



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

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

**Ninth periodic report submitted by Cuba under article 18 of  
the Convention, due in 2017<sup>\*,\*\*</sup>**

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

\*\* The annex to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



## Introduction

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the established general guidelines.<sup>1</sup> In it, the measures taken, progress made and challenges encountered by the country in ensuring the full exercise and enjoyment of the rights of women and girls from 2013 to 2021 are addressed. Cuba updated its common core document in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

2. For the preparation of the present report, broad consultations were held with state entities and civil society organizations, which conducted an assessment of compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking into account the concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Cuba, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2013.<sup>3</sup>

3. The constitutional reform process of 2018 and 2019 also enriched and benefited the report. During the popular consultation that preceded the adoption of the new Constitution, 8,945,521 people participated in 133,681 meetings, at which 783,174 amendments were proposed. The Constitution of the Republic was ratified by referendum on 24 February 2019, with 86.85 per cent of voters voting in favour, and was proclaimed by the National Assembly of People's Power on 10 April of that year.

4. The economic, commercial and financial blockade that has been imposed on Cuba by the Government of the United States and overwhelmingly condemned by the international community remains the main obstacle to the more effective implementation of the Convention. This hostile policy adversely affects the lives of women and families, and constitutes a form of indirect violence that is cruelly inflicted on Cuban women.

5. To counter the effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Cuba developed a preventive, intersectoral and multidisciplinary model, in which Cuban women played a leading role. Similarly, in the plan for prevention, monitoring and support related to people infected by COVID-19, the disease's effects on women and their families were considered, and women's essential role in the fight to eliminate the outbreak through their creative contributions and initiatives was acknowledged. The leading role of women in all areas of society and the leadership of the Federation of Cuban Women at every stage have contributed to periodic diagnoses of the interests and needs of the population in general, through community work.

## Information relating to articles 1 to 16 of the Convention

### Articles 1 to 4

6. The country's main measures and progress in this area are further strengthened by the new Constitution. Article 42 broadens the bases of equality and non-discrimination by stipulating that all persons shall be equal before the law, shall receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and shall enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities, without discrimination of any kind on grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnic origin, skin colour, religious belief, disability, national or regional origin, or any other personal condition or circumstance that implies a distinction detrimental to human dignity.

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<sup>1</sup> [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [HRI/CORE/CUB/2016.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [CEDAW/C/CUB/CO/7-8.](#)

7. Article 43 of the Constitution establishes that women and men have equal rights and responsibilities in the economic, political, cultural, labour, social, family and other spheres. The State ensures that women and men are offered the same opportunities and possibilities. It also affords women protection from gender-based violence. Article 82 of the Constitution establishes that spouses have equal rights, obligations and legal capacity.

8. In the documents entitled “Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development” and “Bases of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development up to 2030”, gender is mainstreamed, the advancement of Cuban women is promoted, and the rights of Cuban women are supported and upheld.

9. In accordance with the above-mentioned legal bases, on the basis of objective and subjective conditions in Cuba, and in order to develop an inclusive model based on equality, social justice and the full emancipation of women, the Council of Ministers adopted Decision No. 9231/2021, on the comprehensive strategy for the prevention of, and support in relation to, gender and family violence, published in Special Official Gazette No. 101, of 9 December 2021.<sup>4</sup>

10. In the strategy, two implementation phases are stipulated, with a mid-term evaluation in 2026 so that the planned actions can be updated in accordance with the needs identified during implementation. The strategy’s core components are aligned with the priority areas of the national programme for the advancement of women. The strategy comprises seven cross-cutting themes: a human rights-based approach; a gender-based approach; a person-centred approach; an intersectoral approach; the best interests of the child; victims as protagonists of trials; and high-quality statistical information.

11. In Decree-Law No. 56/2021, on working women’s maternity and the responsibility of families,<sup>5</sup> published in the Official Gazette in December 2021, broad recognition is given to the social role of maternity, women’s entry and re-entry into the workforce, and the provision by other family members of care and attention to minor children. Pursuant to that Decree-Law, Decree-Law No. 339, the Working Women’s Maternity Act, and Decree-Law No. 340, modifying special social security schemes for the protection of motherhood, are repealed.

