

(b) **Develop a code of conduct for the media and journalists to eliminate gender stereotypes in printed, audiovisual and social media and promote positive portrayals of women as active drivers of change, and establish a media observatory to monitor and address gender stereotypes in the media;**

(c) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy, with a dedicated budget and results-based objectives, aimed at eliminating patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. Mandate and financially support civil society in educating the public and raising awareness of the negative impact of gender stereotypes on the exercise by women of their fundamental rights.**

Gender-based violence against women

27. The Committee notes the conduct in 2022 of the National Survey on Health and Status of a Woman in the Family, the resulting recommendations and the road map to address them, as well as the creation of the special working group of the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law to develop measures to prevent violence against women. However, the Committee notes with concern that 12 per cent of women in the State party have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, as revealed in the survey. It also notes with concern:

(a) The absence of legislation specifically criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, and the absence of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women;

(b) That the new Social Services Act (2021) does not explicitly provide for victim support services for women survivors of domestic violence, the absence of State-run victim support services and the lack of State funding for victim support services provided by civil society organizations;

(c) The lack of disaggregated data on cases of gender-based violence against women and girls.

28. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/5, para. 23), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Adopt, without further delay, legislation specifically defining and criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence; develop a comprehensive strategy to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence; and ensure the provision of free legal and medical aid for victims of violence;**

(b) **Systematically investigate and prosecute all reported cases of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, sentence**

perpetrators and provide mandatory capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, the police and other law enforcement officials on the strict application of relevant criminal law provisions and on gender-sensitive interrogation and investigation methods in cases of gender-based violence against women and girls;

(c) Strengthen victim support services by amending the Social Services Act (2021) to explicitly include support services for women survivors of domestic violence; publish and expand the standard operating procedures for police and social and health-care workers on quality services for women and girls who are victims of domestic violence across the country; and make public the road map developed to address recommendations of the National Survey on Health and Status of a Woman in the Family;

(d) Develop social contract legislation to enable civil society organizations to contract with the State party to provide essential services to women and girls who are survivors of violence and establish a formal mechanism for the State party to partner with those organizations, and support and increase the number of independent NGOs working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights and provide adequate funding to them as well as to organizations operating shelters;

(e) Systematically collect data on the number of complaints of gender-based violence against women and girls as well as on investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on perpetrators, disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

29. The Committee takes note of the renewal of the National Action Plan on combating human trafficking for the period 2020–2022, and of the training sessions conducted on an annual basis to build the capacity of internal affairs personnel on human trafficking issues. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The limited financial resources allocated to the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation and the National Action Plan on combating human trafficking, including preventive programmes to address the root causes of trafficking;

(b) The low rates of early identification of victims of trafficking and of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in cases of trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls;

(c) The lack of capacity-building for the judiciary, border police, labour inspectors and other law enforcement officers on the enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation and gender-sensitive protocols for dealing with victims of trafficking;

(d) The lack of State-funded victim support services and rehabilitation programmes.

30. **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 the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the implementation of the National Action Plan on combating human trafficking and the Trafficking in Persons Act;**

(b) **Address the root causes of trafficking by expanding educational and economic opportunities for women and girls at risk of trafficking and their families, thereby reducing their vulnerability to exploitation by traffickers;**

(c) **Ensure that all cases of trafficking in women and girls are investigated and prosecuted and that traffickers and their accomplices, including when they are public officials, are convicted and adequately sentenced;**

(d) **Build the capacity of the judiciary, prosecutors, border police and other law enforcement officers, as well as social workers and health workers, on early identification and referral of victims of trafficking to appropriate services, as well as on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods in cases of trafficking in women and girls;**

(e) **Ensure that victims of trafficking have access to adequate support services, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and legal assistance, ensure their protection and issue temporary residence permits irrespective of their ability or willingness to cooperate with the prosecution authorities;**

(f) **Collect disaggregated data on the extent of trafficking in women and girls in the State party and strengthen cooperation with other countries in the region to facilitate information exchange and prosecution of traffickers.**

31. The Committee notes that prostitution, procuring and organized prostitution are punishable under the Criminal Code. It notes with concern the lack of information on measures taken by the State party to reduce the demand for prostitution and decriminalize and provide alternative income opportunities for women and girls wishing to leave prostitution.

