

against Women

Fifty-second session

9-27 July 2012

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Bulgaria

1. The Committee considered the combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periodic report of Bulgaria (CEDAW/C/BGR/4-7) at its 1045th and 1046th meetings, on 12 July 2012 (see CEDAW/C/SR.1045 and 1046). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/BGR/Q/4-7 and the responses of the Government of Bulgaria in CEDAW/C/BGR/Q/4-7/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its detailed combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periodic report. It regrets, however, that the report was long overdue and generally did not follow the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports. It also lacked statistics disaggregated by sex and qualitative data on the situation of women in a number of areas covered by the Convention, in particular in respect of women belonging to disadvantaged groups. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the Committee's pre-sessional working group and for the responses to the questions posed orally by the Committee.

3. The Committee thanks the State party for its delegation, which was headed by the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations, Stephan Tafrov, and included representatives of various ministries and departments. The Committee appreciates the dialogue that took place between the delegation and the members of the Committee, although it regrets that some questions were not answered and that the responses were not always clear and precise.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the adoption, since the consideration of the previous report, of several laws aimed at eliminating discrimination and violence against women, including:

- (a) The Protection against Discrimination Act (January 2004), which introduced the shifting of the burden of proof on to the defendant;
- (b) The Protection against Domestic Violence Act (March 2005, amended in 2009) and the corresponding amendment of article 296 (1) of the Criminal Code that criminalizes the failure to comply with a protection order;
- (c) The Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act (May 2003);
- (d) The Legal Aid Act (January 2006) and the Crime Victim Assistance and Financial Compensation Act (January 2007);
- (e) The new Family Code (October 2009).

5. The Committee commends the State party for the establishment of various institutions and the adoption of policy measures aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman in 2005, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination in 2005, the National Anti-Trafficking Commission and the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in 2010, in addition to the adoption of the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality 2009-2015, the National Programme for Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence, the National Roma Integration Strategy (2012-2020) and the National Programme on Prevention and Counteracting Human Trafficking and Protection of its Victims.

6. The Committee notes with appreciation the ratification by the State party, on 20 September 2006, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the acceptance of the amendment to article 20 of the Convention in 2010.

7. The Committee further welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international and regional instruments:

- (a) The International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182) (2000);
- (b) The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2001) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2001);
- (c) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2002);
- (d) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2002);

- (e) The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005);
- (f) The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007);
- (g) The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2011);
- (h) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012).

C. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

8. The Committee recalls the obligation of the State party to systematically and continuously implement all the provisions of the Convention and views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding observations as areas requiring the priority attention of the State party between now and the submission of the subsequent periodic report. Consequently, the Committee urges the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to include, in its subsequent periodic report, information on action taken and results achieved. The Committee calls upon the State party to submit the present concluding observations to all relevant ministries and government departments, the National Assembly and the judiciary so as to ensure their full implementation.

Visibility of the Convention

9. According to article 5 of the Constitution, the Convention forms an integral part of the domestic law of the State party. The Committee notes with concern, however, that, in practice, the Convention has not been given sufficient visibility as the legal basis for measures, including legislative and policy measures, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to promote gender equality. The Committee is also concerned that there is insufficient knowledge and awareness among the branches of the Government, the National Assembly and the judiciary about the rights of women under the Convention, its concept of de facto or substantive gender equality, the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the general recommendations of the Committee and the views of the Committee on individual communications. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the absence of a national mechanism to implement the views of the Committee under the Optional Protocol.

10. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Convention, as a legally binding instrument, is sufficiently known and applied by the Government, the National Assembly and the judiciary as a framework for legislation, policies and court decisions;**
- (b) Ensure that the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's general recommendations, its views on individual communications and its inquiries, and relevant domestic legislation are made an integral part of systematic training for lawyers, judges, prosecutors, police and other law enforcement officials with a view to enabling them to interpret national legal provisions in the light of the Convention;**
- (c) Continue raising awareness among women about their rights under the Convention and about the communications and inquiry procedures provided by the Optional Protocol thereto, including by translating into Bulgarian the Committee's general recommendations and its views under the Optional Protocol;**
- (d) Establish a national mechanism to implement the views of the Committee under the Optional Protocol.**

Legal framework for equality

11. While noting that the general principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in article 6 of the Constitution and that a general definition of discrimination is provided in the Protection against Discrimination Act, the Committee continues to be concerned at the failure to specifically prohibit discrimination against women and to incorporate the principle of gender equality in all areas covered by the Convention, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, and at the fact that a gender equality law has not yet been adopted, despite the recommendations to do so made by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (A/53/38/Rev.1, paras. 238 and 250) and by the Human Rights Council in the universal periodic review of Bulgaria in November 2010 (A/HRC/16/9, para. 80.7).