12. In 2014, the Labour Code, Act No. 116, and its supplementary regulations entered into force. Article 2 establishes, as principles governing the right to work, non-discrimination on the basis of skin colour, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, territorial origin, disability and any other distinction detrimental to human dignity, as well as the prohibition of child labour.<sup>6</sup> It is applicable to all sectors and to all forms of economic management – State, non-State and mixed (private and cooperatives). Article 66 of the new Constitution also prohibits the employment of children and adolescents.

13. In 2022, the Family Code was approved by referendum<sup>7</sup> after specialized consultations and broad citizen participation.

14. In the Code, immediate and specialized legal measures are established to resolve family matters. Legal concepts are enhanced and expanded in view of real situations

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<sup>4</sup> GOC-2021-1100-EX101.

<sup>5</sup> GOC-2021-1134-O145.

<sup>6</sup> [CEDAW/C/CUB/CO/7-8](#).

<sup>7</sup> In the referendum, the right to vote was exercised by 6,269,427 people, which represents turnout of 74.12 per cent. A total of 3.22 per cent of voters returned blank ballots, while 2.51 per cent returned spoiled ballots. Of the total number of ballots returned, 5,909,385, or 94.25 per cent, met the legal requirements to be declared valid. A total of 3,950,288 votes, or 66.85 per cent of the valid ballots, were in favour.

that have arisen, taking as a basis equal relations founded on both the affective and the biological aspects, on the solidarity inherent to the family, and on human dignity as the supreme value that supports the recognition and exercise of the rights and obligations enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, international treaties and the Code itself.

15. At the same time, social prejudices and stereotypes are rejected in the Code, which is intended to standardize the protection of the various forms of family organization on an absolutely equal footing, and to regulate parental and family relationships, the protection of persons with disabilities, and efforts to combat family violence, among other matters.

16. The number of information, awareness-raising, education and training activities related to gender has increased. Gender has been mainstreamed into the curricula and is gradually being added to textbooks, as well as to development, training and postgraduate programmes. Research is promoted through the design of a non-sexist education system.

17. Hundreds of lawyers have taken postgraduate courses on gender and the law, violence, sexuality and masculinities, a diploma course on mediation, gender and the family has been offered, and several universities have introduced an optional undergraduate module on gender and the law. The Law Faculty of the University of Havana added a gender strategy to its curriculum in 2015.

18. The International Conference on Women, Gender and the Law, organized by the National Union of Jurists of Cuba in cooperation with the Federation of Cuban Women, is held every other year. The 2014, 2016 and 2018 conferences were attended by approximately 150 professionals – working in the legal field and in other social sciences – and law students, from 12 countries. Members and former members of the Committee have participated in the conferences. At the 2016 conference, the United Nations system in Cuba awarded the UNiTE prize for commitment to equality and combating gender-based violence to a project of the National Union of Jurists of Cuba on justice from a gender perspective as a guarantee of gender equality.

19. The prosecutors responsible for handling judicial proceedings, dealing with citizens' complaints and protecting minors have received training on gender issues, with the collaboration of the National Sex Education Centre (CENESEX). The training has helped to prepare the prosecutors to ensure that the rights of women, girls and adolescents are respected. These actions are being taken in accordance with the cooperation agreement between the Office of the Attorney General and the Federation of Cuban Women.

20. The court system has made progress in mainstreaming gender, in collaboration with the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Havana, the National Union of Jurists of Cuba, the Federation of Cuban Women and CENESEX. There are gender units in all provincial courts and the People's Supreme Court.

21. A total of 18 courses on gender, the law and violence were held at the Judicial Training School between 2013 and 2017, with the participation of judges from all levels of the court system nationwide. The People's Supreme Court has participated in all the events on gender and the law organized by the National Union of Jurists of Cuba.

22. A module on gender, law and violence has been incorporated into all courses on judicial management and administration. Gender issues are part of the bank of scientific problems approved by the People's Supreme Court.

23. In 2015, female judges and leaders from all the courts in the country participated at an event held in Cuba by women law officers of Ibero-America. Cuban women

judges have participated in the gender courses given during the five-year period by Aula Iberoamericana, a training programme of the General Council of the Judiciary of Spain.