32. **The Committee recommends that the State party decriminalize women in prostitution and provide exit programmes, including alternative income opportunities, to women wishing to leave prostitution. It also recommends addressing the root causes of prostitution, such as poverty and structural gender inequalities, as well as the demand for prostitution, and adopting targeted measures to protect women from being exploited in prostitution.**

Equal participation in political and public life

33. The Committee welcomes the appointment of a woman as Speaker of the newly elected parliament. It notes with concern, however, that women represent only 24.8 per cent of the deputies in the Mejlis (lower chamber) and 27 per cent of the deputies in the Halk Maslahaty (upper chamber) of parliament. It also notes that there is only one woman in the Cabinet of Ministers, who is the Deputy Chair responsible for culture and the media, that women continue to be underrepresented in municipal councils, in leadership positions within political parties and in the civil service at decision-making levels, and that there is only one woman ambassador in the State party.

34. **In line with its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Amend electoral legislation to establish quotas for women candidates on electoral lists of political parties, with a view to reaching parity by 2030; provide financial incentives for political parties to provide campaign funding and training to women candidates; and monitor compliance with electoral quotas;**

(b) **Introduce preferential recruitment of women to the judiciary, the public service and the foreign service, including in diplomatic missions, and support the women candidates applying to international organizations, particularly at senior levels.**

Women human rights defenders and civil society

35. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) Reports of strict requirements for the registration and monitoring of activities of civil society organizations, including women's organizations, and reports of arbitrary refusal of registration of NGOs in the State party;

(b) The lack of engagement of women's human rights organizations from pluralistic backgrounds with the Committee in the context of its consideration of the sixth periodic report of the State party;

(c) Reports that women human rights defenders and their families have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, violence, unlawful detention, travel bans and other reprisals for their legitimate work to promote and advocate women's human rights;

(d) The limited cooperation of the State party with civil society organizations with pluralistic backgrounds.

36. **Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/5, paras. 29 and 31), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Ensure the registration of women's human rights organizations, create an enabling environment for women human rights defenders to perform their legitimate work and provide a budget to support their activities;

(b) Cooperate with women's organizations of pluralistic backgrounds in the implementation of the present recommendations and consult them in the preparation of the next periodic report;

(c) Ensure the protection of women human rights defenders and their families from intimidation, harassment and reprisals for their work and immediately stop any such reprisals and investigate, prosecute and adequately punish those responsible, including police officers and other State agents;

(d) Ensure the systematic and meaningful participation of independent women's human rights organizations in the formulation and implementation of legislative and policy initiatives affecting women.

Nationality

37. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That the definition of statelessness under the Turkmenistan Citizenship Act (2013) is not in line with the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons;

(b) The excessive requirements for refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women and girls to obtain Turkmen citizenship;

(c) Reports that children in Turkmenistan will not be granted citizenship in all cases;

(d) Reports that the State party frequently limits the procedure for renewing passports for Turkmen nationals living abroad, including many women and girls;

(e) Reports that the marriage of men of Turkmen nationality to women of non-Turkmen nationality results in continuous stigmatization and discrimination, including institutional and societal obstacles.

38. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend the definition of statelessness in the Turkmenistan Citizenship Act (2013) to bring it into conformity with article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons;**

(b) **Ease the requirements for refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women and girls to apply for Turkmen citizenship and ensure that they have access to the necessary legal assistance and documentation;**

(c) **Ensure that all children born in the State party have access to birth registration and birth certificates, irrespective of their parent's legal status, facilitate birth registration procedures, including by reducing costs, deploying mobile civil registrar units to remote areas and providing relevant information in accessible languages to refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women and girls, and uphold obligations under the Civil Status Act (2020);**

(d) **Ensure that Turkmen women and girls living abroad have adequate access to passport renewal procedures, thereby preventing the risk of statelessness;**

(e) **Strengthen measures to combat the continuous stigmatization and discrimination associated with the marriage of men of Turkmen nationality to women of non-Turkmen nationality and ensure that women do not face institutional or societal hindrances.**