12. The Committee calls upon the State party to adopt a gender equality law prohibiting all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex and gender in all areas covered by the Convention, including through sanctions in cases of violations of the law, and embodying the principle of equality between women and men, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

Legal complaints mechanisms

13. While commending the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman and of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Committee is concerned that both institutions are not fully compliant with the Principles relating to the status of national institutions (the Paris Principles). The Committee is further concerned by the low number of complaints of discrimination based on sex received by both institutions and filed with the State party's courts. In addition, while appreciating the enactment by the State party of a law on legal aid and the establishment of a national legal aid bureau, the Committee notes with concern the practical obstacles faced by women seeking redress for acts of discrimination based on sex and gender, and the insufficient counselling and legal aid services available to women, especially women belonging to disadvantaged groups.

14. The Committee urges the State party to strengthen its legal complaints mechanisms to ensure that all women have effective access to justice and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Further strengthen the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission for Protection against Discrimination with a view to becoming fully compliant with the Paris Principles and expand their activities addressing discrimination based on sex and gender;**
- (b) Take measures to increase women's awareness and understanding of their rights under the Convention and of the functioning of the existing complaints mechanisms so that they are better able to seek redress in cases of discrimination;**
- (c) Provide women with effective access to legal aid by strengthening the legal aid facilities in place and ensure that, when pursuing legal remedies, women are sufficiently informed of their rights during proceedings.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

15. While acknowledging the establishment of an equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and social assistance department within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and a national council on gender equality within the Council of Ministers, the Committee notes the lack of information provided on how the national machinery works for the protection of women's rights and, especially, on how it monitors the situation of women in all areas covered by the Convention. The Committee is also concerned that the national machinery lacks sufficient authority, visibility and adequate human and financial resources to effectively promote the implementation of the Convention. It is also concerned about the Department's limited capacity to effectively coordinate and cooperate with women's non-governmental organizations.

16. The Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously strengthen the national machinery by increasing its authority and visibility, by providing it with adequate human and financial resources to make it more effective and by enhancing its capacity to formulate, coordinate and monitor the elaboration and implementation of legislation and policy measures in the field of gender equality. The Committee also urges the State party to strengthen its cooperation with women's non-governmental organizations in achieving the implementation of the Convention and in monitoring such implementation.

17. While appreciating the comprehensive character of the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality 2009-2015 and the adoption of annual national action plans, the Committee regrets the lack of information on the results achieved and the obstacles and challenges encountered in implementation.

18. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure the effective implementation of the national strategy and action plans, to monitor and regularly evaluate the process and to provide information thereon to the Committee in its subsequent periodic report.

Temporary special measures

19. While noting the measures to encourage equality in the areas of employment and education provided for in articles 24 and 38 of the Protection against Discrimination Act, the Committee remains concerned about the State party's lack of understanding of article 4 (1) of the Convention, on temporary special measures, and about the fact that such measures have not been used by the State party as a matter of general policy to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality between women and men, including with regard to women's participation in public and political life.

20. The Committee calls upon the State party:

- (a) To provide for a legal basis, for example in the future gender equality law, for the use of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 of the Committee and to apply quotas and other forms of temporary special measures, such as targeted recruitment and promotion, incentives and preferential allocation of funds, in areas in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged;**
- (b) To familiarize all relevant officials with the concept of temporary special measures as a strategy necessary to accelerate the achievement, without delay, of de facto or substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention.**

Stereotypes and discriminatory practices

21. While welcoming the efforts of the State party to eliminate entrenched gender stereotypes in the family, the media and society at large, including through legislative measures such as paternity leave, the Committee reiterates its concern about the persistence of stereotypical patterns regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society that overemphasize the traditional roles of women as mothers and spouses and continue to affect their educational and professional choices. It also notes with concern that the media and the advertising sector systematically convey sexualized and commercialized images of women.