24. The Office of the Attorney General has joined the specialized group on gender issues of the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors. This has made it possible to contribute good practices and evaluate those applied in our region in relation to prevention, criminal prosecution and gender mainstreaming.

25. At the international events Cubamotricidad and the International Convention on Physical Activity and Sport, held every two years, the topics of gender, inclusion and empowerment are addressed. At Cubamotricidad in October 2018, the regional conference of the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women was held, with 459 delegates from 52 countries.

26. Hundreds of journalists, scriptwriters, artists and media managers have received training on gender and equality issues from experts from the Federation of Cuban Women, the University of Havana, the women's studies departments of higher education centres throughout the country, and other national institutions.

27. In order to evaluate and monitor gender issues in Cuban society, the Centre for Women's Studies of the Federation of Cuban Women and the Centre for Population and Development Studies of the National Office of Statistics and Information conducted a national survey on gender equality in 2016, with a representative sample of 19,189 men and women aged between 15 and 74. The resulting data showed that 88.7 per cent of Cubans aged between 15 and 74 were of the view that laws protecting women were applied in Cuba, and that specific policies and actions favouring women were in place. A total of 85.5 per cent also stated that there were places or services at which women victims of violence were provided with support, and 83.7 per cent said that there were organizations at which women could explain their needs and concerns.

28. Article 61 of the Constitution recognizes people's right to submit complaints and requests to the authorities, which are obliged to process them and provide timely, relevant and well-founded responses within the time period and in accordance with the procedure established by law.

29. Cuba has an extensive and effective inter-agency system, also involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to receive, process and answer any complaint or request from individuals or groups of individuals in respect of the enjoyment of any human right.

30. The functions of the Office of the Attorney General include addressing complaints submitted by citizens about alleged violations of their rights; the Office therefore plays a central role in the system for investigating and providing support in relation to such matters.

31. Multidisciplinary teams from the women's and family counselling centres of the Federation of Cuban Women are involved in addressing complaints. When the participation of State and/or government bodies is required, the Federation not only provides counselling to the individual concerned but also sends the body in question a summary of the case, follows up on the matter with the body, and insists that the individual and the Federation receive a response.

32. In 2017, of the total number of actions in municipal courts in relation to the economic or social security aspects of labour rights, 33 per cent were brought by female workers. Of those actions, 22 per cent were entirely successful and 14 per cent were partially successful.

33. A total of 32 per cent of the actions related to the imposition of disciplinary measures in 2017 were brought by female workers. Of those actions, 11 per cent were

successful and the court consequently revoked the measures that had been imposed. In another 11 per cent of those actions, the measure imposed was replaced with another.

34. In Instruction No. 216 of the Governing Council of the People's Supreme Court, issued in 2012 to standardize judicial practice in family cases, the work of a multidisciplinary team in the field of family procedure is regulated. The team is coordinated by the Federation of Cuban Women and comprises specialists in the medical, social and pedagogical sciences. The team provides advice to the Court.

35. When a woman appears as a defendant in a trial, her possible victimization is evaluated in accordance with the specific circumstances, for example in cases involving women with disabilities, disputes over parental authority, rulings regarding the payment of alimony as a result of divorce proceedings, the liquidation of the community property of a marriage and judicial recognition of marriages that have not been formalized.

36. In the criminal justice system, women account for 12 per cent of those who appear before the judges responsible for monitoring and supervising people serving non-custodial sentences. This way of working includes a gender approach in collaboration with the women's and family counselling centres.

37. In 2018, a comprehensive methodological dossier was prepared in relation to the Convention, the Action Plan of the Republic of Cuba for Follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Platform for Action) and other relevant materials. The dossier was made available to bodies and organizations, the women's and family counselling centres, libraries, think tanks and university gender studies departments.

38. The combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Cuba on the implementation of the Convention, and the concluding observations of the Committee on those reports, have been published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Major NGOs, including the Cuban United Nations Association, have also published the reports and discussed the concluding observations at meetings, workshops and seminars, while an evaluation on the subject was presented at a meeting of the national secretariat of the Federation of Cuban Women. An online forum on human rights was held to discuss recommendations from the universal periodic review and others made, including in relation to women's rights, by human rights treaty bodies. Representatives of the Government, civil society, religious groups, women, educators, medical societies and other sectors participated actively in the forum.