Education

39. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the delegation during the dialogue on increasing the proportion of girls in higher education to 44 per cent of students, compared with 40 per cent in 2018, and that women represent 47 to 48 per cent of professors in higher education. It commends the State party on its ratification of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education in 2021. However, it notes with concern:

(a) That in urban areas only 48.7 per cent of young women aged 18 to 24 are enrolled in educational institutions, and in rural areas merely 35 per cent are enrolled;

(b) The underrepresentation of women and girls in non-traditional fields of study and career paths, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT);

(c) The persistence of gender stereotypes in textbooks and teaching materials;

(d) That family planning and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections are not part of the basics of life skills mandatory subject in schools and that there is a lack of teacher training on sexuality education.

40. **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 promote the importance of the education of girls as a basis for their empowerment, and:**

(a) **Take targeted measures, including awareness-raising campaigns and special scholarships, to increase enrolment, retention and completion rates among young women in higher education;**

(b) **Orient women and girls towards non-traditional fields of study and career paths, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics and**

ICT, by training and recruiting women teachers for these subjects, providing career counselling and scholarships to women and girls, raising awareness among parents and teachers of the importance of non-traditional educational choices of women and girls for their career perspectives and empowerment;

(c) Take measures to promote employment opportunities for female specialist graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT;

(d) Review textbooks, curricula, teaching materials and teacher training to eliminate gender stereotypes in education;

(e) Introduce age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education in school curricula at all levels of education, including education on responsible sexual behaviour to prevent early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and provide systematic training to teachers on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Employment

41. The Committee notes the progress made by the State party in reducing the gender pay gap in 2020 and the fact that restrictions on the employment of women in harmful and/or hazardous working conditions were removed in 2019. However, the Committee notes with concern the following:

(a) Vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market, women's concentration in low-paid jobs in the informal economy and the barriers faced by women in accessing decision-making positions in the public and private sectors;

(b) That many women in the State party are unemployed or underemployed due to women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work and their limited opportunities for reconciling professional and family life;

(c) Reports of widespread use of the forced labour of civil servants during the cotton harvest (mainly women) under threat of such penalties as the loss of wages or salary cuts and the termination of employment, as well as other sanctions;

(d) The absence of paid paternity leave;

(e) The absence of legislation to ensure the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, despite the fact that the State party has ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), which has resulted in a significant gender pay gap of 12 per cent.

42. The Committee draws 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, on achieving by 2030 full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men and equal pay for work of equal value, and recommends that the State party:

(a) Take targeted measures to break the glass ceiling and promote women's access to decision-making positions and higher-paid jobs, including in traditionally male-dominated professions, for example by providing incentives for preferential recruitment of women;

(b) Promote equal sharing of domestic and childcare responsibilities between women and men by increasing the number of affordable quality childcare facilities and kindergartens, ensuring that flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work and telecommuting, are available for both women and men, and holding employers accountable for discrimination against women in career development, recruitment and promotion;

(c) Promptly put an end to forced labour in the cotton sector, inter alia, by fully enforcing the legal framework prohibiting forced labour; clearly communicating to public officials and the public at large that the mobilization of persons to pick cotton under coercion or threats is unlawful; increasing labour inspections and establishing an effective complaint mechanism, paying specific attention to labour performed by women and girls; prosecuting those responsible for violations and providing full reparation to victims; and improving working and living conditions in the cotton industry, including through targeted measures to protect women and girls;

(d) Amend its legislation to introduce paid paternity leave;

(e) Adopt and enforce comprehensive legislation and regulations to ensure the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, regularly review wages in sectors in which women are concentrated and adopt measures to close the gender pay gap, including through gender-sensitive analytical job classification and evaluation methods and regular pay surveys;

(f) Increase the number of labour inspections to monitor employers' compliance with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and provide effective remedies to women who are subjected to discrimination in employment;

(g) Adopt and implement targeted, time-bound measures, including temporary special measures, to create more opportunities for women to enter the formal labour market;

(h) Strengthen access to employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged groups of women, such as women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic minorities and refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women;

(i) Ratify the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

Sexual harassment in the workplace

43. The Committee takes note of the information provided by the State party about the absence of complaints by women about sexual harassment in the workplace. It notes with concern the absence of legislation specifically criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace and the limited awareness of the criminal nature of sexual harassment.

44. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/5](#), para. 37) and recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt legislation to specifically criminalize sexual harassment in the workplace, with adequate penalties for perpetrators and the provision of redress to victims of sexual harassment;

(b) Develop a confidential, independent and safe system for filing complaints relating to sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination in the workplace and ensure that complainants are not stigmatized and that they are protected from reprisals;

(c) Collect data on complaints, investigated cases and court decisions.

Health

45. The Committee notes the information provided during the dialogue with the State party about a slight reduction in maternal mortality and early pregnancies. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The limitation of abortion services upon request to five weeks of gestation, and the fact that abortion services obtained beyond the specified grounds are criminalized under the Criminal Code, carrying a maximum penalty of 2 years;

(b) That only 47 per cent of women of fertile age are using modern contraceptives and that the access of women and adolescent girls to adequate sexual and reproductive health services and information, including family planning, is limited, in particular in rural areas;

(c) The requirement of parental consent for girls below the age of 18 to access sexual and reproductive health services, contraceptives and abortion;

(d) Forced virginity testing on young girls in cases of rape;

(e) The lack of training of health-care staff on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights;

(f) The low percentage of women screened for cervical cancer and the lack of information on the prevalence of breast cancer in the State party, as well as on the treatment available to women and girls;

(g) The persistent lack of publicly available disaggregated data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the State party and the stigmatization of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.

46. **The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and targets 3.1, on reducing global maternal mortality, and 3.7, on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, of the Sustainable Development Goals, and recommends that the State party:**

(a) In line with the guidelines on abortion care of the World Health Organization, amend article 18 of the Criminal Code and article 19 of the 2015 Public Health Care Act to legalize abortion and decriminalize it in all cases and ensure that women and adolescent girls have adequate access to safe abortion and post-abortion services to ensure full realization of the rights of women, their equality and their economic and bodily autonomy to make free choices about their reproductive rights;

(b) Provide free access to modern contraceptives for all women and girls, including women with disabilities, rural women and refugee women;

(c) Reduce the age requirement for girls to access sexual and reproductive services, including contraception and safe abortion services, without parental consent;

(d) Abolish the harmful and stigmatizing practice of virginity testing on young girls;

(e) Provide health-care staff with training on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights;

(f) Expand the cervical cancer screening campaign to cover all eligible women, collect disaggregated data on the prevalence of cervical and breast cancer and provide training to medical and health professionals on their early detection, including in rural areas;

(g) **Collect data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the State party, disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors, provide training to medical and health professionals on non-discriminatory and scientifically appropriate treatment of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and conduct public awareness campaigns to destigmatize women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.**

Economic empowerment

47. The Committee notes with concern:

- (a) The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women;
- (b) That women employed in the informal economy and self-employed women have no access to social protection in the State party;
- (c) The challenges that persist in providing women and girls with programmes that promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, and access to bank credits and loans;
- (d) The limited access of women to land ownership and use.

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

- (a) **Ensure that women's unpaid work is recognized, reduced and redistributed, including by increasing the availability of affordable childcare and elderly facilities and promoting equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men;**
- (b) **Extend social protection coverage to women employed in the informal economy and unpaid work, as well as to self-employed women;**
- (c) **Strengthen women's access to entrepreneurship opportunities, support for starting independent businesses and ICT, and ensure that women have adequate access to land ownership, financial credit, including low-interest loans without collateral, and markets;**
- (d) **Ensure that national economic development policies include a gender dimension and are based on disaggregated data to ensure that they address the needs of women and girls.**

Rural women

49. The Committee notes with concern:

- (a) That rural women account for most of the unpaid home farm workers in the State party;
- (b) Rural women's limited access to justice, land ownership and use, education, health care, formal employment, income-generating opportunities and microcredit, and the restrictions on their freedom of movement.

