



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Eighth periodic report submitted by the Dominican
Republic under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2019^{*,**}**

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



I. Introduction

1. The Dominican Republic has the honour to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women the present report, in which it describes the progress made and the main challenges faced by women in eliminating such discrimination in the country.

2. The information in the present report is the result of a joint effort by the Ministry of Women and the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to collect data on the activities of the institutions that comprise the Inter-Institutional Commission on Human Rights and of other institutions that play a significant role in the implementation of public policies for the achievement of equality. The Inter-Institutional Commission on Human Rights, which is coordinated by the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the 2018–2022 National Human Rights Plan.

3. The institutions that comprise the Commission are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic (Human Rights Directorate), the Supreme Court of Justice (Technical Directorate General of the Council of the Judiciary), the Central Electoral Board (Department of Gender Equality Policy), the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (Human Rights Department of the Public Prosecution Service), the Ministry of the Interior and Police (Human Rights Directorate), the Ministry of Education (Department of Informatics and Communication and Directorate of International Relations), the Ministry of Labour (Directorate of International Relations), the Ministry of Women (Directorate of International Relations and Gender Equality Observatory), the Ministry of Defence (Higher Institute of Defence), the Directorate General for Migration (Subdirector General for Migration), the National Council on Disability (Department of Legislation and Justice), the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence (Department of Planning and Development) and the National Council of Older Persons (Directorate of International Relations). Contributions were also made by the Office of the President of the Republic (Directorate General for the Office of the President and Legal Directorate), the Office of the Vice-President of the Republic (“Progressing with Solidarity” programme, Social Policy Observatory and Social Policy Coordination Office), the Ministry of Higher Education and the National Statistical Office (Directorate for the Coordination of the National Statistical System). The following United Nations system entities also contributed information on their activities and the activities of their interlocutors in the country: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

4. The Ministry of Women, as the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the country, recognizes that we have not yet achieved the levels of equality that the country needs and wants. However, it is a great honour to present the advances made during the reporting period, advances that are the result of a joint effort backed by the central Government, which supports women through its public policies in the various sectors related to the three forms of women’s empowerment.

5. The reporting period (2015–2019) coincided with the presidential terms of Danilo Medina (2014–2016 and 2016–2020), which were served in accordance with Dominican law and during which, in particular, fundamental issues of gender equality and women’s rights were put on the public and political agenda. The eradication of violence against women and girls is unquestionably a key issue in decision-making bodies, the image of women is being re-evaluated in all areas and gender has been

mainstreamed in both public and private work. A noteworthy achievement is the decision by the Ministry of Public Administration to establish, in all government institutions, a gender equality and equity unit to help ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all institutional work and the resulting public policies.

6. We have taken particular care to compile the most important statistical data collected by the various observatories and, in particular, the work done with a gender perspective by the National Statistical Office, so that the Committee can corroborate the information contained in the present report. We have also submitted in the annexes other information on the current status of the implementation of equality policies. We have compiled the most relevant information, in accordance with the reporting guidelines, but, because of the drafting instructions received from the Committee, it is not possible to include all the achievements related to the requests made.

7. The present report was drafted by the Directorate of International Relations of the Ministry of Women, taking into account all the requests made by the Committee in the list of issues and questions prior to the submission of the present report (CEDAW/C/DOM/QPR/8). It includes the input provided by the institutions mentioned in annexes A and B, the initiatives and efforts of United Nations agencies in the country and the contributions of non-governmental organizations working for the well-being of women throughout their lives, in order to broaden the scope of the achievements, progress and challenges presented.

II. Replies to the list of issues

A. Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues

8. In addition to standardizing the production of statistics, disaggregated as set out in the list of issues, the national statistical system is producing statistics based on surveys on matters essential to the rights of women and girls, such as child marriage and early unions, adolescent pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health, and violence.

9. The National Statistical Office periodically receives the administrative records of the entities of the national statistical system and annually updates the indicators contained in the various information systems with a gender perspective on the basis of the data available, in order to generate statistical information in accordance with an established methodology. The Office has the following systems:

- (a) The National Information System on Gender-based Violence;¹
- (b) The System of Gender-Sensitive Indicators of the Dominican Republic;²
- (c) The indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals;³
- (d) The Gender Atlas of the Dominican Republic;
- (e) National surveys to create baseline data on specific matters (see annex A).

10. The objective of the Social Policy Observatory of the Office of the Vice-President⁴ is to improve the management of knowledge related to poverty and social inclusion, analyse social issues relevant to the country's development, and disseminate knowledge through publications and the coordination of discussion forums. The objective of the Gender Equality Observatory⁵ of the Ministry of Women is to

¹ See <https://sinavig.one.gob.do/>.

² See <https://sisge.one.gob.do/>.

³ See <http://ods.gob.do/Home/Inicio>.

⁴ See www.opsd.gob.do/observatorio/qui%C3%A9nes-somos/.

⁵ See <https://oig-rd.gob.do/>.

understand the situation of women compared with that of men and evaluate the impact of public policies implemented by the Government.

B. Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues

11. Various efforts have been made to highlight discrimination against women in the public and private spheres and steps have been taken to bring about cultural change.

12. In 2019, the Ministry of Women launched the third national gender equality and equity plan (2020–2030),⁶ in which sectoral strategies are aligned with the 2030 National Development Strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5, and other programmatic and public policy instruments for gender equity.

13. The main themes of the third national gender equality and equity plan and the links between them and the Sustainable Development Goals are as follows:

- (a) Education for equality, aligned with target 5.1 and Goal 4;
- (b) Comprehensive women's health, aligned with target 5.3 and Goal 3;
- (c) Economic empowerment, aligned with targets 5.4 and 5.a, and Goal 8;
- (d) Citizenship, democracy, and social and political participation, aligned with target 5.5;
- (e) Gender equality and the environment, aligned with target 5.a and Goal 6;
- (f) Gender-based violence against women, aligned with target 5.2;
- (g) Digital technologies for women's empowerment, aligned with targets 5.b and 5.c.

14. The Ministry of Women, which is leading the implementation of the road map for the achievement of Goal 5, emphasized that the third national gender equality and equity plan should include accelerators for achieving the Goals. UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women in the evaluation of the second national gender equality and equity plan, and in the design of the third plan and of the road map for Goal 5.

15. Another important initiative is the Dominican seal of equality in the public and private sectors.^{7, 8} Through the seal, the Ministry of Women, with support from UNDP, promotes a model of high-quality management for equality and addresses gender inequalities in the following areas:

- Reconciliation of professional, family and personal life
- Access to work
- Equal pay
- Sexual or workplace harassment
- Prevention of and intervention in domestic and gender-based violence

16. The following has been achieved in relation to the seal of equality:

- Establishment of the seal and Dominican standard No. 775

⁶ Available at <https://oig-rd.gob.do/publicaciones/#planes-nacionales>.

⁷ See <https://igualandord.com/>.

⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqFcFokVQU0&t=30s and www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xgCIGIpUww&t=55s.

- Award of the seal at the gold level to 6 private companies (Banco BHD León, Bepensa, Claro, Humano Seguros, Grupo Universal and Barrick Gold), with 67 companies in the process of certification
- Award of the seal to four government entities (the Office of the Vice-President of the Republic, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development, the Central Electoral Board and the Dominican Civil Aviation Institute)

17. In a joint decision of 11 September 2019, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Women provided for the establishment of gender equality units in public administration bodies (see annex B for a copy of the decision).

18. The bill on equality and non-discrimination is in the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Judiciary, where it is being reviewed with a view to reaching consensus among the interested parties. The review is expected to be completed in the coming months. The Office of the President has instructed the Ministry of Health to ensure access to contraceptive methods and comprehensive sex education.

C. Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

19. The comprehensive draft legislation on violence against women is currently before the National Congress, where its consideration has been given high priority. Through a designated commission chaired by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Office of the President and composed of the institutions involved, the Office of the President is coordinating the implementation of the draft legislation and the involvement of all interested parties. The Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Women are continuously monitoring the process until the draft legislation is approved.

D. Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

20. The National Public Defence Office⁹ is the constitutional body of the justice system. It has administrative and functional autonomy, and was established to ensure access to justice for individuals and respect for their fundamental rights. Public defenders receive specialized training in criminal defence and representation, and in the provision of aid to anyone who is accused of committing a criminal offence and whose rights to freedom, human dignity and due process are affected, without discrimination of any kind. The following are under the Office's responsibility:

- Public defence offices in the provinces
- The Department of Free Legal Aid for Vulnerable Groups
- The National Network for the Identification and Protection of the Rights of Vulnerable Groups
- The Internal Human Rights Commission
- The national directory of State organizations and institutions responsible for ensuring access to justice, and of civil society organizations that provide related support and aid

21. During the reporting period, legal aid in criminal cases was received by the following:

- 7,294 women, including 18 with disabilities, who were new users of the service

⁹ See www.defensapublica.gob.do/.

- 1,065 children and adolescents
 - 284 women of Haitian origin, including 27 adolescents
22. No requests were received for legal aid in cases related to gender-based discrimination in civil and labour courts during the reporting period.
23. Other programmes include the following:
- The nationwide radio programme of the Ministry of Women, entitled “Women, know your rights”, through which the Ministry raises awareness of and protects women’s rights and promotes the elimination of violence against women in our society
 - The gender equality policy of the Judiciary, a policy that was established in 2007 and approved by Decision No. 3041-2007 of the plenary of the Supreme Court of Justice, and in which the need to prevent and eradicate any form or manifestation of gender discrimination and protect rights is recognized
 - The Directorate for Families, Children, Adolescents and Gender of the Judiciary, which is responsible for implementing the gender equality policy
 - The Division of Judicial Statistics of the Directorate of Planning and Projects of the Judiciary, which has established a statistical observatory on gender and domestic violence
 - The Dominican Judicial Documentation and Information Centre, which compiles judgments on domestic and gender-based violence from all the country’s courts, including the Supreme Court of Justice, for the analysis of the related jurisprudence
 - The National Judicial College, which provides appropriate training to aspiring justices of the peace and sitting judges, judicial officials, and employees and defence lawyers of the National Public Defence Office, and mainstreams gender in study programmes
 - The Commission for Gender Equality, which monitors and reports on the performance of actions approved under the gender equality policy
 - The departmental subcommissions, which monitor compliance with the plan of action throughout the country
24. The following steps were taken during the reporting period:
- Establishment of 10 interview centres with Gesell chambers and closed-circuit television systems for victims or witnesses of criminal offences
 - Issuance of a good practice guide for the handling, by judges and judicial officials, of domestic and gender-based violence cases
 - Approval, by the Council of the Judiciary in 2016, of an equality policy for persons with disabilities, as a result of which the following initiatives were taken:
 - Training programmes related to disability
 - 2020–2024 Institutional Strategic Plan
 - Award of the Dominican inclusivity seal by the National Council on Disability
 - Agreement between the Public Prosecution Service and the organization of women with disabilities *Círculo de Mujeres con Discapacidad* for the inclusive care of women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence

25. The Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre of the Supreme Court of Justice¹⁰ follows up on gender-related judgments and other judicial decisions with a view to providing guidelines for the Judiciary and suggesting the legislative changes deemed necessary in order to enhance the effectiveness and strength of the judicial response.

26. Between 2015 and 2018 – the figures for 2017 and 2018 are preliminary – 12,784 cases related to violence primarily affecting women were brought to trial; 11,995, or 93.83 per cent, were cases of domestic violence against women, while 271, or 2.12 per cent, were cases of violence against women. Crimes of sexual violation of adults, with no distinction made as to whether or not the alleged victim was female, accounted for 518 cases, or 4.05 per cent (see the statistics provided in the annexes).

27. The studies carried out by the Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre include an analysis of court judgments related to women's deaths associated with intimate and family relationships and to violence against women. In that study, obstacles, weaknesses and good practices were identified through an analysis, from a gender perspective, of the form and content of 121 judgments provided by the observatory of the Directorate for Families, Children, Adolescents and Gender of the Judiciary.

28. The following recommendations were made in the study:

- Conduct further research on the general efforts of the Judiciary in the area of gender-based violence against women and assess the practices, attitudes and knowledge of judges and all staff who provide support in the administration of justice.
- Improve the language and structure of judicial decisions to make them easier to understand.
- Conduct more institutional investigations to confront impunity and eliminate sexism from the text of judgments so that women are not confused and re-victimized.
- Establish agreements with universities that have gender studies centres, and agree on curricular training activities related to gender and violence, over and above workshops or short courses, at the master's and diploma levels.