39. The Federation of Cuban Women has so far served as the machinery for the advancement of women in Cuba, a role recently reaffirmed in the national programme for the advancement of women. Representatives of the Federation have been the interlocutors for the advancement of women in the governmental sphere. Because of its experience in this area, the Federation is regarded as a theoretical and methodological authority for the mainstreaming of gender into national policies.

40. On 8 March 2021, the national programme for the advancement of women was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Cuba as an annex to Presidential Decree No. 198/2021. The programme replaced the national action plan that had been in force since its adoption in 1997. The programme is the agenda of the Government of Cuba for the advancement of women and brings together in a single document actions and measures that correspond to the postulates and principles of the country's Constitution, as well as to the international commitments made by Cuba in the area of gender equality.

41. Actions to improve comprehensiveness and effectiveness in the prevention and elimination of manifestations of discrimination against women, as well as to strengthen the mechanisms and professional capacity of public officials to incorporate gender issues into the development of policies and programmes and into the provision of services, are promoted in the programme.

42. The programme for the advancement of women is also a government programme that, with the participation of the Federation of Cuban Women as the national machinery for the advancement of women, promotes and ensures the monitoring, evaluation and control actions that correspond to the bodies of the central State administration, national entities, and other organizations and institutions, as well as the responses of those bodies, entities, organizations and institutions to the recommendations of the Committee.

43. The national sex education and sexual health programme, coordinated by CENESEX as an entity attached to the Ministry of Health, has enabled the coordination of a comprehensive educational strategy on sexuality that includes respect for freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity. The programme includes activities related to the educational sphere, academic work and scientific research, legal advice services, sex therapy, support for LGBTI people and victims of gender-based violence and child sexual abuse, the development of community programmes and editorial and audiovisual production, and the coordination of social networks, online debates and campaigns related to respect for freedom of sexual orientation.

44. The approval and implementation of sectoral gender strategies has been promoted, with the support of the Federation of Cuban Women. The Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Tourism, the People's Supreme Court, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Centre for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention of the Ministry of Health, and the Faculty of Law of the University of Havana, among others, now have strategies in place. The objective is to eliminate gender inequalities that may exist in those bodies' spheres of activity.

45. The strategies include initiatives for the promotion of women to positions and posts in State and government bodies. The political will exists to continue to make progress in this area, intentionally and gradually.

46. The Ministry of Agriculture is implementing a gender strategy for the entire agricultural system and influencing institutional management policies to promote gender equality. Through the strategy, changes are promoted in order to advance towards equality through the demonstrative experience of a management system entitled "Igualdad de género para la gestión con calidad de la seguridad alimentaria" (Gender equality for the quality management of food safety), through which entities in the sector are recognized on the basis of their progress. A total of 13 entities hold a level 1 certificate of commitment to equality, and 5 entities have renewed that certification. In the cooperatives in which the management system is applied, it has resulted in more women joining the workforce, and in capacity-building for the promotion of women's rights and the gender approach; the management system is being expanded to other projects in the agricultural system.

47. The Federation of Cuban Women is a member of a coordinated platform for comprehensive local and regional development, whose purpose is to mainstream gender in local enterprises, and of a project for local agricultural innovation.

48. The Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic is developing a programme involving the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in audits of all bodies and entities.

49. In 2018, the Office conducted a performance audit related to Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality, in accordance with the guidelines of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions and the Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Supreme Audit Institutions. It audited 13 national bodies, 45 provincial bodies – in Villa Clara, Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba – and 23 municipal bodies. It found that all processes were optimized.

## Article 5

50. The above-mentioned national survey on gender equality showed that progress had been made in terms of gender-related conceptions and stereotypes, compared with the findings of previous studies. For example, the respondents said that a set of occupations traditionally regarded as exclusively male were suitable for women, and recognized women's ability to make decisions and lead as well as men. A trend has emerged for respondents not to distinguish between men and women in relation to management activities. In 1989, only 60.4 per cent of respondents said that both men and women could perform such activities, while today the figure is 75 per cent.