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

- (a) **Enhance rural women's access to land ownership and control, including by adopting and implementing a national gender plan in agricultural policies, introducing co-ownership of the land allocated, including women as**

producers in family production registries, and conducting awareness-raising campaigns to dismantle patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes;

(b) Facilitate access by rural women to technological support and training to improve land management, such as equipment, animal feed, energy, markets and marketing services;

(c) Expand access by rural women to low-interest loans without collateral, microcredit and other forms of financial credit;

(d) Ensure the effective participation of rural women in planning and decision-making on rural infrastructure and services.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

51. The Committee notes the State party's presidency in 2022 of a regional preparatory conference for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change in Central Asia. However, it notes with concern the absence of a gender-responsive national strategy to address environmental risks and challenges, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

52. In line with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that women are represented and participate 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 legislation and policies and ensure that women, in particular rural women, participate in their development. It further recommends that the State party take measures to address the impact of climate change specifically on women's livelihoods and access to resources.

Disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women

Women and girls with disabilities

53. The Committee notes with concern that women and girls with disabilities face systemic barriers, including physical barriers, to accessing inclusive education and health-care services.

54. The Committee recommends, in view of targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, that the State party strengthen its measures to address barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing inclusive education, health care and social protection.

Refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women and girls

55. The Committee notes with concern that women and girls at border entry points or in administrative detention for immigration offences, do not have access to information about asylum procedures or legal assistance to file asylum claims. It is further concerned that refugee and asylum-seeking women cannot access employment or specialized health services in the State party.

56. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that women and girls in need of protection have effective access to asylum procedures and free legal assistance to file asylum claims and that the State party grant access to border entry points and immigration detention centres. It also recommends that the State party provide for alternative residence registration or special

exemptions to allow refugee women access to employment and specialized health services.

Women belonging to ethnic minority groups

57. The Committee is concerned about reports of discrimination, harassment and hate speech against non-Turkmen women, who are also barred from working in the public sector, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women belonging to ethnic minority groups.

58. **The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/5, para. 47) and recommends that the State party investigate, prosecute and adequately punish discrimination, harassment and hate speech against women and girls belonging to ethnic minority groups, establish a quota for their recruitment to the public service and conduct awareness-raising activities to address their stigmatization in society.**

Marriage and family relations

59. The Committee notes the legal minimum age of marriage in the State party of 18 years for both women and men. However, it notes with concern:

- (a) That a legal guardian can authorize a marriage from 17 years of age;
- (b) The persistence of polygamy in the State party and the lack of legal and economic protection for women in polygamous unions.

60. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Review the Family Code to repeal any exceptions to the minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both women and men and pursue efforts to combat child and/or forced marriage, especially in rural areas;**
- (b) **Enforce the prohibition of polygamy, ensure that discriminatory customary laws on divorce, inheritance and child custody have no legal effect and are not applied in practice, and ensure the legal and economic protection of women and girls in polygamous and unregistered unions;**
- (c) **Provide capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local executive bodies, traditional leaders, teachers, political leaders, parents and the general public on the harmful effects of polygamy and child and/or forced marriages for women's and girls' education, health and autonomous choices.**

Data collection

61. The Committee notes that the Information Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs collects statistical data on instances of all forms of violence against women, disaggregated by age, citizenship and place of incident, on an ongoing basis. It regrets, however, the general lack of publicly available updated statistical data, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, geographical location and socioeconomic background, which are necessary for an accurate assessment of the situation of women, to determine whether they suffer from discrimination, for informed and targeted policymaking and for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved towards the realization of women's substantive equality in all areas covered by the Convention.

62. The Committee calls upon the State party to develop a gender indicator system to improve the collection of data, disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors, which is necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming gender equality and enhancing the enjoyment by women of their human rights, and to make this data available to the public. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from relevant United Nations agencies and to enhance its collaboration with women's associations that could assist in the collection of accurate data.

Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

63. The Committee encourages the State party to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

64. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Dissemination

65. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official language of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, the parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

Technical assistance

66. The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.

Ratification of other treaties

67. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments¹ would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

68. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 14 (c), 20 (a), 36 (a) and 54 above.

Preparation of the next report

69. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the seventh 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 and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

70. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).