29. The Directorate for Families, Children, Adolescents and Gender of the Judiciary conducted an analysis of court judgments related to rape and incest in the Dominican Republic. The findings included the following:

- (a) A total of 94 per cent of the victims were women, mostly girls, adolescents and young adults; some cases involved older persons (45 per cent of the victims were children, followed closely by adolescents, who accounted for 38 per cent);
- (b) The crimes were punished with the maximum penalties;
- (c) In 2 per cent of cases, the defendant was found not guilty;
- (d) The fact that the defendants or perpetrators were linked to the victims as parents or relatives, or, inter alia, as acquaintances, friends, neighbours or teachers, reaffirmed the high levels of violence within families;
- (e) Most judges had received training on the gender perspective and the use of the legal instruments on which that perspective is based;
- (f) The judgments complied with the law in terms of timeliness, the definition of crimes and aggravating circumstances;
- (g) Among the judgments analysed, the best results were obtained in cases in which the crime was committed in provinces that had a Unit for the Care of Victims of

¹⁰ See https://observatoriojusticiaygenero.gob.do/observatorio/quienes_somos.aspx.

Domestic and Gender-based Violence and Rape of the Attorney General's Office, an office of the National Institute of Forensic Science and interview centres for vulnerable persons, and in which support was provided by lawyers from the Ministry of Women.

Training of justice system personnel on gender issues

30. During the reporting period, the National Judicial College trained judges and employees of the Judiciary, public defenders and employees of the National Public Defence Office, and members of the national legal community in such matters as access to justice, fundamental rights, human rights, domestic and gender-based violence, and the gender perspective, in order to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in terms of access to justice (see annex A).

31. With regard to the training of police officers in relation to the Convention, the Directorate Specialized in Support Services for Women and Victims of Domestic Violence of the National Police provided various training sessions, in which 9,019 people participated in 2019.

E. Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

32. The main results of the implementation of the second national gender equality and equity plan (2007–2017) were as follows:

- Gender equality and equity in the country's legal and programmatic frameworks and institutional reforms
 - Explicit inclusion of the principle of gender equality in article 39 of the 2010 Dominican Constitution; mainstreaming of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in Act No. 1-12, on the 2030 National Development Strategy, and mainstreaming of the gender perspective in plans, programmes, projects and public policies through the implementing regulation of that Act; inclusion of gender equality in Act No. 176-07, on the National District and municipalities; and mainstreaming of the gender perspective in other amended laws and decisions, such as the General Health Act (Act No. 42-01), Act No. 135-11, on HIV/AIDS, Decision No. 04-2010, Decision No. 05-2015, Decision No. 13-2016, Act No. 41-08, Act No. 87-01, on the Dominican social security system, Decree No. 575-07 and Act No. 358-12
 - Pilot project for the mainstreaming of gender in the implementation of the National Development Strategy in 10 State institutions, with the inclusion, for the first time, of specific budget lines to promote gender equality in the national budget and the establishment of important forums for inter-institutional coordination
- Deconstruction of discriminatory cultural stereotypes and roles and revitalization of the female image
 - In the Dominican Demographic and Health Survey, for the question "Who decides how the wife's money is spent?", the percentage of respondents who replied "mainly the wife" decreased from 57 per cent in 2007 to 51 per cent in 2013, but the percentage that replied that the decision was made "jointly" increased from 38 per cent in 2007 to 44.9 per cent in 2013. For the questions "Who makes decisions about women's health care?" and "Who makes decisions about visiting other family members?", the percentages associated with women's empowerment and shared decisions increased between 2007 and 2013. The exception was the decision on how to spend the money contributed to the household by the wife; the percentage of responses

indicating that the decision was shared increased, but so did the percentage indicating that the husband took the decision unilaterally.

- In the National Survey of Multi-Purpose Households, in both 2009–2010 and 2014, Dominican women were asked whether they believed that their partner was justified, under certain specific circumstances, in hitting them. In 2009–2010, 4.1 per cent of women respondents aged between 15 and 49 thought that a husband was justified in hitting his wife or partner; however, that percentage dropped to 2.0 per cent for the same group in 2014.
- Highlighting of women’s contributions and status in society
 - Production of gender-related statistics and indicators (System of Gender-Sensitive Indicators and National Information System on Gender-based Violence)
 - Conduct of 90 gender-related studies for various sectors of the Government and Dominican society
- Expansion and strengthening of coordination among institutions and organizations that improve gender equity and equality, and establishment of institutional bodies
 - Establishment of 50 gender equity and development offices in State institutions
 - Establishment of 56 provincial and municipal offices of the Ministry of Women
 - Establishment of gender commissions in the Central Electoral Board, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate and the Directorate for Families, Adolescents and Gender of the Public Prosecution Service
 - Establishment of inter-institutional committees on, among other things, technology; security, citizenship and gender at the local level; the environment; training related to elections and civil status; education; and political training
 - Production of methodological tools and operational mechanisms to mainstream gender into public policies in the implementation of the 2030 National Development Strategy
- Strengthening of economic empowerment and overcoming of poverty among women
 - Establishment of a specialized solidarity-based banking programme, through which 67 per cent of credit is granted to women who own micro- and small enterprises, and financial advice and training are provided
 - Provision of training to more than 3,500 women entrepreneurs and owners of micro- and small enterprises through Banco ADOPEM, the savings and loans bank of the women’s development association Asociación Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer
 - Provision of training to 1,755 people in the provinces of Azua, Monte Cristi and Valverde through a project for strengthening the banana value chain
 - Establishment of a registry of women suppliers to the State; inclusion, from 2012 to 2016, of more than 12,000 women in the registry of suppliers to the State maintained by the Directorate General of Public Procurement of the Ministry of Finance

- Enrolment of a greater proportion of households headed by women in all components of the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme
- Strengthening of mechanisms for preventing and addressing gender-based violence
 - Conduct of many awareness-raising activities (campaigns and information days) and general and specialized training by the Ministry of Women, the Attorney General’s Office and civil society organizations
 - Establishment of the policy on the gender perspective in official statistics by the National Statistical Office
 - Establishment of such organized information systems as the National Information System on Gender-based Violence and the System of Gender-Sensitive Indicators
 - 2010 reform of the Dominican Constitution, in which all forms of slavery, servitude, and trafficking and smuggling of persons are prohibited
 - Establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (through Decree No. 575-07)

Steps taken to strengthen the human and technical resources of the Ministry of Women

33. The institutional structure of the Ministry of Women was updated and adjusted in coordination with the Ministry of Public Administration; the result was Decision No. 002/2017 of the Ministry of Public Administration, in which the modifications to the organizational structure of the Ministry of Women were approved (see annex B).

34. Such new work units and positions as the Gender Equality Observatory, which are necessary for the proper functioning of the Ministry of Women, were established.

35. The in-service employee training programme were institutionalized through the National Institute of Public Administration of the Ministry of Public Administration.

36. The School of Gender Equality, a tool for in-person and online training and education, was established to support and enhance knowledge and work with a gender perspective among public servants, including staff of the Ministry of Women, and among citizens, in matters related to gender and a culture of such democratic values as equality, solidarity and responsible citizenship.

Steps taken to put in place a system to monitor the implementation of the national gender equality and equity plan in the context of the Convention

37. The Gender Equality Observatory of the Ministry of Women was established to evaluate the impact of public policies in all areas of public and private life and to provide measurements in such areas as population, education, health, economic empowerment, participation, the environment, violence against women and technology. It will have its own information system in order to understand the situation of women compared with that of men at the national level. It will monitor, follow up on and evaluate the third national gender equality and equity plan (2020–2030), calculate progress related to the 54 gender-specific indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals and enable the evaluation of public policies to eliminate existing gender gaps.

38. Since its launch in August 2019, the Observatory has been in continuous use and has proved essential to the consideration of public policies. In January 2020, the Ministry of Public Administration awarded the Observatory its highest prize, the National Quality Award, for excellence, innovation and the presentation of statistics with a gender perspective (see the statistics provided in annex A).

39. The latest research by the Observatory includes the following:
- Analysis of unpaid work in the Dominican Republic on the basis of data from the time-use module of the 2016 National Survey of Multi-Purpose Households
 - Analysis of violence against women in intimate partner relationships on the basis of data from the 2018 Experimental Survey of the Situation of Women
 - Analysis of wage gaps between men and women in the Dominican labour market

F. Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

40. The Ministry of Women constantly leads communication campaigns to change behaviour in the various spheres of Dominican society in which women participate. These campaigns have had an impact on society, with a marked cultural shift towards the acceptance and re-evaluation of women in the country.

41. Among the most important campaigns are the following:
- First Mamá Tingó photography competition, held in 2019 with the support of the European Union; competition rules and winning photographs available at <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/noticias/item/509-MMUJER-y-union-europea-entregan-premios-del-concurso-nacional-de-fotografia-mama-tingo>
 - “Equal behind the lens” competition, supported by the European Union, to help raise public awareness regarding equality
 - “Ending violence against women: it’s a man’s job too” campaign, conducted in 2018 through the media and social networks
 - Competition for the graphic design and audiovisual production of the 2018 awareness-raising and sensitization campaign on the prevention of gender-based violence and femicide; winning entry entitled “Ending violence against women is everyone’s business”
 - Festival of short films on the theme “One and a half minutes of male violence”, for which the call for entries was addressed to directors, producers, students, actors and actresses, and of which the winners were as follows:
 - First place: Johnson Ogando, *Exulansis* (explicit), winner of the Minerva trophy. Available at <https://youtu.be/RgwOL2acY1w>.
 - Second place: Kayla Lala Rodríguez, *Foto perfecta* (explicit), winner of the María Teresa trophy. Available at <https://youtu.be/CtPHptiYKzw>.
 - Joint third place: José Báez, *Sus ojos sobre el lienzo* (explicit), winner of the Patria trophy. Available at <https://youtu.be/T6Lzd5U2S0g>; and Nidsbelle Guzmán and Greycy Uceta, *212* (explicit), winner of the Patria trophy. Available at <https://youtu.be/jWbRva0ht7s>.

42. National and international conferences were held on such themes as women’s political participation, the inclusion of women with disabilities in the workplace, comprehensive laws on violence against women and political violence.

43. An inter-institutional agreement was concluded with the Technological Institute of the Americas and the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications to close the digital gap between men and women.

44. The “Women and software” project was established to train women in information and communications technologies in order to eliminate gender inequalities by enabling women to use new technologies and improving their access

to jobs and remuneration. From 2018 to 2020, 100 scholarships were awarded to young women between the ages of 16 and 25.

45. In the third national gender equality and equity plan, under national theme 1: Education for equality, component 1.6: Non-formal education – Artistic media, social networks, advertising media and communications media, in particular television, the following is addressed: legislating, regulating and penalizing the objectification of women and the reproduction of women's roles and image through the media and advertising, in order to ensure respect for the integrity of women and project a re-evaluated, positive image that is productive and in keeping with the situation of women.

46. Other initiatives that help to eliminate stereotypes and discrimination against women are the seal of equality in the public and private sectors (see para. 15) and the Intersectoral Round Table on Positive Masculinities, in which the following institutions participate, among others: the Ministry of Women, UNDP, the Ministry of Health, UNFPA, Comunidad Inclusiva Dominicana, the Social Policy Coordination Office of the Office of the Vice-President, Profamilia, the Centre for Gender Studies of the Technological Institute of Santo Domingo, and the Institute of Gender and Family Studies and Research of the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo.

47. In order to draw attention to women's contributions to national gross domestic product and their double burden of work, the Gender Equality Observatory and the National Statistical Office have carried out studies in the following areas:

- Measuring the contribution of women to agricultural activities in the Dominican Republic.
- Unpaid work in the Dominican Republic.¹¹ The findings were that women bear 77 per cent (31.2 hours) and men the remaining 23 per cent (9.6 hours) of the burden, a ratio of more than 3 to 1; men showed greater reluctance in care work (of which they did 16 per cent) than in domestic work (of which they did 28 per cent).

48. The Social Policy Coordination Office is working to establish a social protection floor with a gender focus by analysing the issue of unpaid work and the ways in which policies for the empowerment of women in education, work and entrepreneurship can be reconciled with domestic tasks, parenting and care of older persons and persons with disabilities, and to ensure that the matter is accorded due importance in government budgets and becomes public policy.

G. Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

49. In article 396 of Act No. 136-03, sexual abuse is defined as relations between a minor and another person five or more years older, while, under the Civil Code, marriage is permitted before the age of 18, with the authorization of parents or guardians or by a court order. According to data from the Central Electoral Board, from 2015 to 2018, 968 marriages of minors aged between 14 and 17, of whom 129 were males and 839 were females, were registered (see annex A).

50. According to a 2018 analysis of the situation with regard to adolescent pregnancy in the Dominican Republic, among women aged between 20 and 24, 12 per cent had been married or in a union before the age of 15 and 36 per cent had been married or in a union before the age of 18, with no legal consequences; the proportions were much higher in the poorest quintile, in which 51.7 per cent of women aged between 15 and 19 reported that they were or had been married or in a union. A total of 23.5 per cent of adolescent women aged between 15 and 19 who were currently

¹¹ On the basis of the time-use module of the 2016 National Survey of Multi-Purpose Households.

married or in a union, and 24 per cent of young women aged between 20 and 24 who were currently married or in a union – namely, one in four – had husbands or partners who were 10 years or more older than them.