22. The Committee calls upon the State party:

- (a) To further strengthen its efforts to put in place a comprehensive policy with proactive and sustained measures, targeted at women, men, girls and boys, to overcome stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**
- (b) To take all appropriate measures to raise the awareness of the media and the advertising sector with a view to**

eliminating gender stereotypes, to ensuring that women are not portrayed as sexualized commodities and to promoting objective images of women actively participating in social, economic and political life.

Violence against women

23. While noting the information provided regarding the current review of the Criminal Code, the Committee is deeply concerned about its article 158, a provision enabling the termination of criminal proceedings against rapists when they marry their victims.

24. The Committee urges the State party to expeditiously repeal article 158 of the Criminal Code and to ensure that all acts of sexual violence against women and girls are effectively investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and that their sentences are commensurate with the gravity of their crimes.

25. The Committee reiterates its serious concern about the high prevalence of domestic violence, the persistence of sociocultural attitudes condoning such violence and its underreporting. The Committee is particularly concerned about the absence of specific provisions criminalizing domestic violence and marital rape, the lack of criminal prosecution of violence within the family and the failure by the judiciary to follow the practice of shifting the burden of proof to favour victims, which is provided for in the Protection against Domestic Violence Act. The Committee is further concerned about the scarcity of and insufficient funding for shelters for women victims of domestic violence. With regard to the implementation of the Committee's recommendations in its decision on communication No. 20/2008 (CEDAW/C/49/D/20/2008, para. 9.16), the Committee takes note of the information provided that a working group has been established under the Ministry of Justice to amend the Protection against Domestic Violence Act to extend the one-month time limit to file a petition for a protection order.

26. The Committee urges the State party:

(a) To amend its Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in order to specifically criminalize domestic violence and marital rape and to introduce the possibility of ex officio prosecution for both offences;

(b) To amend article 10 (1) of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act so as to remove the one-month time limit to file a petition for a protection order, and to ensure the stringent application by the judiciary of article 13 (3) of the Act so as to ease the burden of proof in favour of the victim;

(c) To ensure that sufficient State-funded shelters are available to women victims of domestic violence and their children and to provide support to non-governmental organizations offering shelter and other forms of support to victims of domestic violence;

(d) To provide mandatory training for judges, lawyers and law enforcement personnel on the application of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, including on the definition of domestic violence and on gender stereotypes;

(e) To set a time frame for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

27. While welcoming the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken to combat trafficking in persons, the Committee remains concerned about gaps in the implementation of legislation and strategies, the lack of preventive measures to address the root causes of trafficking, in particular with regard to Roma women, and the scarcity of shelters for women victims of trafficking. The Committee also notes the inadequate assistance and protection provided to victims and the lack of rehabilitation procedures, of compensation and of funding for non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and temporary shelter to victims. While noting that sexual exploitation is a criminal offence in the State party, the Committee regrets the absence of information with regard to women and teenagers trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. The Committee further notes the lack of information about the prevalence of prostitution in the State party and about exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution.

28. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Tackle the root causes of trafficking and exploitation of women by increasing its efforts to improve the economic situation of women and girls, in particular Roma women, thereby eliminating their vulnerability to exploitation and traffickers;

(b) Provide adequate assistance and protection to all women victims of trafficking, increase the number of shelters for victims, expedite efforts to establish compensation mechanisms for victims and strengthen programmes for victims' reintegration into society;

(c) Broaden cooperation with non-governmental organizations in implementing and monitoring the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in human beings and provide funding for anti-trafficking activities by non-governmental organizations;

(d) Pursue a comprehensive approach in addressing the exploitation of prostitution, including by developing strategies to prevent prostitution and implementing programmes to support and provide rehabilitation for women who wish to leave prostitution, and focus on the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

29. While appreciating women's involvement in electoral activities in the State party, the presence of some women in high-level positions, the high percentage of female judges and the number of women in medium-level decision-making positions within ministries, the Committee remains concerned that women, in particular Roma women, continue to be underrepresented at the municipal level, in the National Assembly, in high-ranking posts in the diplomatic service and in academic institutions. The Committee is further concerned by the lack of proactive and sustained measures taken to promote and accelerate an increase in such representation.