51. The survey also showed that women had more autonomy, and more equitable and respectful relationships with men. This is reflected in the fact that over 66 per cent of Cuban women do not require their partner's consent to work, study, participate in community activities, hold management positions, use contraception, spend money or go out alone.

52. Although progress has been made, work remains to be done. Traditional ways of thinking prevail in the family sphere, with an inequitable distribution of domestic labour that overburdens women, particularly working mothers. Many continue to bear the burden of a double working day, in the workplace and at home, and to take more responsibility in caring for children, older persons, ill persons and other family members. The survey revealed a difference of 14 hours in the time spent on unpaid work by women and men. In the case of wage-earning women, the difference was 10 hours.

53. During the reporting period, many activities and programmes were carried out in schools, in the family sphere and in society in general with regard to stereotypes and the promotion of a culture of equality, non-exclusion and the elimination of violence against women.

54. In 2017, the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television implemented a differentiated and inclusive communication strategy to enhance the image of women on television in Cuba. The number of programmes dedicated to gender issues has increased, and there are 23 programmes dedicated to women on national television and 53 on regional channels. Other initiatives include the production of materials on women's participation in the sociopolitical life of the country; the redesign of the specialized programme *Cuando una Mujer* (When a woman), with up-to-date content; the dissemination of messages; and the increased presence on television of women from all sectors of society.

55. In 2021, the Council of State of Cuba established the Institute of Information and Social Communication, whose mission is to conduct and improve the social communication policy of the State and Government, as well as to help to foster a culture of dialogue and consensus in Cuban society.<sup>8</sup>

56. Preventing and combating manifestations of violence against women and girls is a priority for the country. Article 43 of the Constitution enshrines the protection of

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<sup>8</sup> Decree-Law No. 41/2021.

women against gender-based violence in all its forms and manifestations, and provides for the establishment of institutional and legal mechanisms for such protection.

57. Article 84 of the Constitution establishes that the duties of mothers and fathers, or other relatives by blood or marriage, include the protection of children and adolescents in their custody and care from all types of violence.

58. Article 85 provides that domestic violence, in any form, is damaging to the persons involved, families and society, and that it is punishable by law.

59. Among the measures taken in this area are those aimed at raising people's awareness and sensitivity through the media, and education and training programmes. A group of experts and specialists on the subject, coordinated by the Federation of Cuban Women, was established to follow up on the matter. It prepared a comprehensive plan for the prevention of gender-based violence.

60. Judges, prosecutors, police officers, health and education personnel and journalists, among others, have received training on different forms of violence and on support for potential victims. The Federation of Cuban Women, in partnership with various civil society organizations, such as the Centro Oscar Arnulfo Romero (Oscar Arnulfo Romero Centre), is developing a national campaign entitled "Eres más" (You are more), on prevention and support in relation to the various forms of violence.

61. The implementation in Cuba of the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign of the United Nations has been an example of the prevention of violence against women and the raising of public awareness. Intersectoral work and the coordination of institutional, community and other networks have been decisive in helping to prevent and confront this scourge.

62. The Cuban United Nations Association develops activities to draw attention to the work of women in our society and recognize the progress made, without ignoring the remaining challenges and obstacles. In particular, it celebrates International Women's Day, the anniversary of the establishment of the Federation of Cuban Women, International Children's Day, the International Day of the Girl Child, the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, World Population Day, the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, the International Day of Rural Women, the International Day of Families and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

63. At the twenty-seventh Havana International Book Fair, held in 2018, the Cuba Women's Agenda for that year was presented at the headquarters of the Cuban United Nations Association, in conjunction with the publishing house of the Federation of Cuban Women, Editorial de la Mujer, and the inter-agency gender group of the United Nations system. In conjunction with the publishing house of CENESEX, various books on sexual rights in Cuba, sexuality education and training for future parents were presented. Examples include *La Integración Social de las Personas Transexuales en Cuba* (The social integration of transsexual people in Cuba), *Violencia de Género, Prostitución y Trata de Personas* (Gender-based violence, prostitution and trafficking in persons), and *Derechos Sexuales en Cuba: Experiencias desde la Praxis en el Servicio de Orientación Jurídica del Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual* (Sexual rights in Cuba: experiences from the praxis of the Legal Advice Service of CENESEX).

