



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

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### Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Thirty-seventh session

15 January-2 February 2007

### Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Suriname

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Suriname (CEDAW/C/SUR/3) at its 769th and 770th meetings, on 25 January 2007 (see CEDAW/C/SR.769 and 770). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/SUR/Q/3, and the responses of Suriname are contained in CEDAW/C/SUR/Q/3/Add.1.

#### Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its third periodic report, which followed the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports, while regretting that it provided insufficient information on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and did not refer to the general recommendations of the Committee. The Committee commends the State party for the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group, for the oral presentation, which elaborated on the recent developments in the implementation of the Convention in Suriname, and for the responses to the questions posed orally by the Committee.

3. The Committee commends the State party for its delegation, headed by the Coordinating Director for Gender within the Directorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Committee appreciates the frank and constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

#### Positive aspects

4. The Committee commends the adoption of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010, which includes 10 priority areas, and the establishment of a network of gender focal points in the different ministries of Government.

5. The Committee welcomes the announcement by the delegation that the term of the National Committee on Gender Legislation will be extended, that it will have a permanent nature and that its task will be to continuously assess national legislation



in regard to compliance with international conventions and to present concrete legislative amendments to the Government.

6. The Committee notes with satisfaction that a branch office of the National Bureau of Gender Policy has been opened and welcomes the statement of the delegation that more branch offices will be established in the future.

7. The Committee welcomes the statement by the delegation that there are no obstacles hindering the State party's future ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

#### **Principal areas of concern and recommendations**

8. **While recalling the State party's obligation to systematically and continuously implement all the provisions of the Convention, the Committee views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding comments as requiring the State party's priority attention between now and the submission of the next periodic report. Consequently, the Committee calls upon the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report. It also calls upon the State party to submit the present concluding comments to all ministries and to Parliament so as to ensure their full implementation.**

9. The Committee is concerned that, although the State party acceded to the Convention in 1993, it appears that the Convention has not yet been fully incorporated into domestic legislation and that its provisions are not directly applicable. The Committee is concerned that the provisions of the Convention and the general recommendations of the Committee are not sufficiently known, especially by judges, lawyers and prosecutors, nor by the majority of Surinamese women themselves.

10. **The Committee urges the State party to give high priority to ensuring that the Convention becomes fully applicable in the domestic legal system. The Committee calls upon the State party to take measures to disseminate information about the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations and to implement educational programmes for prosecutors, judges and lawyers that cover all relevant aspects of the Convention in order to firmly establish in the country a legal culture supportive of gender equality and non-discrimination. It also recommends that sustained awareness-raising and legal literacy campaigns targeting women, including rural women and non-governmental organizations working on women's issues, be undertaken to encourage and empower women to avail themselves of available procedures and remedies for violations of their rights under the Convention.**

11. The Committee continues to be concerned about provisions in the domestic law that discriminate against women, including provisions in the Nationality and Residence Act, the Penal Code and the Personnel Act. The Committee notes that, while some revisions have been made, such as the abolishment of the Asian Marriage Act, and the Committee on Gender Legislation has recommended a number of amendments to existing laws and the adoption of a law on equal treatment of women and men, the pace of legal reform is slow and there is a lack of real progress towards achieving women's de jure equality.

12. **The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party amend discriminatory provisions to bring them into line with the Convention and ensure compliance of all national legislation with the Convention. The Committee urges the State party, in particular, to repeal discriminatory provisions in the Nationality and Residence Act, the Penal Code and the Personnel Act. The Committee also urges the State party to give high priority to completing the necessary legal reform. It calls upon the State party to increase its efforts to sensitize Government officials, Parliament and the public regarding the importance of legal reform, which, according to article 2 of the Convention, must be undertaken without delay. The Committee requests the State party to ensure that the draft law on equal treatment of women and men is extended to acts of discrimination by public and private actors and includes a provision on temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention.**

13. While noting the adoption of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2006-2010 and a range of other plans, policies and programmes to promote gender equality, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information on their implementation and impact. The Committee is concerned about the lack of precise and reliable statistical data disaggregated by sex in the report, which makes it difficult to assess accurately the actual situation of women in regard to all areas covered by the Convention. The Committee is concerned that the lack of data is also an impediment to the evaluation of the impact of measures taken by the State party and results achieved.