30. The Committee encourages the State party to accelerate the full and equal participation of women in public and political life and increase the number of women in top positions, including by implementing temporary special measures. It also recommends that the State party provide incentives for political parties to nominate equal numbers of women and men as candidates, adopt electoral rules that guarantee women an equal chance of being elected and create an enabling environment for political participation of women, including Roma and other disadvantaged groups of women.

Education

31. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of gender segregation in education, in particular in vocational education, where women and girls remain predominant in non-technical areas. The Committee further reiterates its concern, expressed in its previous concluding observations (A/53/38/Rev.1, para. 245), at the high dropout rates of Roma girls and women. It also notes with concern the very low number of Roma women in higher education. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the outcomes of the measures taken to deal with this phenomenon.

32. The Committee urges the State party:

(a) To develop measures aimed at diversifying women's educational and professional choices, including counselling programmes;

(b) To take measures to tackle the root causes of and to decrease the dropout rates among Roma girls and to reintegrate them into the educational system by fully implementing the strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities and the National Roma Integration Strategy (2012-2020).

Employment

33. The Committee notes with appreciation that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is embodied in domestic legislation, that sexual harassment is prohibited in the Protection against Discrimination Act and that a national employment strategy (2008-2015) and a national action plan for employment have been adopted. The Committee expresses concern, however, about the continuing vertical and horizontal occupational segregation and the persistent wage gap between women and men, in particular in the public sector, the increased rate of women's unemployment and the exclusion of Roma women from the formal labour market. It is also concerned about the lack of information on complaints related to labour discrimination based on sex, the low number of reported cases of sexual harassment and the low number of men taking paternity leave.

34. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures:

(a) To narrow and close the wage gap between women and men by applying job evaluation schemes in the public and private sectors connected with wage increases in female-dominated sectors, and to strengthen the access of women, including Roma women and women belonging to other disadvantaged groups, to formal employment and entrepreneurship;

(b) To provide information on the enforcement of legal provisions related to labour discrimination based on sex and sexual harassment, and to include such data in its subsequent periodic report;

(c) To encourage men to share parental responsibilities on an equal footing with women, including by taking paternity leave.

Health

35. While welcoming the decrease in maternal mortality and the State party's efforts to provide education on sexual and reproductive health in schools and access to contraceptives, the Committee remains concerned about the increased number of early pregnancies and the high rate of abortion, in particular among teenagers and women aged under 20 years, which indicates that abortion continues to be used as a method of birth control. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of information on the inclusion of Roma women in the reformed compulsory health-care system.

36. The Committee calls upon the State party to step up its efforts to systematically promote education on sexual and reproductive health rights and to target adolescent girls and boys, including in vocational training schools, paying special attention to the prevention of early pregnancy, and to provide adequate family planning services and affordable contraceptives, in line with the recommendations made during the universal periodic review of Bulgaria by the Human Rights Council in November 2010 (A/HRC/16/9, para. 80.30). The Committee requests the State party to provide information on access to health care for Roma women in its subsequent periodic report.

37. While noting the information provided about the recent adoption by the Government of regulations prohibiting illegal requests for additional payments by medical staff and about the establishment of a working group to design a patients' bill of rights and responsibilities, the Committee expresses concern at the impact on women, in particular, of the unfriendly health-care environment and at the lack of effective complaints mechanisms.

38. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that health-care providers are fully aware of the particular health-care needs of women, to adopt the patients' bill of rights and responsibilities and to establish effective complaints mechanisms to enable women to seek redress in cases of health-care related discrimination and abuse.

Economic and social benefits

39. While noting the target of reducing the number of people living in poverty by 260,000 mentioned in the National Reform Programme (2011-2015), the Committee is concerned about the feminization of poverty, in particular among Roma women, women with disabilities and rural and older women, and about the fact that the State party's anti-poverty strategy does not integrate a gender perspective. The Committee also regrets the lack of information on the impact of the current economic crisis on women and on the continuing welfare reform, including with regard to the pensionable ages for women and men, which are not the same.

40. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Mainstream a gender perspective in all poverty alleviation and development programmes to ensure that women fully benefit from such measures according to their needs;

(b) Ensure that, in the current welfare reform, the levels of social benefits guarantee an adequate standard of living for women and their families, and provide information thereon in its subsequent periodic report.