64. The Cuban United Nations Association, together with the Federation of Cuban Women and authorities in Havana, has promoted a multisectoral campaign entitled "Súmate por una vida sin violencia" (Join us for a life without violence). The campaign is implemented by the ¡Súmate! community sociocultural project with the participation of various Cuban civil society institutions, organizations and bodies, and

is designed to support the efforts being made at the national level to prevent and address gender-based violence.

65. The campaign includes activities such as workshops, concerts, talks and lectures, in friendly spaces, primary schools, pre-university institutions and universities, to promote intergenerational dialogue in the education sector. Súmate networks of artists and jurists have also been established. The artists' network is dedicated to conveying messages that promote actions to eradicate violence against women and girls at the individual level, and in families and communities. The jurists' network is intended to continue educational initiatives to raise awareness regarding violence against women, and to prevent and address such violence.

66. In close collaboration with the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system that are accredited in Cuba, activities and projects have been carried out, and supporting publications have been issued, to raise awareness regarding the gender perspective and disseminate the country's achievements in this area. As part of the contribution of the Cuban United Nations Association to the UNiTE campaign, socioeducational actions are being developed to promote a culture of non-violence, coexistence and respect in all spheres of life, in the areas of community, sexuality and culture.

67. In the magazines *Mujeres* (Women) and *Muchacha* (Girl), published by Editorial de la Mujer, the Federation of Cuban Women constantly draws attention to the work of women in Cuban society, and to women's incorporation into economic, political, social and cultural life. In the magazines, attention is drawn not only to the progress made in the area but also to the remaining challenges and obstacles to the achievement of complete equality.

## Article 6

68. Cuba maintains a zero-tolerance policy on any form of trafficking in persons. The actions of the Cuban authorities are based on three fundamental pillars: preventing such trafficking, combating it and protecting its victims.

69. The various legal instruments in force in the country make it possible to address trafficking in persons and related behaviours such as pimping and other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

70. In Act No. 151/2022, the Criminal Code, published in Official Gazette No. 93, ordinary edition, of 1 September 2022, the crime of trafficking in persons is reformulated, with increased penalties in certain circumstances.

71. In addition, trafficking in persons is criminalized in all its forms, including labour exploitation and sexual exploitation, forced or compulsory labour, forced marriage, illegal adoption, servitude, organ removal or other activities that are contrary to human dignity.

72. With the aim of providing information to the people of Cuba and the international community, since 2013 a report has been published on the main initiatives taken by the country and the results achieved in the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons and the protection of victims.

73. The country celebrates the World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

74. In February 2017, the 2017–2020 national action plan for the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons and the protection of victims was approved. The updated plan for 2022–2024 is awaiting adoption by the Council of State. The plan is essential to improving the prevention and combating of such trafficking and the protection of victims, through coordinated action between the State and Cuban civil

society organizations. The plan is focused on gender and the defence and protection of human rights, with special protection for girls, adolescents and women in general. All the bodies of the central State administration involved in the prevention of trafficking in persons have approved their sectoral plans for the prevention and combating of this scourge. The Federation of Cuban Women, which does extensive community and family work, has developed its own plan, and designed a communication and training strategy for its leaders at all levels.

75. In April 2017, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, visited Cuba and had the opportunity to see at first hand the country's results in that area, as well as to make observations and recommendations in that regard.

76. The Special Rapporteur recognized the country's universal education and health systems as mechanisms that reduced vulnerabilities to trafficking and as part of the eminently preventive nature of Cuban society and of government policies.

77. The limited number of cases identified at the domestic level are not linked to organized criminal networks. Almost all of these cases are related to sexual exploitation in the family or immediate social circle, and the perpetrators of the crimes have been prosecuted in accordance with the law. No cases of trafficking related to the removal of organs, slavery or forced marriage have been verified.

78. In 2019 and 2020, 15 cases involving crimes with characteristics typical of trafficking in persons were tried.<sup>9</sup> Of those cases, 15 involved trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and 1 involved trafficking for purposes of forced labour. A total of 18 victims were identified, of whom 10 were girls and 8 were women. The criminal penalties for the perpetrators ranged from 6 to 12 years of imprisonment. Of the 17 defendants identified, 11 were men and 6 were women.