14. **The Committee calls upon the State party to put in place expeditiously a comprehensive system of sex disaggregated data collection in all areas covered by the Convention so as to assess the actual situation of women and to track trends over time. It calls upon the State party to monitor, through measurable indicators, the impact of plans, policies and programmes to promote gender equality and progress achieved towards the realization of women's de facto equality. It invites the State party, as necessary, to seek international technical assistance for the development of such data collection and analysis efforts. It encourages the State party to use these data and indicators and the results of studies undertaken to promote gender equality in the formulation of laws, plans, policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention. The Committee requests the State party to include, in its next report, statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex and by rural and urban areas, in regard to the provisions of the Convention, indicating the impact of measures taken and of results achieved in the practical realization of women's de facto equality.**

15. While noting the State party's recognition of the important role of non-governmental organizations working on women's issues, the Committee is concerned that the State party seems to rely too heavily on such organizations in connection with the implementation of the Convention.

16. **While encouraging the State party to involve non-governmental organizations in all stages of the implementation of the Convention, including in policymaking, on a regular basis and in a structured way, the Committee emphasizes that the obligations under the Convention are those of the State party and urges it to ensure that implementation of the Convention is fully integrated into its overall governmental responsibilities.**

17. The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Suriname, which are reflected in women's educational choices, their situation in the labour market and their low level of participation in political and public life. The Committee is concerned about persistent stereotypes found in school textbooks and curricula.

**18. The Committee requests the State party to enhance the training of teaching staff in regard to gender equality issues and to revise educational textbooks and curricula to eliminate gender-role stereotypes. The Committee urges the State party to disseminate information on the Convention through the educational system, including human rights education and gender-sensitivity training, so as to change existing stereotypical views and attitudes about women's and men's roles. The Committee calls upon the State party to further encourage diversification of the educational choices of boys and girls. It also urges the State party to encourage a public dialogue on the educational choices girls and women make and their subsequent opportunities and chances in the labour market. It recommends that awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project positive images of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres.**

19. The Committee continues to be concerned about the prevalence of violence against women in Suriname, including domestic violence. It is concerned about the lack of updated data on all forms of violence against women. While noting the elaboration of two draft laws dealing with domestic violence, one of which is integrated into proposed amendments to the Penal Code and the other is a draft law on domestic violence, it regrets the lack of information on the content of those draft laws and is concerned about delays in their adoption.

**20. The Committee calls upon the State party to implement a comprehensive and coherent approach to addressing violence against women, including domestic violence, which should include prevention efforts, training measures aimed at public officials, especially law enforcement personnel, the judiciary, health-care providers and social workers to enhance their capacity to deal with violence against women in a gender-sensitive way, and measures to provide support for victims. It requests the State party to ensure that violence against women is prosecuted and punished with seriousness and speed. It urges the State party to enact a draft law on domestic violence as soon as possible, and calls upon it to ensure that all women who are victims of domestic violence, including rural women, have access to immediate means of redress and protection, including protection orders, and access to a sufficient number of safe shelters, as well as to legal aid, in accordance with the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women. It urges the State party to conduct research on the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence against women, including domestic violence, to serve as the basis for comprehensive and targeted intervention and to include the results of such research and of the impact of follow-up action taken in its next periodic report.**

21. While noting some measures taken to combat trafficking in persons, including the establishment of a Committee on Trafficking in Persons and amendments to the

Penal Code regarding trafficking in persons, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information regarding the extent of trafficking in women and girls in Suriname and the absence of adequate measures taken to address that issue. The Committee is concerned about the exploitation of prostitution in both urban and rural centres and the absence of efforts to combat that phenomenon.

**22. The Committee urges the State party to adopt necessary legislation and develop a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy and plan of action to combat that phenomenon. Steps should include the collection and analysis of data, including from the police and international sources, the prosecution and punishment of traffickers and measures to prevent trafficking and for the rehabilitation and social integration of women and girls who are victims of trafficking. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the effective prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitution. The Committee urges the State party to pursue a holistic approach in addressing the question of prostitution and, in particular, to provide women and girls with education and economic alternatives to prostitution. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, comprehensive information and data on trafficking in women and girls, on exploitation of prostitution and on the measures taken to prevent and combat such activities, including their impact. The Committee recommends that, in those matters, the State party pay special attention to the situation of Maroon women.**

23. While noting the delegation's statement that the National Bureau of Gender Policy is in the process of being upgraded and the establishment of gender focal points in different ministries, the Committee is concerned that the Bureau is not sufficiently informed about legislative and other measures taken to promote gender equality and still lacks sufficient authority, decision-making power and financial and human resources to coordinate effectively the Government's work to promote gender equality and the full implementation of the Convention.