51. Adolescent pregnancy has been recognized as one of the basic obstacles to poverty elimination, development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country, and its prevention has become a national priority for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. The Joint Inter-Agency Programme to End Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean, led by the UNICEF, UN-Women and UNFPA country offices and various State and civil society actors, encourages regional and national action to end such marriages and unions.

53. The non-governmental organization (NGO) Plan Internacional República Dominicana has conducted several campaigns aimed at the general public and lawmakers for the removal of exceptions under Dominican law to the prohibition of marriage before the age of 18.

54. In 2019, the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence established a collaboration agreement with the local UNFPA office to establish girls' clubs to help reduce the rates of child marriage, early union, adolescent pregnancy, gender-based violence and school dropout, and other threats to the full development of girls and adolescents.

55. Save the Children in the Dominican Republic launched a petition to end child marriage on the change.org website. In the petition, the bicameral National Congress was asked to remove from the Civil Code the legal provisions that allow or facilitate child marriage in the country.

56. In April 2019, UNICEF launched a campaign against child marriage, with the support of many of the country's non-profit institutions and organizations, demanding that the legislature change the law to permit marriage, without exception, only over the age of 18.

57. In addition, in coordination with the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence, a bill amending the Civil Code to define marriage only as a civil or religious union between two persons of legal age, namely, 18 years, and to remove the term "emancipation" from the Code, was introduced in the Chamber of Deputies.

58. From 2012 to 2019, through the "Babies? Think it through" project, the "Progressing with Solidarity" programme raised awareness among and provided guidance to 25,004 adolescents and young people regarding sexual and reproductive health (see the statistics provided in annex A).

59. In April 2019, UNICEF and the "Progressing with Solidarity" programme of the Office of the Vice-President of the Republic conducted a study of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to child marriage and early unions in six municipalities.¹²

60. In response to the study, the "Progressing with Solidarity" programme, in conjunction with the European Union and the Directorate General for Multilateral Cooperation, with the technical support of UNICEF, is conducting a multisectoral programme in the provinces of Barahona, Higüey and Santo Domingo Norte for the reduction of child marriage and early unions in the Dominican Republic.

61. The "Girls Not Brides" project for the prevention of forced child marriage in the Dominican Republic benefited more than 1,580 girls and adolescents aged between 12 and 18 in 10 communities in the provinces of San Juan and Elías Piña,

¹² Available at www.unicef.org/republicadominicana/CAP_MIUT.pdf.

500 parents and guardians living in 10 communities, 40 religious leaders at the provincial level, 160 teachers, school counsellors and psychologists, 70 members of community protection mechanisms, public opinion at the national level, three local committees for the protection and restoration of rights, two boards of the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence, 30 judges, prosecutors and police personnel at the national and provincial levels, and the Congress of the Republic.

62. Research carried out, as part of the project, on masculinities and their impact on child marriage and early unions showed that 60 per cent of men in rural areas and 48.5 per cent of men in urban areas were in a union with an underage partner.

63. The following initiatives are also being taken:

(a) The Centre for the Promotion of Comprehensive Health Care for Adolescents¹³ of the Ministry of Women, established in Santo Domingo with funds from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, is conducting a programme to prevent adolescent pregnancies, promote values-based education and youth leadership, and prevent violence. Three centres are under construction to provide national coverage;

(b) The third national gender equality and equity plan (2020–2030),¹⁴ which is the road map for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, includes actions for the prevention of child marriage and early unions;

(c) A plan for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy¹⁵ has been issued and a national plan for prevention, care services, protection and political impact related to child marriage and early unions is being formulated;

(d) Inclusive, equitable and high-quality education, full and productive employment and the development of inclusive entrepreneurship for young people are promoted through the National Youth Plan in order to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for young people;¹⁶

(e) Extreme poverty is being reduced through the “Quisqueya Digna” National Plan;

(f) Various civil society organizations, including Plan International, Save the Children, the Girls First Fund and Girls Not Brides, are working in a number of communities on programmes for the prevention of child marriage and early unions and for the provision of care services to girls who were married at a young age.

H. Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues

64. Given that two proposals have been made for the bill on violence against women, the Office of the President of the Republic has established a commission that includes the Attorney General’s Office and the Ministry of Women and is tasked with studying the content of the proposals and identifying their most important aspects. The following are envisaged in the unified bill on violence against women:

(a) Creation of a comprehensive system of collaboration with all institutions to serve as part of the “critical path” for women in situations of violence;

(b) Establishment of a governing council to formulate the system’s policies, assisted by a support network of institutions and organizations working in the same field;

¹³ See <https://centropsia.gob.do/>.

¹⁴ Available at <https://oig-rd.gob.do/publicaciones/#planes-nacionales>.

¹⁵ See <https://gabinetesocial.gob.do/vicepresidenta-presenta-plan-nacional-para-la-reduccion-de-embarazos-en-adolescentes/>.

¹⁶ Available at www.juventud.gob.do/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/pnj2020-2030_optimize.pdf.

- (c) Precise definition of the roles of each participating institution;
- (d) Criminalization and codification of femicide and femicide by connection with a maximum prison sentence of 40 years;
- (e) Establishment, definition and criminalization of new types of violence, such as cyberviolence, media violence and gynaecological-obstetric violence;
- (f) Creation of a single national registry to connect all the entities involved in countering violence against women;
- (g) Allocation of specific funding by each institution working in the area, among other cutting-edge measures provided for in the relevant international conventions and protocols.

Services provided by the Ministry of Women

65. A total of 66,772 people received legal, psychological and other services, such as citizen advice services, in the country in 2019. Of those people, 25.8 per cent (17,210) received services at the Distrito Nacional headquarters of the Ministry of Women and 74.2 per cent received services at provincial and municipal offices.

66. Nationwide in 2019, a total of 15,493 people received services in court, by type of service and judgment issued. The Ministry of Women handled 2,349 judicial decisions in support of women victims of violence, by type of decision.

67. In 2019, the Ministry of Women handled 5,981 ongoing judicial proceedings in the country, by type of proceedings, including coercive measures, preliminary hearings, trials at first instance, appeals at second instance, appeals to the Supreme Court of Justice and reviews of judgments by the Constitutional Court, and carried out 4,930 judicial visits in the country in support of women victims of violence was 4,930.

68. In 2019, the provincial and municipal offices of the Ministry of Women provided direct assistance to 5,072 people. In 4,575 of those cases, or 90.2 per cent, the services were requested by women, and in 2,582 cases, or 50.9 per cent, the recipients of the services had suffered violence at some point in their lives. Of those victims of violence, 25.6 per cent requested legal assistance, 70.8 per cent requested psychological assistance and 3.4 per cent requested other information. A total of 63.0 per cent of women users who suffered some form of violence were under 35 years of age.

69. A total of 94.5 per cent of victims had a primary or higher level of education; 46.9 per cent had reached secondary school level, 27.6 per cent primary school level and 20.1 per cent university level. Of the women victims of violence, 22.5 per cent had no fixed income, 29 per cent earned less than 6,000 pesos per month, 27.3 per cent earned between 6,000 and 12,000 pesos per month, 11.9 per cent earned between 12,000 and 20,000 pesos per month, and only 9.3 per cent earned more than 20,000 pesos per month (see annexes A and B for more details).

Free services to address violence against women in the country

Ministry of Women¹⁷

70. Services are focused on prevention and assistance to address violence against women and domestic violence through the provision of support and through the monitoring, promotion, defence and upholding of the human rights of women in the country. The services are provided as set out below.

¹⁷ See <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php>, <https://twitter.com/MMUJERrd?lang=de>, www.instagram.com/MMUJERrd/?hl=de and www.facebook.com/MMUJERRD/?ref=page_internal.

71. A team of lawyers and psychologists provides free services to women who request them. Countrywide coverage is ensured at 31 provincial and 25 municipal offices of the Ministry of Women and at the Santo Domingo headquarters.

72. The emergency telephone helpline, which can be reached by dialling *212, 809-689-7212 or 809-200-7212, is available 24 hours a day, all year round. It was established in 2012 to provide assistance to and enable the rescue of women victims of violence, as well as to offer advice and guidance to other aid institutions.

73. Three shelters or refuges provide nationwide protection and temporary accommodation for women victims of violence, their minor children and other family members whose lives may be at risk. Two more shelters are being built to ensure greater comfort for users and their family members.

74. The School of Gender Equality is an educational platform that provides the general public with training tools for gender equality, as a means of preventing violence against women and protecting their rights.¹⁸

75. The Committee on the Critical Path for Addressing Violence against Women, which brings together institutions to prevent and address violence against women, has been established in 21 provinces. It is composed of provincial and local governments and institutions that are part of the critical path at the local level.

76. Committees on security, citizenship and gender have been established in neighbourhoods and communities with a high rate of violence, such as Villa Altigracia, Los Alcarrizos, Santo Domingo, Baní, Azua, Higüey, Barahona and Santiago.

Attorney General's Office

77. The Office's comprehensive support units to address violence against women and domestic violence operate as special prosecutors' offices to safeguard the public right of action in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of acts of violence against women and domestic violence in the judicial, psychological, forensic and social spheres, from a comprehensive, rights-based perspective.

78. Línea Vida (809-200-1202) is a telephone service through which citizens can report cases of violence against women and of abuse and abandonment of children, and receive free and effective assistance.

79. Behavioural intervention centres for men in the Distrito Nacional combat gender-based violence by focusing efforts on the male aggressor, yielding very positive results. In 11 years of operation, they have treated more than 31,000 men, fewer than 10 per cent of whom have reoffended, and no man who has completed one of the centre's programmes has committed femicide. Three centres are currently offering such services, in the Distrito Nacional, Santiago in the northern region and San Juan in the southern region.

80. The Directorate Specialized in Support Services for Women and Victims of Domestic Violence of the National Police is working to strengthen measures to support and protect women who are victims of domestic violence. It is equipped to receive reports 24 hours a day and is linked to the *GOB centralized reporting system.

81. The Civic Security Observatory is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Police. It publishes official statistics on violent deaths, including femicide, on the basis of continuous joint monitoring conducted by the National Police, the Attorney General's Office and the National Institute of Forensic Science.

¹⁸ See <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/servicios/la-escuela-de-igualdad-de-genero>.

Supreme Court of Justice

82. The Directorate for Families, Children, Adolescents and Gender is responsible for implementing the gender equality policy of the Judiciary to ensure equal opportunities for men and women and prevent gender-based discrimination in judicial decisions, in the administration of justice and in the internal functioning of the Judiciary.

83. The Justice and Gender Monitoring Centre of the Judiciary publishes case law and provides online training on women's access to justice, criminal proceedings, and violence against women and girls.

National Congress

84. Permanent commissions on family affairs and gender equity of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies were created to study, research and provide information on issues related to equality and equity between men and women, promote and implement a gender equality and equity approach, and eliminate discrimination against women in the legislative branch.

85. The Inter-Agency Committee for the Protection of Migrant Women is responsible for developing plans to strengthen governmental and non-governmental action for the protection of Dominican migrant women, especially those who are trafficked to other countries for sexual exploitation. The Committee comprises the Ministry of Women, which coordinates it, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Labour, the Directorate General for Migration, the Directorate General for Multilateral Cooperation, the Programme for the Prevention of Drug Abuse, the Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral, the Sociocultural Activities Coordinator, the International Organization for Migration and the National Organization of Hotels and Restaurants.

I. Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

86. The national plan of action against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants for the period 2017–2020, aimed at the prevention and prosecution of such trafficking and the provision of protection and assistance to trafficked migrants, specifies the actions to be taken by the relevant government institutions and encourages the actions carried out by non-governmental organizations in the area of prevention. It promotes inter-agency coordination and capacity-building by the National Institute for Migration.

87. The Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants was created as a national coordination mechanism by the Government to provide an institutional response to the trafficking and smuggling of migrants. It conducted a study on trafficking in persons as a new form of slavery.¹⁹

88. The Inter-Agency Committee for the Protection of Migrant Women is a national coordination mechanism that prevents the uninformed emigration of women by means of educational and work plans, and assists Dominican women who have survived trafficking and returned to the country, and foreign women who are identified in the country (Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

89. The Office of the Special Prosecutor to Combat Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons, created in February 2013, is responsible for implementing a national policy to counter organized crime by enforcing Act No. 137-03, on the crimes

¹⁹ Available at https://issuu.com/pciudadana/docs/la_trata_de_personas.

of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, to ensure that the perpetrators are punished and the victims and witnesses protected. The Office also establishes the national policy for prosecuting migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons.

90. In addition to strengthening the protection of children and adolescents in coordination with the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence and non-governmental organizations, the Office of the Special Prosecutor also provides legal aid, psychological support, social work services and accommodation to children and adults who have survived human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and to their families.