Rural women

41. While appreciating that the Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) establishes the principle of equality between men and women and includes training activities aimed at improving rural women's technical expertise, the Committee expresses concern about the insufficient information available with regard to rural women's access to social services and retirement benefits, the low percentage of rural women who own land and have access to microcredit and the lack of information on the programme to promote women entrepreneurship in agriculture.

42. The Committee encourages the State party to step up its efforts to enhance the economic and political empowerment of women in rural areas, including by reviewing the causes of the low percentage of women who own land and have access to credit facilities. The Committee also requests the State party to include in its subsequent periodic report information on rural women's access to social services and retirement benefits, and about the results of the implementation of the Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) and the programme to promote women entrepreneurship in agriculture.

Disadvantaged groups of women

43. The Committee notes the extremely limited information and statistics available on disadvantaged groups of women, such as women belonging to ethnic minorities, elderly women and women with disabilities. The Committee is concerned about the vulnerability and marginalization of such women, who often suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, especially with regard to access to education, employment, adequate housing and health care, protection from violence, access to justice and lack of information on the use of temporary special measures to improve their situation.

44. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its subsequent report, comprehensive statistical data disaggregated by sex on the situation of disadvantaged groups of women, such as ethnic minorities, elderly women and women with disabilities, in all areas covered by the Convention, in addition to information on specific programmes. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures, including temporary special measures, with a view to accelerating the realization of substantive equality for such disadvantaged groups of women.

45. The Committee is further concerned that gender-related persecution is not considered as a ground for granting asylum in the State party.

46. On the basis of the statement made by the delegation of the State party that the issue is currently being examined by parliamentary committees, the Committee calls upon the State party to consider gender persecution as a ground for recognition of refugee status, in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951).

Marriage and family relations

47. While commending the State party for the enactment of a new Family Code in 2009, the Committee notes the lack of information on the definition and scope of intangible joint marital property, in particular whether pension and insurance benefits and other career assets form part of the property to be equally divided upon divorce. The Committee is also concerned about reports that, in practice, women have no access to effective remedies enabling them to claim child maintenance from their former husbands or partners and about the failure of the State party to enforce maintenance orders. The Committee further notes the lack of information on the implementation by the State party of subsidy payments with regard to child maintenance.

48. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that the concept of joint marital property extends to intangible property, including pension and insurance benefits and other career assets, and that joint property is divided equally. The Committee further recommends that effective remedies be put in place to enable women to claim and receive child support from their former husbands or partners and that legal aid services be made available to women with insufficient means. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its subsequent periodic report, information on the implementation of the subsidy payment provided by the State in respect of child maintenance.

49. The Committee is concerned that the practice of arranged and early marriage remains prevalent within Roma communities, that there is insufficient information thereon and that the National Roma Integration Strategy (2012-2020) does not provide for specific measures or actions to combat this harmful practice.

50. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to gather data on the scope of early marriage, to raise awareness among Roma communities about the prohibition of child marriage and about the harmful effects of child marriage on girls' health and completion of education, and to effectively investigate, prosecute and punish cases of forced and early marriage.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

51. The Committee urges the State party, in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, to fully utilize the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its subsequent periodic report.

Millennium Development Goals

52. The Committee emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the attainment of the Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its subsequent periodic report.

Dissemination

53. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Bulgaria of the present concluding observations in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women and the further steps that are required in that regard. The Committee recommends that dissemination should include dissemination at the local community level. The State party is encouraged to organize a series of meetings to discuss the progress achieved in the implementation of the present observations. The Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Ratification of other treaties

54. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments 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 consider ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, i.e., 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.

Follow-up to concluding observations

55. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 16 and 26.

Preparation of the subsequent report

56. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the wide participation of all ministries and public bodies in the preparation of its subsequent periodic report and, at the same time, to consult a variety of women's and human rights organizations.

57. The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its subsequent periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its subsequent periodic report in July 2016.

58. The Committee invites 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 that were approved at the fifth inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, in June 2006 (HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1). The treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee at its fortieth session in January 2008 (A/63/38, annex I) must be applied in conjunction with the harmonized reporting guidelines on a common core document. Together, they constitute the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the Convention. The treaty-specific document should be limited to 40 pages, while the updated common core document should not exceed 80 pages.