**24. The Committee requests the State party to ensure that the national machinery for the advancement of women has the necessary authority, decision-making power and human and financial resources to work effectively for the promotion of gender equality and the enjoyment of women's rights, and undertake effective coordination of initiatives across all government sectors. It encourages the State party to ensure that gender focal points with each ministry are composed of senior-level staff with direct access to decision makers and adequate links to the National Bureau of Gender Policy. The Committee encourages the State party to raise awareness and build capacity of government officials and staff at all levels on gender equality.**

25. While noting the increase in the representation of women in the National Assembly, from 17.6 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2005, the Committee is concerned about the continuing underrepresentation of women in public and political life and in decision-making positions, including in the National Assembly, the Government, diplomatic services and regional and local/municipal bodies.

**26. The Committee encourages the State party to take sustained measures, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations 23 and 25 to accelerate women's full and equal participation in elected and appointed bodies, including at the international level. Such measures should**

**extend to indigenous and other racial minority women and include: establishing benchmarks, numerical goals and timetables; conducting training programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for current and future women leaders; and regular monitoring of progress made and results achieved. It further urges the State party to undertake awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in public and political life and at decision-making levels for society as a whole.**

27. The Committee continues to be concerned about discrimination against women in the field of employment and, in particular, with regard to the non-availability of paid maternity leave in the private sector, especially for women working in small businesses. The Committee is also concerned about childcare facilities, which lack regulation of any sort. It is concerned about the occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market and the persistent wage gap, as well as the high level of unemployment among women.

**28. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party ensure that all women workers have working conditions equal to those of men, including freedom from sexual harassment and social security benefits and provision for paid maternity leave for all working women, including those working in small businesses. The Committee also recommends that the State party provide a sufficient number of childcare facilities under quality supervision. It recommends that efforts be strengthened to eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, and measures be adopted to narrow and close the wage gap between women and men, for example by linking job evaluation schemes in the public sector with wage increases in sectors dominated by women. It also recommends that efforts be strengthened to ensure access by women, including indigenous and other racial minority women, to vocational training. The Committee requests the State party to provide information on the measures taken in its next report.**

29. The Committee reiterates its concern about the provisions in the Penal Code regarding family planning, including prohibiting the display and offering of contraceptives, and the restriction on abortion, although the provisions are not enforced. The Committee is concerned about the high maternal mortality rates and the prevalence of teenage pregnancy. The Committee also reiterates its concern about the increasing HIV/AIDS infection rates of women and girls, including women in the interior and in rural areas.

**30. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the laws restricting family planning activities and abortion services, which are "dead letter" laws, be repealed. It urges the State party to take concrete measures to enhance and monitor access to health-care services for women, including in the interior and in rural areas, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 24 on women and health. It requests the State party to strengthen measures aimed at the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, especially among teenagers. Such measures should include making widely available, without any restriction, a comprehensive range of contraceptives and increasing knowledge and awareness about family planning. The Committee requests the State party to include in its next report detailed and statistical information on women's health and on the impact of measures it has taken to improve women's health and access to health-care services,**

including family planning, and about the impact of those measures on reducing maternal mortality rates and teenage pregnancy rates. The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS and improve the dissemination of information about the risks and ways of transmission. It recommends that the State party include a gender perspective in all its policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS. It calls upon the State party to ensure the effective implementation of its HIV/AIDS strategies and to provide detailed and statistical information about women and HIV/AIDS in its next report.

31. The Committee reiterates its concern about the precarious situation of rural women and women in the interior, in particular indigenous Amerindian and Maroon women, who lack access to adequate health services, education, clean water and sanitation services and to credit and other facilities and infrastructure.

32. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party give full attention to the needs of rural women and women in the interior, particularly Amerindian and Maroon women, and ensure that they have access to health care, education, social security, clean water and sanitation services, fertile land, income-generating opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. It requests the State party to provide, in its next report, a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of rural women in all areas covered by the Convention and on the impact of measures taken and results achieved in the implementation of policies and programmes that are targeted to enhancing the situation of these women.

33. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

34. The Committee urges the State party to utilize fully, in its implementation of the obligations under the Convention, 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 next periodic report.

35. The Committee also emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and the explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Goals, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

36. The Committee notes that the adherence of States to the seven major international human rights instruments<sup>1</sup> enhances the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

**the Committee encourages the Government of Suriname to consider ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.**

**37. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Suriname of the present concluding comments 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 the de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard. The Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".**

**38. The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its fourth periodic report, which was due in March 2006, and its fifth periodic report, which is due in March 2010, in a combined report in 2010.**