91. The Office of the Special Prosecutor works in coordination with the country's investigation agencies, international bodies that follow up on crimes of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, and other State institutions. Since 2013, it has provided legal aid services to victims.

92. The following 18 cases of trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation and exploitation of prostitution were brought before the courts in 2019:

- (a) 16 cases of trafficking in persons;
- (b) 1 case of exploitation of prostitution;
- (c) 1 case of labour exploitation.

93. A total of 34 people (22 male and 12 female) were charged.

94. In 2019, a total of 32 cases were under investigation:

- (a) 24 cases of trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- (b) 1 case of commercial sexual exploitation;
- (c) 1 case of pornography;
- (d) 6 cases of exploitation of prostitution.

95. A total of 3 male and 80 female victims were identified (82 adults and 1 minor). In the 54 cases brought to trial, a total of 91 men and 13 women were charged. In 2019, two cases were under investigation, five cases were brought to trial and six people were convicted. A liaison prosecutor specializing in cases of illegal trafficking in migrants and human trafficking was appointed to every public prosecutor's office in the country, working in coordination with the heads of those offices.

96. The Office of the Special Prosecutor, alongside the Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Institute of Justice and other partners, participated in meetings in 2019 to prepare a draft bill amending Act No. 137-03 on the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons to enforce the national plan of action against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants for the period 2017–2020.

97. There was an increase in the number of convictions for trafficking and a decrease in the number of convictions for fraud (which had obscured trafficking), resulting in significant judgments with sentences of up to 20 years (the maximum sentence). On 20 February 2020, the First Collegiate Court of the Criminal Chamber of the National District Court sentenced Jarvis Guerra Rodríguez, the owner of the closed Pink Pony Bar, to 25 years in prison for the crime of aggravated human

trafficking of 33 women of Venezuelan nationality.²⁰ Another judgment, in which a five-year sentence was stipulated, was issued on 17 March 2020.²¹

98. With regard to the “Casa Malala” project, the Attorney General’s Office and the Dominican Conference of Members of Religious Orders have launched a programme of cooperation and assistance to support the social reintegration of victims of human trafficking and related crimes, such as pornography and sexual exploitation. Under the programme, the Conference is responsible for the temporal administration of the project for two years.

99. The National Institute for Migration,²² which is under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior and Police and supports the National Council for Migration, in accordance with Act No. 285-04 and its Regulatory Decree, No. 631-11, is a technical body that conducts studies on migration to and from the Dominican Republic with the aim of promoting the development of evidence-based public policies that strengthen migration governance, encourage sustainable development and respect for human rights, and contribute to the professionalization of public servants working in migration management. The Institute carried out a qualitative study on trafficking in foreign women in the Dominican Republic,²³ a study in which it analysed the phenomenon in the country and internationally, taking into account gender, human rights and life-cycle perspectives.

100. The Ministry of Women took the following initiatives:

- Throughout the country, the Ministry provided guidance on human trafficking and smuggling, facilitates the reporting of cases and serves as a link for victims to access justice.
- It established six working groups to review cases handled in the regions with the highest trafficking-related crime rates (namely, the eastern, north-western and south-western regions and Santo Domingo).
- It established six municipal networks that promote a life free from violence and hold workshops on the subject.
- It trained *212 hotline staff.
- Through the National School of Migration, it provided online training to the Migration Policy Unit and the Inter-Agency Committee for the Protection of Migrant Women to strengthen the support system for victims of trafficking.
- In coordination with the State’s social programmes, it implemented a protocol to promote services and ensure socioeconomic reintegration and assistance for adult trafficking survivors.
- It signed an agreement with the International Organization for Migration on joint decision-making and action in the implementation of projects of common concern.
- It signed an agreement with the Consulate General of the Dominican Republic in Frankfurt, Germany, on the creation of the Consulate’s Gender Department, which will provide Dominican women living in Germany with advice, individually or with their partner or family, on violence against women. The agreement serves as a framework to be expanded to other consulates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²⁰ See www.diariolibre.com/actualidad/justicia/condenan-hombre-a-25-anos-de-prision-por-trata-de-personas-agravada-OE17201359.

²¹ See <https://noticiassin.com/condenan-a-cinco-anos-de-prision-administrador-de-bar-del-dn-acusado-de-proxenetismo-agravado/>.

²² See <http://www.inm.gob.do/>.

²³ Available at https://issuu.com/inmrd/docs/trata_de_mujeres_en_rd_6x9_web.

- It held the “One and a Half Minutes” festival²⁴ to raise awareness of and prevent human trafficking. The first prize was awarded to *Antes de Dormir*, by Francisco Rojas;²⁵ the second prize to *La Catarsis*, by Ellis Francisco Pérez and Giovanni Chacón;²⁶ and the third prize to *Ella*, by Patricia Narpier.²⁷

J. Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

101. There was an increase in the number of women candidates and in women’s participation in decision-making bodies, in both public and private life, although the number of women who held positions in those bodies remained low. The Monetary Board, which takes the main decisions in the financial and economic system, had 10 members, only one of whom was a woman, who held the position of Secretary. In the Executive Branch, the position of Vice-President of the Republic was held by a woman, but women continued to be in the minority at the highest ministerial level, with three female Ministers (of Higher Education, Women and Youth) in a total of 22 ministries. These ratios have been sustained for decades, although women account for about 63.6 per cent of the total staff of the public sector. For the 2020 presidential elections, the three leading parties each have a woman as their candidate for Vice-President.²⁸ Of the five judges who comprise the Central Electoral Board, two are women and three are men.

102. The Supreme Court of Justice, the highest judicial body in the country and head of the Judiciary, is composed of 16 judges, 4 of whom are women. Of the 770 judges in the Judiciary, 451 (58.57 per cent) are women and 319 (41.42 per cent) are men. In the administrative service of the Judiciary, of the 6,634 judicial officials, 4,009 are women (60.43 per cent).

103. The Judiciary has a gender equality policy, approved by Decision No. 3041-07, in which the Commission for Gender Equality of the Judiciary was also established. One of the core principles of the 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Judiciary is a commitment to work from a gender perspective.²⁹

104. In Act No. 33-18, on political parties, groups and movements, of 21 August 2018, and Organic Act No. 15-19, of 18 February 2019, on the electoral system, the quota for female participation in politics was increased, among other positive aspects. Article 53 of Act No. 33-18 provides as follows:

105. “Article 53. Gender quota. The form and mechanisms for selecting candidates for elected office shall at all times respect the percentages of electoral positions to be occupied by men and women in accordance with the present Act.

106. “Paragraph I: The Central Electoral Board and the municipal electoral boards shall not accept lists of candidates for elected office that include fewer than 40 per cent or more than 60 per cent of either gender.”

107. The quotas are mandatory and must therefore be met by all political parties, groups and movements. Also of relevance is the establishment, in article 289 of Organic Act No. 15-19, of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, composed of officials

²⁴ See <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/noticias/item/434-la-trata-de-personas-es-una-realidad-muy-dura-y-debemos-prevenir-que-las-mafias-se-enriquezcan-por-la-explotacion-laboral-y-sexual-de-mujeres-y-ninas>.

²⁵ Available at https://youtu.be/rO8Q_C8PZF4.

²⁶ Available at <https://youtu.be/pvUnSK9o0E0>.

²⁷ Available at <https://youtu.be/CyueTxn13fA>.

²⁸ See <https://acento.com.do/2020/opinion/editorial/8792625-las-mujeres-en-la-politica-a-proposito-de-raquel-pena-y-sergia-elena/>.

²⁹ See <https://listindiario.com/la-republica/2020/03/05/606937/print>.

who are responsible for investigating and prosecuting electoral crimes and offences, and who are governed by the provisions of Organic Act No. 133-11, of 9 June 2011, on the Public Prosecution Service.

108. In the event that political parties, groups and movements fail to comply with this legal requirement, the Central Electoral Board and municipal electoral boards will return the lists, granting the parties, groups and movements no more than 72 hours to resubmit lists that observe the quotas. Nominations by a political party, group or movement that fail to comply with this legal requirement will not be accepted, in which case the party will be declared to have presented no candidates in that electoral district. Article 78 of Act No. 33-18 establishes penalties for political parties, groups and movements, and other natural or legal persons, public or private, without prejudice to other laws that may apply.

109. Article 136, on gender equity, of Organic Act No. 15-19 provides that nominations and proposals for candidatures for the Chamber of Deputies and municipal and district councils shall be governed by the principle of gender equity, with no less than 40 per cent and no more than 60 per cent of either gender proposed nationally.

110. Article 278 of Organic Act No. 15-19 provides for administrative penalties for violations of the legal provisions related to elections, including the payment of financial compensation, based on the minimum wage or the dismissal of certain proceedings. Article 281 sets out the acts that shall be regarded as electoral offences, within the remit of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, which has jurisdiction over reported electoral crimes and offences.

111. Annex A contains the pre-candidates, final results for the elected candidates and other statistics related to the elections of 15 May 2016, in which the quota for women was set at 33 per cent as provided for in article 1 of Act No. 12-2000.

112. The following studies and training activities were conducted with a view to increasing women's political participation:

- A study on women's political participation and access to electoral justice in the Dominican Republic was conducted.³⁰
- A study entitled "Más Mujeres, Más Democracia: Desafíos para la Igualdad de Género en la Política" (More Women, More Democracy: Challenges for Gender Equality in Politics) was conducted,³¹ based on the 2016 general elections.
- Four regional workshops, which between them covered the entire country, with the participation of 366 women members of 15 political parties, aspiring politicians and activists from various provinces and municipalities, were held as part of a capacity-building project aimed at promoting the political participation of women in the 2020 general elections, led by the Ministry of Women and UNDP.
- An academic and technical training workshop entitled "Más Mujeres, Más Candidatas" (More Women, More Candidates)³² was held for female political party candidates by the Ministry of Women, UNDP and the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo.
- The first Inter-American course on electoral governance from a gender perspective was delivered by the Inter-American Commission of Women, in

³⁰ Available at www.do.undp.org/content/dominican_republic/es/home/library/womens_empowerment/mas-mujeres--mas-democracia--desafios-para-la-igualdad-de-genero/.

³¹ Available at www.do.undp.org/content/dominican_republic/es/home/library/womens_empowerment/mas-mujeres--mas-democracia--desafios-para-la-igualdad-de-genero/.

³² See <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/noticias/item/427-proyecto-mas-mujeres-mas-candidatas-fomenta-la-participacion-femenina-en-los-espacios-de-poder-y-en-las-candidaturas>.

coordination with the Central Electoral Board and the Ministry of Women, with a focus on capacity-building for electoral authorities and professionals.

- A course for strengthening the skills of women electoral candidates was developed in coordination with the Inter-American Commission of Women and the School of Governance of the Organization of American States.
- The “Conoce Tu Candidata” (Know Your Candidate) digital platform³³ was launched to provide access to information on the 7,876 women candidates running in the February and May 2020 elections.
- The Ministry of Women launched a digital campaign on political participation.³⁴

K. Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

113. With regard to the application of the General Migration Act, Act No. 285-04, the position of the Government of the Dominican Republic is that discrimination is neither practised nor tolerated as a State policy, a position that is reaffirmed in article 39 of the Constitution, which states that all persons are equal before the law and should be free from any form of discrimination. Therefore, the provisions of article 28 (1) of the Act, regarding the procedure for registering the births of children to foreign mothers who lack proof of legal residence, are based on legal, non-discriminatory criteria that are supported by the following regulations:

(a) Article 1 of the Convention regarding the Status of Aliens in the respective Territories of the Contracting Parties, signed at the Sixth International Conference of American States, held in Havana in 1928, which provides that “States have the right to establish by means of laws the conditions under which foreigners may enter and reside in their territory”;

(b) The Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws, signed in The Hague in 1930, which provides that “it is for each State to determine under its own law who are its nationals“;

(c) Article 22 (1) of the American Convention on Human Rights, ratified by the Dominican Republic through Decision No. 739 of 25 December 1977, and article 12 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by Decision No. 684 of 27 October 1977, which make the fundamental right of movement and residence of persons subject to the condition of legality, with a reference in article 12 (1) of the Covenant to compliance with the legal system; article 22 (1) of the Convention provides that “every person lawfully in the territory of a State Party has the right to move about in it, and to reside in it subject to the provisions of law”, while Article 12 (1) of the Covenant provides that “everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence”;

(d) Article 2 of the Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals Who are not Nationals of the Country in which They Live, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/144, which provides that “nothing in this Declaration shall be interpreted as legitimizing the illegal entry or presence in a State of any alien, nor shall any provision be interpreted as restricting the right of any State to promulgate laws and regulations concerning the entry of aliens and the terms and conditions of their stay or to establish differences between nationals and aliens”;

³³ See <https://conocetucandidata.com/>.

³⁴ See www.instagram.com/p/BxVLthunoFp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link and <https://twitter.com/MMUJERRD/status/1031617232978227201?s=20>.

(e) Article 9 of the Code of Private International Law (Bustamante Code), approved in Havana on 20 February 1928 and ratified by the Dominican Congress on 3 December 1929, which states that “each contracting party shall apply its own law for the determination of the nationality of origin of any individual or juristic person and of its acquisition, loss and recuperation thereafter, either within or without its territory, whenever one of the nationalities in controversy is that of the said State”;

(f) Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that “the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents”;

(g) Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides as follows:

“1. Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.

“2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.

“3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality”;

(h) Supreme Court Ruling No. 9 of 14 December 2005, in which the Court adopted the following criterion, which every international court recognizes for all States, enshrining the right to reserved and sovereign control of their migration and nationality policies: “each State, within the limits of international treaties and public international law, makes a sovereign determination regarding who its nationals are, and may therefore, as a binding corollary, assert its authority on persons who are born or live in its territory”, a criterion ratified by the Court in successive decisions without modification.

114. In accordance with international regulations on the acquisition of nationality, the country combines the modalities of *jus sanguinis*, or the right of citizenship by descent, and a limited form of *jus soli*, or the right of citizenship by place of birth. Only those children born to parents with permanent residence in the country are Dominican. Any person born to parents who are in transit are identified, their birth is registered, and they receive a proof-of-birth document, so that, as set out in the applicable article, the declaration of birth and recognition of nationality can be completed at the embassy of the parents’ country of origin; it is mandatory for newborns to be identified and for the filial bond to be established with the father and mother in a timely manner. However, in the exceptional case that the nationality of a child’s parents is only acquired by *jus soli*, on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which establishes the obligation to recognize the nationality of foreigners who are in transit, and provided that they are not entitled to another nationality, as confirmed in Supreme Court Ruling No. 9/2005, the Dominican Republic may, as a unique case, be required to recognize the Dominican nationality of that foreign child under those conditions of legal irregularity, thus safeguarding the right of the child to register his or her name and nationality.

115. The children of Dominicans will, regardless of the immigration status of one of the parents, always be Dominican nationals, in accordance with article 18 of the Constitution of 2015, which establishes that the following persons are Dominican nationals: the sons and daughters of a Dominican mother or father, even those born abroad, by *jus sanguinis* (para. 1); any person born in a foreign country to a Dominican father or mother, despite having acquired, by place of birth, a nationality different from that of his or her parents (para. 4); the direct descendants of Dominicans residing in a foreign country (para. 6). All children of Dominican descent, therefore, are issued a birth certificate in which their name and Dominican nationality are recognized. The

provision that is questioned in the list of issues, namely, the provision according to which children born to foreign women and Dominican fathers are considered “foreigners”, will apply only to persons who feel they are Dominican but who have been unable to legally prove that they are entitled to that nationality, and who therefore cannot transmit a nationality that they do not hold.

116. The practice of issuing different birth certificates for children of nationals of the Dominican Republic and children of foreigners is maintained as they have different purposes. For Dominican nationals, the birth certificate constitutes the registration of their name and recognition of their nationality, while for foreigners in transit it is only a declaration that the name has been registered in compliance with international regulations on the right to a name, so that a birth can be formally declared and the child’s nationality recognized at the embassies of the countries of which the child’s parents are nationals, as set out in article 28 of the General Migration Act.

117. With regard to birth registration, in 2019, the Central Electoral Board, the Ministry of Health, the Directorate General for Special Programmes of the Office of the President and the National Health Service, with technical assistance from UNICEF, continued to implement the Inter-Institutional Cooperation Agreement on Timely and Late Registration in the Dominican Republic, signed in 2017.

118. The hospitals given high priority under the Agreement received technical assistance from UNICEF and its partners to develop a workplan with 36 tasks, which included making best use of technical and financial resources, assessing procedural gaps, addressing existing bottlenecks and increasing intersectoral coordination among civil registrars and health officials.

119. As a result, the rate of timely registration of births grew from 41 per cent in 2012 to 61 per cent in 2017, 70 per cent in 2018 and 83 per cent in 2019. The rate also increased in the most marginalized areas. The rate of timely registration of births of children born to teenage mothers increased from 20 per cent in 2017 to 67 per cent in 2019, and the rate of registration of births in the register for foreigners increased from 37 per cent to 88 per cent.

120. To raise awareness of the importance of birth registration and the right to identity, UNICEF and its partners produced outreach posters in Spanish and Haitian Creole, posters in which the steps required to receive a certified birth registration before being discharged from the hospital were explained. A total of 2,676 people participated in information sessions held at the hospitals given high priority under the Agreement.

121. Capacity-building activities were also carried out in combination with awareness-raising sessions for 1,583 health sector officials, civil registry officials and staff responsible for promoting birth registration. The initiatives sought to raise awareness and clarify procedures.

L. Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

122. Under Act No. 169-14, establishing a special naturalization scheme, specifically with regard to individuals in group B, children who were born to foreign parents with an irregular migration status and who can prove irrefutably that they were born in the Dominican Republic by the means set out in the Act, are entitled to permanent residence with the same rights as residence obtained in the ordinary way. Two years after receiving a special residence permit, those individuals may opt either for ordinary naturalization, as provided for in the applicable law, or for the renewal of their migration status. Of the 8,768 foreigners who chose to undertake the process under group B:

(a) A total of 6,582 foreigners (6,577 Haitian nationals, 2 Venezuelan nationals, 1 Argentine national, 1 Nicaraguan national and 1 Curaçao national) were

granted permanent residence; 50.8 per cent (3,347) were women, 99.9 per cent of whom were Haitian nationals, distributed as follows: 66 per cent were legal adults and 24 per cent were minors. The other 49.2 per cent of those granted such residence (3,235 individuals) were men, 99.9 per cent of whom were Haitian nationals, distributed as follows: 68 per cent were legal adults and 22 per cent were minors;

(b) Of those who received permanent residence, 3,983, or 61 per cent, chose voluntarily to renew their acquired status with the Directorate General for Migration. Of those, 3,981 were from Haiti; 2,012 were women (1,253 adults and 759 minors) and 1,969 were men (1,274 adults and 695 minors). In addition, one was a male minor from Argentina and one was a male legal adult from Nicaragua. A further 1,718 recipients, or 26 per cent, opted for ordinary naturalization through the Ministry of the Interior and Police; 910 were women and 808 were men, and all were of Haitian nationality. Another 881 recipients, or 13 per cent, did not complete the naturalization process through the Ministry of the Interior and Police or renew their status as permanent residents at the Directorate General for Migration; 878 were Haitians (454 men and 424 women), 1 was a male adult from Curaçao and 2 were from Venezuela (1 male minor and 1 female adult);

(c) The minimum requirements – namely, submission of an application form to the Executive Branch through the Ministry of the Interior and Police, with the following documents: birth certificate; certificate confirming the absence of a criminal record, issued by the Attorney General's Office; copy of the permanent residence permit; and photocopy of the identity card – were not met in 2,197 cases (24 per cent). Of those individuals, 995 have taken steps to complete their files and 563 have already completed them. In 11 cases, the applicant opted instead to renew their acquired status with the Directorate General for Migration, while no action has been taken in 639 cases; therefore, only 2,186 cases are still pending.

123. The Dominican Republic, in accordance with its sovereign power to determine the way in which nationality is acquired, established the acquisition criteria in article 18 of the Constitution, which combines restricted *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, and in the protocol for the registration of the birth of children to foreigners, set out in article 28 of the General Migration Act, which applies generally to all foreigners, without discrimination based on nationality and with the aim of ensuring that no child is left without a nationality. To that end, taking as a basis the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which establishes the obligation to recognize the nationality of foreigners who are in transit, provided that they are not entitled to another nationality, a criterion that was confirmed in Supreme Court Ruling No. 9/2005, decisions on the acquisition of nationality are taken on a case-by-case basis, thus upholding the child's right to a nationality.

124. Birth declaration requests submitted to the Central Electoral Board may be subject to an investigation if there are any doubts regarding the information provided by the interested party. The investigation process is not discriminatory. The Board is responsible for maintaining the Civil Status Registry as a means of safeguarding identity. That task must be fully accomplished in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the Dominican Republic. As set out in article 18 (3) of the Constitution, the following persons shall be Dominican:

125. Any person born within the territory of the Dominican Republic, except those born to members of foreign diplomatic and consular missions, and foreigners who are in transit or reside illegally in Dominican territory. A foreigner "in transit" is any person defined as such by the laws of the Dominican Republic. In that regard, the birth declarations of children born to a foreign mother, or to parents who are both foreign, will not be registered in the ordinary birth register.

126. Article 28 of the General Migration Act provides that non-resident aliens who give birth during their stay in the country must register the child at the consulate of their country of nationality. If the father of the child is Dominican, he may register the child at the corresponding Dominican registry office, in accordance with the relevant laws.

127. When childbirth services are provided to a foreign woman who does not have documentation confirming that she is a legal resident, regardless of her nationality, health centres shall issue an official proof-of-birth document with the mother's personal details.

128. Article 28 of Act No. 285-04 is specifically not discriminatory but rather establishes the procedure to be followed for the registration of children born to parents who are both foreign. In that context, the Central Electoral Board issued its Decision No. 02/2007 of 18 April 2007 on the implementation of the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country. In accordance with the provisions of article 28 of the Act, that Decision provides as follows:

“(1) For the purposes of the present decision, the documents issued by the authorities involved in the process are named and defined as follows: (a) proof-of-birth document: constitutes proof of the birth and must be issued by the corresponding health centre; (b) certification: document issued by a registrar, including the most important information contained in the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country; (c) civil status documents: information on a life event collected by a registrar and recorded in the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country, pursuant to the formalities required by law. They relate to situations that can be verified by the registrar and are put on public record.

“(2) The Administrative Division shall take the appropriate measures to implement the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country, a register whose maintenance shall be among the powers and competencies of the registrar. Each registry office shall have one original register, which shall be completed by the registrar and shall remain at the registry office. A duplicate shall be created and kept at the National Directorate for Civil Status Registration of the Central Electoral Board. Every year, the Central Electoral Board shall send a list of registrations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directorate General for Migration.

“(3) Registrars shall be authorized to record, in the above-mentioned register, children who are born to non-resident foreign mothers from the date of entry into force of the present decision, upon submission of the proof-of-birth document issued by a health centre.

“(4) Registrars at the registry office for the place of birth shall, upon receipt of the pink proof-of-birth document provided for in the General Migration Act, Act No. 285-04, register the document in the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country and issue two birth certifications, of which one shall be given to the parents and the other shall be sent to the relevant embassy through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“(5) For the purposes of the present decision, the life event that is recorded and documented by the registrar shall be established when a birth is recorded in the birth register for children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign mothers who are not legally resident in the country. In this case, registration shall not be subject to the time limits and procedures set out in articles 39, 40 and 41 of Act No. 659, on civil status documents, or to the confirmation procedure for late declarations.

“(6) The Administrative Division of the Central Electoral Board shall be authorized to provide the National Directorate for Civil Status Registration with the resources necessary for immediate and effective compliance with the present decision.

“(7) The Secretariat of State for Health and Social Assistance (the current Ministry of Health) shall issue four original pink proof-of-birth documents, to be distributed as follows: the first original shall be given to the parents; the second shall be sent to the health centre by the Secretariat of State; the third shall be given to the civil status registration unit of the relevant health centre, if one exists, or to the registrar within whose jurisdiction the hospital lies; and the fourth shall be sent to the embassy or consular headquarters of the mother’s country of origin, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”

129. Children born to foreign mothers and Dominican fathers are considered Dominican, in accordance with the Constitution, provided that the Dominican father acknowledges paternity, and such children will be registered in the ordinary birth register at the corresponding registry, in accordance with article 28 of Act No. 285-04. Registrars may accept declarations of births of children to a foreign father or mother, even when the identity document (passport or identity card) shown by the foreign national has expired (see annex B).

130. The Central Electoral Board adheres to the Constitution and laws of the Dominican State. The terms and conditions for birth registrations are based on the Constitution of the Dominican Republic and the relevant laws. In accordance with the provisions described above, different birth certificates shall therefore be issued for children of Dominican nationals and children of foreigners.

M. Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

131. In 2016, after the investment of 4 per cent of gross domestic product in education was approved, extended schooldays were introduced in State schools. Students receive eight hours of instruction and three free meals on school campuses. Currently, 68 per cent of students, or 1,600,000 children nationwide, are included in this programme. The goal is to reach 100 per cent by 2020. The programme is not only substantially improving the quality of education but also generating savings of approximately \$1,400 per student per year.

132. The average salaries of preschool and primary school teachers have increased by 97 per cent, while those of secondary school teachers have risen by 103 per cent, and their retirement pensions and health coverage have also increased.

133. Through the Ministries of Higher Education and Youth, nearly 450,000 grants have been awarded for higher education opportunities, including for undergraduate, postgraduate and master’s studies in the Dominican Republic and abroad, and for English-language immersion programmes.

134. No assessments of the implementation of sex education or of the programme for pregnancy prevention and support for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents have been conducted.

135. Examples of progress made as a result of the implementation of strategies and initiatives relating to sex education include the following:

- Design, for use in schools, of proposed protocols for the detection and management of adolescent pregnancies, with a gender perspective
- Provision of national guidelines, for directors of education at the regional, district and school levels, on laws protecting pregnant adolescents and their rights, in particular the right to education, and on the Ministry of Education’s

policies to reduce school dropout rates and the impact of those policies on the continuation of pregnant adolescents and mothers in the education system

- Provision of training for 7,624 professionals, who participated in 122 meetings and workshops of psychopedagogical guidance and psychology groups on the programme for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and psychopedagogical support
- Provision of training in curriculum-based approaches to sex education and responsible parenting for 220 guidance and psychology experts at the national, regional and district levels of the education system
- Provision of training for 600 students in different regions of the country on peer multiplier strategies to prevent adolescent pregnancy
- Development in 2014 of education system guidelines for affective sexual education in schools (in partnership with UNICEF)
- Implementation of the pilot programme for pregnancy prevention and support for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in an education district in the province of San Cristóbal
- Provision of HIV-related training for teachers and students

136. Under the second budget support programme for the education sector (implemented in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and the European Union), the following steps were taken:

- Conduct of a situational analysis of the approach to sex education in the education system
- Formulation of suggestions for the inclusion in the revised and updated curriculum of competencies, achievement indicators and content relating to comprehensive sex education
- Development of curricula for comprehensive sex education from the preschool level to the lower secondary level
- Advancement of a proposal for continuing training in comprehensive sex education for teachers, guidance and psychological services staff, and members of school management teams
- Revision and updating of the introductory course entitled “Comprehensive sex education: methodological guidelines to promote attitudes and practices consistent with the priorities established in the curriculum”
- Preparation of peer strategies that are tailored to schools and take into account students’ rights
- Design of a structured proposal for training and awareness-raising for schools for parents and guardians
- Development of a proposal for awareness-raising and training for school support staff
- Provision of support resources for the provision of comprehensive sex education in schools, and preparation of guides adapted to students’ stages of development

137. The following main reasons have been identified for the gender gap in performance in mathematics at various levels:

- Perpetuation of biases and gender stereotypes through educational practices, the attitudes of education stakeholders, pedagogical resources, biased methodologies and techniques, and school organization and culture

- Promotion of gender stereotypes by the media, including the portrayal of girls as passive and of boys as more active and as having greater reasoning capacities, and thus a greater aptitude for science

The following steps have been taken to change views on gender in order to achieve equality:

- Development, by the Ministry of Education, the Research Centre for Feminist Action and the Ministry of Women, of science, technology, engineering and mathematics clubs,³⁵ under the leadership of the Directorate for Educational Computing, Psychology and Guidance, Gender and Development
- Provision of training for final-year students from the Salomé Ureña Teacher Training Institute on integrating a gender perspective into core competencies
- Development of a methodological guide for mainstreaming a gender and human rights perspective in educational planning and evaluation in the pre-university education system in the Dominican Republic

138. Male students and students living in rural areas have the highest school dropout rates.³⁶ According to information provided by the Dominican Institute for Educational Quality Evaluation and Research in 2016, the main risk factors associated with the problem are socioeconomic. For the 2017/18 school year, in urban areas the dropout rate was 2.46 per cent among girls and female adolescents, and 3.33 per cent among boys and male adolescents, while in rural areas the dropout rate was 2.99 per cent among girls and female adolescents, and 4.29 per cent among boys and male adolescents (see the statistics provided in annex A).

Strategy of the Ministry of Education to support inclusive education

139. This strategy is aimed at students with specific educational support needs, irrespective of sex, and is set forth in Ordinance No. 04-2018, which regulates services and strategies to assist such students, in accordance with the established curriculum. The following steps were taken under the strategy:

- Preparation and approval of the National Plan for Inclusive Education
- Establishment of diversity resource centres³⁷
- Development of learning support spaces: strategy to improve instruction in the Spanish language and mathematics for primary school students with specific educational needs
- Through the Olga Estrella National Educational Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired, promotion of the social and educational integration and inclusion of persons up to 20 years of age who are visually impaired, deafblind or have multiple disabilities, and recognition of the right of all persons to equitable and equal education, by means of:
 - Comprehensive education for children with multiple disabilities and deafblindness
 - Computer courses for the visually impaired
 - A supplementary support programme for the improvement of instruction in mathematics and languages

³⁵ See www.educando.edu.do/centro-de-recursos/busqueda/?q=clubes%20de%20chicas.

³⁶ See www.ideice.gob.do/documentacion/publicaciones.html-set_4=p1-12.

³⁷ See www.ministeriodeeducacion.gob.do/comunicaciones/estudiantes/minerd-presenta-plan-nacional-para-la-educacion-inclusiva.

- Technical support services, such as the production of adapted texts and teaching materials
 - Development of specific classrooms for inclusive education: transitional education strategy for children and adolescents with disabilities, providing rooms and specialized staff to enable students to develop necessary skills and abilities in order to promote inclusion
140. The following legislative, normative and administrative measures have been taken in the area of human rights:
- Development of rules for the system of harmonious coexistence in public and private schools (2013)
 - Establishment of the National Strategy for a Culture of Peace (2018)
 - Establishment of the National Plan for Inclusive Education (2019)³⁸

N. Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

141. Statistical information on the outcomes of requests to terminate women who enjoy maternity protection, by economic sector and local labour office, is reflected in Form RLT-5 of the Directorate for the Coordination of the Inspection System (see annex A).

142. Penalties for violations of the Labour Code are set forth in its section II, articles 720 and 721, on violations and penalties, respectively, as follows:

- Fines of between 1 and 3 times the minimum wage for minor violations
- Fines of between 3 and 6 times the minimum wage for serious violations
- Fines of between 7 and 12 times the minimum wage for very serious violations

143. The Labour Inspection Directorate monitors companies' compliance with the Labour Code. Under our labour laws, women and men have the same rights and privileges in the workplace, with the exception of maternity protection. In March 2019, by presidential decision, paternity leave was increased from two to seven calendar days throughout the public administration.

Social security

144. In December 2019, 7,954,923 people were enrolled in the Family Health Insurance scheme, including 3,884,741 men and 4,070,182 women, distributed as follows:

- Subsidized scheme: 3,726,262 (1,758,351 men and 1,967,911 women)
- Contributory scheme: 4,228,661 (2,126,390 men and 2,102,271 women)

145. According to the Office of the Superintendent of Pensions, 12,426 disability pensions and 9,520 survivors' pensions had been granted as at 31 January 2020.

146. Because the provisions of Act No. 87-01 relating to old-age, disability and survivors' insurance under the contributory scheme entered into force on 1 June 2003, no one yet has the level of contributions necessary to apply for an old-age pension.

147. We hereby provide the following information on the gender gap in labour participation:

- About 60 per cent of formal-sector workers registered in the Integrated Labour Registry System are male.

- The average salary is 7.2 per cent higher for men than for women, not taking into account specific factors.
- The greatest differences in salary between the sexes are observed at the lowest salary levels.
- The participation of male and female formal-sector workers varies by branch of economic activity; for example, more men than women are employed in financial intermediation and insurance, while the inverse is true in public administration and defence.

148. Under Act No. 5-13 and its implementing regulation, a minimum of 5 per cent of public-sector positions and 2 per cent of private-sector positions in the ordinary labour system are reserved for men and women with disabilities; failing that, for men and women with disabilities must be included in a protected employment or self-employment system. The following steps were taken to that end, in coordination with the National Council on Disability and UNDP:

(a) Awareness-raising sessions on disability, and training on the requirements established under Act No. 5-13 and on the employment quota, were provided for 80 employment experts and managers from the Directorate General for Employment and the National Employment Office, and for 240 labour inspectors;

(b) Coverage of wages and social security contributions was offered to employers which recruit youth with disabilities for in-company training under the First Job Programme;

(c) A memorandum of understanding was signed with UNDP to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities .

149. Other initiatives taken to promote the recognition of women include the following:

- Promulgation of Decree No. 164-13 on purchasing from micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, which provides for updating the registry of State suppliers, in particular to include information on enterprises owned by women or in which women hold more than 50 per cent of shares
- Adoption of the 2013–2016 Multi-Year National Plan for the Public Sector, which provides for increasing the percentage of women with access to sexual and reproductive health services, and for intensifying efforts to address complaints of rights violations
- Adoption of the second and third national gender equality and equity plans for 2007–2017 and 2019–2030, respectively, to enhance citizen security, access to justice and economic opportunities
- Adoption of the 2030 National Development Strategy, which provides for the mainstreaming of gender equality and equity into the plans, programmes, projects and public policies of the Dominican State

150. With regard to the implementation of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization, the National Committee on Wages is meeting with the parties concerned to determine the conditions for agreement on a differentiated minimum wage, and has encountered the following issues:

- Difficulty of engaging representatives of employers as interlocutors in the sector
- Wide variety of arrangements under which domestic workers are employed
- Broad variation in workers' incomes, which makes it difficult to establish a fair and realistic basic salary or minimum wage

- Definition of the concept of an employer, given the vagueness of that concept
- Limited nature of the powers of the National Committee on Wages, as the regulation to which the Committee is subject only covers economic activities and services, and, as a result, employers are not included in statistics on the economically active population
- Categorization of domestic workers by type of work performed
- Difficulty of ensuring coverage of domestic workers under social security schemes and of conducting inspections in the area of domestic work

O. Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

151. The following steps have been taken to improve the functioning of the subsidized social security scheme:

- Mapping and analysis of social protection programmes and the social security system in the Dominican Republic from a gender perspective³⁹
- Publication of a document scenarios and costs related to a social protection and gender equality floor in the Dominican Republic⁴⁰
- Introduction of the seal of gender equality in the public and private sectors

Solidarity pensions

152. Since 2019, the Dominican Republic has granted solidarity pensions of 6,000 pesos under the subsidized scheme of the Dominican social security system. These pensions are intended for persons affected by multidimensional poverty (belonging to the groups with the lowest and second-lowest scores under the Quality of Life Index) who, in addition to other vulnerabilities, such as disability, are marginalized and unable to participate in society, as well as for single mothers of children with disabilities.

Act No. 5-13, on employment quotas

153. Act No. 5-13, on equal rights for persons with disabilities, provides for:

- Reasonable accommodation: necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment and exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Act also provides for accessible and disability-friendly communication formats, including sign language and spoken language, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, written communication, accessible audio and multimedia, plain language, human reader and other augmentative and alternative communication systems and formats, including accessible information and communications technologies.
- Affirmative-action policies: quotas of 5 per cent and 2 per cent for the employment of persons with disabilities in public institutions and businesses, respectively.

154. The National Council on Disability and the Ministry of Labour took the following initiatives, in cooperation with other institutions and bodies:

³⁹ See www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20americas/documentos/publicaciones/mapeo%20y%20an%C3%A1lisis%20de%20g%C3%A9nero.pdf?la=en&vs=2221.

⁴⁰ Available at www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20americas/documentos/publicaciones/2019/03/piso%20proteccion%20social%20interactivo%201-compressed.pdf?la=es&vs=638.

- Implementation of the First Job Project of the Ministry of Labour
- Reservation of a quota of 10 per cent for the employment of youth with disabilities in the formal sector
- Implementation of an inter-agency project, led by UNDP, on the employment of persons with disabilities
- Preparation of three guides on the employment of persons with disabilities, for persons with disabilities, businesses and staff of the Ministry of Labour
- Establishment of a national accessibility evaluation system for the evaluation of compliance with physical accessibility requirements under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular its article 9, and Act No. 5-13 and its implementing regulation
- Establishment of an entrepreneurship programme for persons with disabilities, in partnership with the Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, the Cooperative Institute for Development and Credit, the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and the Directorate General for Special Programmes of the Office of the President
- Provision of advice to various bodies in the Ministry of Labour and to productive sectors of the country on employment of persons with disabilities
- Implementation of the Independent Living Programme of the National Council on Disability, designed to help persons with disabilities and their families to develop leadership skills and techniques to overcome physical barriers, care for themselves and build self-esteem
- Development of a sign-language dictionary to promote the social inclusion of deaf persons
- Establishment of the seal of good inclusive practices of the National Disability Council and UNDP, a seal that has been awarded to 113 entities, to recognize initiatives that successfully contribute to full inclusion

155. See the statistics, provided in annex A, on the information in paragraphs 14 and 15.

P. Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

156. The revised Criminal Code is currently before the National Congress and is expected to be approved in the coming months.

157. In order to ensure legal access to contraceptives and comprehensive sex education, the Ministry of the Presidency has instructed the Ministry of Health to:

- (a) Increase the budget for the purchase of contraceptives from 70 million to 90 million pesos per year;
- (b) Ensure that five free contraceptive methods are available at all three levels of care in public hospitals in the national health system;
- (c) Ensure that contraceptive commodities are included in the Basic Table of Essential Medicines, and that non-clinical contraceptive commodities are available nationwide in pharmacies covered by the Essential Medicines Programme and Logistical Support Centre;
- (d) Strengthen the Committee on Ensuring the Availability of Contraceptive Commodities at the national level;
- (e) Implement the Protocol on Contraception and the Advisory Guide on Sexual and Reproductive Health;

(f) Implement the Comprehensive Sex Education Programme in schools nationwide;

(g) Conduct studies and research on access to, availability of, perceptions of, and satisfaction with, the contraceptive methods and services offered.

158. In 2015, the Ministry of Health published the Technical Regulation for Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Care,⁴¹ which contains guidelines and procedures related to sexual and reproductive health care and contraception for the national health system, to help leading entities in the system to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of the entire population. Under the Technical Regulation, the 2001 National Rules on Reproductive Health in the Dominican Republic and all instruments of equal or lower status that conflict with the Technical Regulation are repealed.

159. Training provided by the Centre for the Promotion of Comprehensive Adolescent Health Care of the Ministry of Women⁴² in 2019:

- Awareness-raising related to comprehensive health care for youth and adolescents from schools in the Distrito Nacional, Santo Domingo Norte and Santo Domingo Este, and, in the southern and eastern regions of the country, awareness-raising related to adolescent pregnancy prevention and comprehensive health;
- Performances of the play *Tú Decides* (You Decide), aimed at youth and adults from the northern and southern regions;
- Monitoring and updating workshop for youth multipliers on comprehensive adolescent health care in the province of San Juan de la Maguana;
- Awareness-raising for teachers and psychologists who work with adolescents and students;
- Training for final-year students from institutions of higher education.

160. See the statistics, provided in annex A, from the Ministry of Women for 2019.

Q. Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

161. In 2015, under the National Partnership to Accelerate the Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Mortality, the Ministry of Health, with the support of UNICEF, launched the “Better care for mothers and newborns” programme in order to improve the quality of maternal and neonatal care through the observation of clinical practice in each hospital, in accordance with protocols and using a baseline approach. UNICEF cooperated with the Ministry of Health, strengthening the Ministry’s leadership role by developing guidelines for certification in high-quality and compassionate maternal and neonatal care, certification for which public and private health facilities can apply.

162. In 2018, the National Health Service incorporated these guidelines into its work and designated, for each hospital, staff dedicated to observing clinical practice in the areas of prenatal, prepartum, partum and post-partum monitoring, breastfeeding and newborn care, and staff dedicated to following up on improvement plans, with the support of UNICEF.

163. The following overarching priorities have been established as the basis for the development of specific strategies that will guide the design of action plans for the implementation of the strategic agenda proposed under the Partnership:

⁴¹ Available at <https://data.miraquetemiro.org/sites/default/files/documentos/SALUD-SEXUAL-Y-REPRODUCTIVA%20DR.pdf>.

⁴² See <https://centropsia.gob.do/>.

- (a) Health promotion;
- (b) Primary health care;
- (c) Continuous improvement of care quality.

164. To view the budget for the Partnership, please refer to the link at the bottom of the page.⁴³

165. In the last quarter of 2018, in their evaluation of efforts made under the Partnership, the Department of Family Health and the Division for Mothers, Children and Adolescents of the Ministry of Health made the following observations:

- (a) Favourable policies, normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms;
- (b) Promotion of reproductive, maternal and child health;
- (c) Access to, and effective coverage of, high-quality reproductive, maternal and neonatal health services;
- (d) Human resources qualified to provide care for mothers, children and adolescents;
- (e) Epidemiological surveillance, monitoring and evaluation;
- (f) Strategic communication;
- (g) Intersectoral coordination and networking.

166. As a result of the Management Model for the Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Morbidity and Mortality, implemented in the Altagracia maternity hospital, the number of annual maternal deaths declined by 59 per cent over a period of five years, from 29 in 2015 to 12 in 2019. The hospital serves 12,000 women and 8,700 newborns per year, on average. Under the project, staff were trained in providing optimal and timely patient care, and in adhering to care protocols.⁴⁴

167. The Directorate for Comprehensive Rights of the Ministry of Women provides training in various provinces in the country in the following areas (see the statistics in annex A):

- Comprehensive women's health, gender, maternal mortality, disability, HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcohol
- Adolescent pregnancy prevention in schools
- Responsible sexuality, for teachers and students
- Awareness-raising on early detection and prevention of breast cancer
- Awareness-raising and training for health-care workers on gender; the application of the related standards, including the guidelines and protocol for addressing domestic violence and violence against women; and networking
- Prevention of chronic and catastrophic illnesses, and promotion of healthy lifestyles

168. In 2019, the number of maternal and neonatal deaths was reduced by approximately 25 per cent, equivalent to 595 newborns and 38 mothers saved.

⁴³ The budget is available at https://www.msp.gob.do/web/Transparencia/documentos_oai/1065/mispas-daf-cm-2019-0179/10546/documento-marco-alianza-nacional-proceso-mispas-daf-cm-2019-0179.pdf.

⁴⁴ See <https://sns.gob.do/noticias/sns-mantiene-mejora-en-indicadores-de-mortalidad-materna-y-neonatal> and <https://sns.gob.do/tag/mortalidad-materna>.

R. Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

169. The achievement of the outcomes envisaged under the 2011–2016 National Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancies was affected by various constraints, in particular a lack of funding under the national budget; a failure to address the various socioeconomic and cultural factors contributing to adolescent pregnancy; a failure to harness experiences, best practices and lessons learned in order to improve and adapt activities; weaknesses in the implementation of a system for monitoring the achievement of the proposed strategic objectives; and the need to consider specific measures for males and adolescents who work, live on the streets, are deprived of liberty or are in conflict with the law (2019–2023 National Plan for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancies, p. 23).⁴⁵

170. The following factors contribute to adolescent pregnancy:

- Income level: 35.1 per cent of adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age from families in the poorest quintile had become pregnant or were already mothers, compared with 8.6 per cent of those in the richest quintile.
- Education: 50 per cent of adolescents who had become pregnant had only reached the primary-school level, compared with 8.6 per cent of those with higher education.
- Unmet demand for family planning methods and commodities affected 1 in 10 women of childbearing age from 2008 to 2015, a figure that increased to nearly 3 in 10 for adolescents (27 per cent) and persons between 20 and 24 years of age (24 per cent).
- Adolescent mothers are more likely than other adolescents to avoid using contraceptive methods and commodities, and are more likely to say that they are not sure how to use them.
- Child marriage: early unions, rather than engagement in sexual intercourse, are associated with an increased likelihood of pregnancy before the age of 15.

171. The Division for Mothers, Children and Adolescents of the Ministry of Health has been responsible for purchasing contraceptive methods since 2010. Contraceptives are transferred, through the Single System for the Management of Medication and Commodities, to the National Health Service for distribution in the public services network. Although in recent years the Ministry of Health has fully financed contraceptive methods, a budgetary mechanism is required to protect the funding allocated for the purchase of those methods.⁴⁶ Health-risk administrators must also cover the costs of contraceptive commodities, as required under the social security system.⁴⁷

Steps taken to prevent adolescent pregnancy

172. Through the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, the Social Policy Coordination Office is implementing the “I’m choosing to wait” and “Babies? Think it through” programmes, which are aimed at strengthening young people’s capacity to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections among adolescents, as well as a theoretical and practical educational programme on the responsibilities associated with becoming parents at an early age.

⁴⁵ Dominican Republic, Office of the Vice-President of the Republic, Social Policy Coordination Office, *Plan Nacional para la Reducción de Embarazos en Adolescentes 2019–2023* (Santo Domingo, 2019).

⁴⁶ See https://www.msp.gob.do/web/Transparencia/documentos_oai/1065/mispas-daf-cm-2019-0179/10546/documento-marco-alianza-nacional-proceso-mispas-daf-cm-2019-0179.pdf.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

173. Between 2011 and 2016, 52 committees were established in provinces and municipalities in which offices of the Ministry of Women were located, in order to implement the measures provided for in the 2011–2016 National Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancies; the committees continue to carry out activities focusing on, and designed with the participation of, young people.⁴⁸ The Centre for the Promotion of Comprehensive Adolescent Health Care, under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, also promotes sex education and sexual and reproductive rights.

174. The Public Prosecution Service established the Life Line, a reporting, investigation and law enforcement mechanism that adolescents can use to express concerns and complain about how they are treated without risk of reprisal. The Service has also implemented initiatives such as, in 2014, the School Certification Programme in the Prevention, Detection and Combating of Gender-based Violence, Domestic Violence and Sexual Crimes, and the 2015–2018 National Road Map for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children and Adolescents in the Dominican Republic.

175. The Ministry of Youth has conducted activities at the regional and local levels to prevent adolescent pregnancy, including a train-the-trainers programme for young people, “You don’t need that”, designed to facilitate promotion and prevention related to pregnancy, self-esteem and life planning, as well as spaces for the training of teachers and staff who provide guidance and psychological services, and spaces for participation, promotion and recreation in the regions.⁴⁹

176. With the participation of the Ministry of Health, the National Council on HIV/AIDS, the Office of the First Lady, the Social Policy Coordination Office, the Ministry of Women, the Division for the Control of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS, the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence, the teachers’ union, United Nations cooperation agencies, Profamilia, Visión Mundial, Plan Internacional and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, the Technical Committee for Comprehensive Sex Education, chaired by the Ministry of Education, is responsible for intersectoral coordination in the area of life skills-based education related to sex and HIV, and for socialization, continuous consultation and the planning of political, technical and financial initiatives.⁵⁰

2019–2023 National Plan for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancies

177. The 2019–2023 National Plan for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancies provides for prevention activities focusing on opportunities available to adolescents to postpone or delay the decision to become pregnant, as well as for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents, the implementation and monitoring of systems for the protection of their rights, and a strategy to promote political advocacy to reduce adolescent pregnancies.

S. Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

178. The Programme for the Reduction of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis, in the HIV Unit, needs to be integrated into all levels of regular obstetric and paediatric care in health facilities, in order to achieve the goal of universal coverage and ensure that all pregnant women are tested for HIV and receive antiretroviral therapy.⁵¹ There are only 79 HIV units in the entire country, and adherence to treatment is still very low, especially among pregnant women, as the out-

⁴⁸ Dominican Republic, Office of the Vice-President of the Republic, Social Policy Coordination Office, *Plan Nacional para la Reducción de Embarazos en Adolescentes 2019–2023* (Santo Domingo, 2019).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Dominican Republic, Ministry of Health, *Estrategia Nacional para la Eliminación de la Transmisión Materno-infantil del VIH y la Sífilis Congénita: informe situación de país* (Santo Domingo, 2016).

of-pocket costs of antiretroviral therapy are very high. The goal is to reduce vertical transmission of HIV in all hospitals in the country, and, in particular, to reduce to 1 per cent the proportion of children born with HIV in the Dominican Republic.

Tabla No. 7: Pruebas de VIH con consejería a embarazadas según resultado de la prueba, 2013-2014						
Años	Pruebas de VIH con consejería previa a embarazadas			Consejerías post prueba de VIH con entrega de resultados a embarazadas		
	Positivas	Negativas	Total	Positivas	Negativas	Total
2013	886	69,652	70,640	897	49,938	50,835
2014	1,126	78,755	79,881	1,636	63,542	65,178

Fuente: Base de datos PTMI, DIGECITSS, MSP, 2013, 2014

2015–2018 National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS

179. The following data were obtained in relation to the National Strategic Plan:

- HIV prevalence in the country is 0.8 per cent, but is 5 per cent among men who have sex with men, 4.5 per cent among female sex workers and 5.4 per cent among women without formal education.⁵²
- In 2010, the majority of new infections occurred in gay men, transgender women and men who have sex with men (33 per cent), and in women who reported engaging in “low-risk” sexual relations, in other words, relations only with the partner with whom they live (32 per cent).⁵³
- Gay men, transgender women and men who have sex with men; women who have engaged in “low-risk” sexual relations; residents of *bateyes* (settlements developed around sugar mills); people who have had casual sex; and female sex workers account for 80 per cent of new HIV infections in the Dominican Republic.⁵⁴
- HIV prevalence is 54 times higher among uneducated Dominican women than among those with higher education.⁵⁵
- HIV prevalence among women of 23 or 24 years of age is 13 times higher than among those between 15 and 17 years of age.⁵⁶
- Among men, HIV prevalence increases between 24 and 29 years of age, from 0.2 per cent to 1.7 per cent.⁵⁷
- The infection rate among young women between 15 and 24 years of age (0.4 per cent) is double that among young men in the same age range (0.2 per cent).⁵⁸

⁵² Technological Institute of Santo Domingo, “Brechas de género: entre el dicho y el hecho de la autonomía de las mujeres en la República Dominicana” (2016).

⁵³ Dominican Republic, National Council on HIV/AIDS, *Segunda Encuesta de Vigilancia de Comportamiento con Vinculación Serológica en Poblaciones Clave* (2012).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dominican Republic, Centre for Social and Demographic Studies and Ministry of Health, *Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud 2013* (2014).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

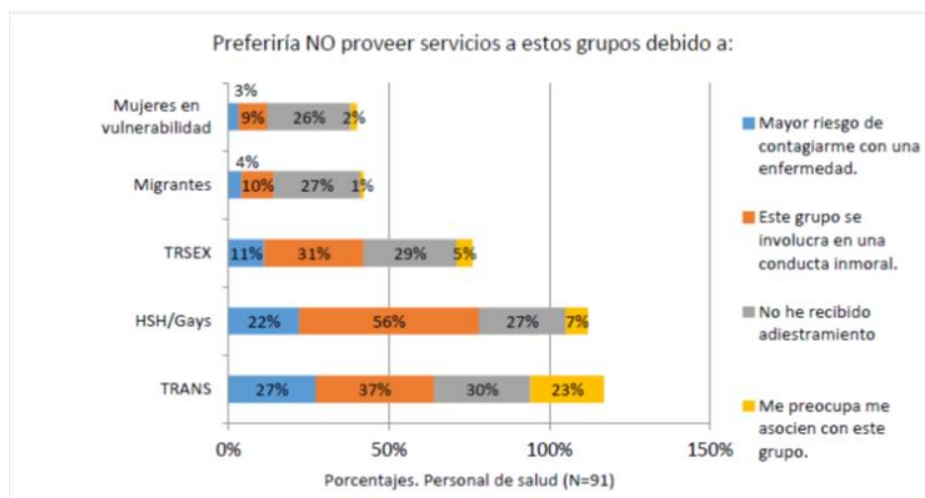
⁵⁸ Ibid.

- Nearly 7 out of every 100 pregnant Dominican women, or 1,700 pregnant women, are HIV positive, according to the Executive Director of the National Council on HIV/AIDS.⁵⁹
- The National Council on HIV/AIDS reported that the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the country is 11.3 per cent.⁶⁰

T. Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

180. In its final report on stigma and discrimination by health staff and the general population against key groups,⁶¹ the National Council on HIV/AIDS noted that 51 of the 91 health staff consulted, or 56 per cent, had indicated that they preferred not to provide services to men who have sex with men or to gay men; a third of the medical and nursing staff consulted, including personnel from specialized health-care centres and NGOs, indicated that they had not been trained in HIV, infection control, or stigma and discrimination; and administrative staff were the group with the most limited access to training.

Gráfico 2. Opiniones del personal de salud hacia los grupos claves y la provisión de servicios.



Fuente: Elaboración del equipo de consultoría. 2016.

181. The Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral and UNDP presented the project “Challenging Stigma and Discrimination to Improve Access to, and the Quality of, HIV Services in the Caribbean”, aimed at improving legal and policy environments in order to ensure that key populations have access to health and justice services.⁶²

⁵⁹ See <https://elnacional.com.do/dice-6-de-las-embarazadas-rd-tienen-virus-del-sida/>.

⁶⁰ See <https://acento.com.do/2019/salud/8679265-conavihsida-transmision-materno-infantil-del-vih-es-de-11-3/>.

⁶¹ Claudia Valdez, Edgar Barillas and Isabel Cepeda, *Informe final: estigma y discriminación hacia las poblaciones claves en los servicios de salud y población general*, National Council on HIV/AIDS (Santo Domingo, 2017).

⁶² See https://www.do.undp.org/content/dominican_republic/es/home/presscenter/articles/2017/03/07/coin-y-pnud-presentan-proyecto-contra-el-estigma-y-la-discriminaci-n.html.

U. Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

Initiatives taken to reduce rural poverty

182. The Comprehensive Model for Strengthening Entrepreneurship and Business Development to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment, initiated by the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Fundación Reservas de mi País,⁶³ Fundación Sur Futuro⁶⁴ and other NGOs, focuses on the unique role of women-led micro- and small enterprises in enabling the effective integration of women into the local economy, and on coordinating and facilitating the access of such enterprises to support services and productive resources.

183. The Programme for Female Entrepreneurship in the Border Zone and the "Pathways for Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises" programme promote knowledge and the leveraging of opportunities by training women to become State suppliers, with the cooperation and support of the Directorate General for Public Procurement.

184. The project launched by the Technical Cooperation Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Agriculture is aimed at ensuring the economic empowerment of rural women through rural development and socioeconomic inclusion strategies, in order to protect the rights of rural women in the south-western region.

185. The "Surprise Visits to Rural Communities" programme of the Office of the President of the Republic is designed to improve quality of life through the implementation of small-scale projects focusing on the production of fruit, poultry, rabbits, sheep, goats, fish, textiles, cattle and wine,^{65, 66} financed by the Government. Since the programme's inception, 1,458 projects have been implemented in the communities, positively affecting over 12,952 women farmers.

186. Through the Solidarity Banking Programme, financing and financial education are provided for micro-enterprises in order to support their development and financial inclusion. Under the Programme, approximately 20 billion pesos in loans have been disbursed to more than 400 micro- and small enterprises, and 68 per cent of the beneficiaries are women.

187. Under the Land Titling Programme, 53,000 land titles have been issued in 23 provinces in the country, and more than 50 per cent of the recipients are rural women.

188. Under the "Progressing with Solidarity" programme,⁶⁷ various activities are being carried out with a view to eliminating poverty in rural areas, including conditional cash transfers, the "Training for Progress" strategy, the Family Farming Programme, and the "Progressing Together" programme⁶⁸ (see the statistics in annex A).

189. Act No. 589-16, establishing the national system for food and nutrition sovereignty and security, provides the institutional framework for the development of food and nutrition sovereignty and security policies designed to uphold, protect, advance and realize the right to adequate food in accordance with human rights principles, in order to improve the quality of life of Dominicans. The scope of the Act

⁶³ See <https://fundacionreservas.com/>.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.surfuturo.org/>.

⁶⁵ Report on visits to women's associations.

⁶⁶ See <https://presidencia.gob.do/noticias/dia-internacional-mujeres-rurales-encuentra-dominicanas-empoderadas-gracias-visitas>.

⁶⁷ See <https://gabinetesocial.gob.do/programas-sociales-de-vicepresidencia-impulsan-reduccion-de-la-pobreza/>.

⁶⁸ Altagracia Suriel, "Protección social y desarrollo: mujeres protagonistas", "Progressing with Solidarity" programme (March 2018).

encompasses factors of agricultural and food production, research, production, processing, preservation, storage, exchange, marketing and consumption, as well as food safety and nutritional value.

190. The Plan of Action for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1⁶⁹ includes a multidimensional analysis of poverty, aimed at determining the main needs of the low-income population. The policies set forth are designed to expand the coverage of programmes that are already being implemented in the country. In the Plan, the population groups that require priority attention are identified by sex and age.

191. In the situation analysis for the road map for Sustainable Development Goal 2, normative frameworks are examined, gaps in the country's food and nutrition security are identified, and strategies and initiatives to eliminate hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture are defined.

192. The Single Registry of Agricultural and Livestock Producers makes it possible to obtain reliable information quickly and accurately, identify and determine the number of national producers, ascertain their exact location and total amount of productive land, and identify the characteristics of each producer's agricultural and livestock production, including variety and species.

V. Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

193. The process of applying for refugee status in the Dominican Republic, in particular the interview process conducted by the National Office for Refugees under the responsibility of the Directorate General for Migration, is carried out rigorously, efficiently and fairly, as provided for in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and incorporates a gender perspective, in accordance with relevant international standards. Women can therefore apply as principal applicants for recognition as refugees.

194. Female applicants are interviewed separately, individually and confidentially. They are also informed in their own right about the possibility of being assisted by an interviewer and an interpreter who is a woman, and their refugee status extends to their immediate family members.

195. Six women have been recognized as refugees in the Dominican Republic. One of the women is a Colombian, who, through the appropriate channels, explicitly renounced her status and returned to her country. Refugee status was also granted to four Haitian women, one of whom left the country, in accordance with the appropriate protocol, for a third State, and did not return to the Dominican Republic within the time frame stipulated in her exit permit, an implicit indication that she has renounced her refugee status. The National Council for Refugees will therefore terminate her refugee status. In revising the status of the other three Haitian women in 2018, the Council determined that the circumstances in connection with which they had been recognized as refugees had ceased to exist. Their status was therefore terminated. Lastly, there is one Iraqi woman who currently has refugee status.

196. The adoption of a general law on political asylum and the national refugee protection system is a goal of the President of the current Government, because existing laws on the matter date from the 1980s and consist solely of executive decrees (Decree No. 1569 of 16 November 1983, on the establishment and composition of the National Committee for Refugees, and Decree No. 2330 of 10 September 1984, on the rules of procedure of the Committee), and of other administrative decisions of the Committee (Decision No. 001/13 of 7 June 2013, Decision No. 002/13 of 7 June 2013, Decision No. 008/13 of 12 December 2013,

⁶⁹ Plan of Action for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1.

Decision No. 009/13 of 12 December 2013, Decision No. 003/14 of 30 April 2014, Decision No. 004/14 of 30 April 2014 and Decision No. 001/15 of 17 June 2015, and the amendments thereto). The President tasked the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Executive Branch, in the Ministry of the Presidency, with drafting the law. The final version of the bill is awaiting definitive approval by the National Committee for Refugees, prior to submission to the National Congress by the Executive Branch.

W. Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

197. The 2015–2018 National Road Map for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children and Adolescents, to be implemented by the institutions of the national system for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents, was extended to 2020 by the National Board of the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence, the highest-level decision-making body in the system.

198. In accordance with that policy, a bill on positive parenting and discipline without corporal punishment or humiliating treatment of children and adolescents was drafted in April 2019 and is under consideration by the Standing Committee on Gender Equity, Childhood, Adolescence and Family Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic. The aim of the bill is to eradicate child abuse by raising awareness among parents and guardians of the need to eliminate corporal punishment.

199. The bill amending the Civil Code of the Dominican Republic to define marriage as only a civil or religious union between two persons of legal age, namely, 18 years, and to remove the term “emancipation” from the Code, was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on first reading in May 2018, and subsequently sent to the Standing Judiciary Committee of the Chamber. However, the Senate let the initiative lapse, and the situation thus remains unchanged.

200. Work is currently under way on the development of the National Plan for Prevention, Assistance, Protection and Political Advocacy for the Eradication of Child Marriage and Early Unions, under the coordination of the Social Policy Coordination Office and with support from UNICEF and other United Nations agencies. The Plan will be the country’s strategy for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal target 5.3.

X. Reply to paragraph 24 of the list of issues

Access to decent and suitable housing in safe places for women

201. Through the National Housing Institute, the Government of the Dominican Republic has provided new housing throughout the country, together with basic services, children’s areas and common areas.

202. Between 2015 and 2019, the National Housing Institute provided a total of 26,029 homes and housing solutions for 104,116 people nationwide, including 10,551 new homes and 15,478 home repairs. These initiatives consisted of the construction of housing made of concrete blocks, with roofing made of concrete, zinc and wood; partial repairs; painting, flooring and sanitation solutions; and the provision of apartments, in much of the country, for vulnerable, marginalized and underprivileged people, and people affected by natural disasters. Guaranteed access to bathrooms, the replacement of dirt floors with cement floors, and the substitution of gas stoves for coal and firewood, are improving living conditions for women and their families.

203. Through such projects as the Ciudades Juan Bosch housing complex, the Government of the Dominican Republic provided land for the construction of 25,000

low-cost homes in Santo Domingo and of 10,000 homes in the province of Santiago, and also constructed service infrastructure.

Provision of social housing and housing solutions by the public sector

<i>Year</i>	<i>National Housing Institute</i>
2015	4 685
2016	1 120
2017	2 864
2018	925
2019	957
Total	10 551

Source: National Housing Institute.

Completion of housing renovations and replacement of dirt floors with cement floors

<i>Year</i>	<i>Housing renovations</i>	<i>Floor replacements</i>
2016	9 472	2 500
2017	2 050	2 182
2018	1 101	5 099
2019	2 855	9 501
Total	15 478	19 282

Source: National Housing Institute.

Construction of low-cost housing under Act No. 189-11 and Decree No. 153-13

<i>Year</i>	<i>Projects</i>	<i>Number of low-cost homes</i>
2013	11	2 784
2014	32	8 516
2015	26	3 416
2016	81	25 530
2017	92	39 441
2018	66	25 177
2019	97	28 450
Total	405	133 214

Source: National Housing Institute.