79. In 2021, 430 cases were tried for corruption of minors and 39 for pimping, of which 10 involved crimes with characteristics typical of trafficking in persons.

80. The low incidence is essentially due to the eminently preventive nature of the social and State policies of Cuba, the zero-tolerance policy, and the absence of organized criminal networks in the country.

81. In 2020, the Ministry of Education continued to improve the preventive education strategy through the application, monitoring and evaluation of the procedure for the design, implementation and control of preventive work, as a means of providing support, from the perspective of the system of methodological scientific work, to students and their families who need it.

82. In conjunction with other bodies and organizations, the Ministry of Education held, in every municipality in the country, a preparatory course on the prevention of trafficking in persons from a gender and legal perspective in educational institutions. The course was held at 1,311 venues, with 6,547 facilitators. There were 97,779 participants, of whom 93,460 were from the education sector and 4,319 were from other bodies, entities and organizations, including 1,427 from local government bodies.

83. Through the process of diagnosis and characterization carried out in schools by the Ministry of Education, support was provided to 219 students identified on the basis of indications or practices associated with prostitution. In all cases, preventive

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<sup>9</sup> Understood as the forced exploitation of persons or the exploitation of minors, as established in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol).

education strategies were developed for the support and protection of minors, and measures were taken in conjunction with the legal representatives.

84. The implementation of two protocols for specifically addressing behaviours related to prostitution and violence continued. Both protocols have been incorporated into the work system at the various educational levels.

85. The central helpline of the Office of the Attorney General has been in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and has allowed people to make reports and complaints on various matters, including trafficking in persons. In 2020, 129,020 citizens contacted the helpline, and although no specific allegations were received regarding the crime of trafficking in persons, 1,923 allegations regarding violations of the rights of minors and women were received, handled and responded to in a timely manner.

86. Cuba continues to collaborate internationally to investigate and solve cases that cannot be addressed within the national framework.

87. Action has been taken at the border to identify and alert young people who fit the profile of victims and intend to travel abroad. In addition, Internet publications related to job offers abroad are systematically monitored, which has allowed the neutralization of three Cuban citizens linked to the recruitment of artists without legal protection.

88. There is an understanding in the country of the need to continue, as in the rest of the world, to improve the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons and the protection of victims. More progress is needed in the perception of the risk of trafficking and the forms in which trafficking is manifested, particularly transnational trafficking. Many of the necessary measures are already included in the above-mentioned national action plan.

89. Since 1959, the Government of Cuba has maintained its will and plans to reduce and eliminate the conditions of vulnerability that result in the performance of sexual activity as a form of economic subsistence.

90. Cuban society, educated in the defence of human dignity, overwhelmingly condemns prostitution and aspires to eliminate the factors that cause and condition it as a social phenomenon. Women who wish to end their involvement with prostitution are helped to join the workforce and continue their studies.

91. Prostitution is not a crime in Cuba. It is not a recognized occupation either, since it imposes serious vulnerabilities and risks on those who practise it, particularly women. Pimping<sup>10</sup> does constitute a crime and is punishable.

92. The authorities investigate and prosecute, in accordance with the law, anyone who induces others to become prostitutes or benefits from their prostitution, even when prostitution is voluntary.

93. Because of social disapproval of prostitution in general and the fight against those who exploit it, prostitutes receive support through various prevention programmes and plans, with a fundamental emphasis on educational and training activities, and on the promotion of better relationships within the family and its immediate circle.

## **Articles 7 and 8**

94. During the reporting period, the active participation of women, on equal terms, in all spheres of the life of the nation, including the political and public spheres, continued to be promoted and strengthened.

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<sup>10</sup> Pimping consists of obtaining economic benefits from the prostitution of another person.

95. Article 205 of the Constitution establishes voting as a citizen's right that is exercised voluntarily by men and women over 16 years of age. Notices of elections call upon citizens to elect the best candidates without any kind of discrimination.
96. Women's participation in decision-making is increasing; they held 51.5 per cent of State and government positions at the end of the first quarter of 2021.
97. Of the members of the Council of State, 52.3 per cent are women. There are 8 women ministers<sup>11</sup> and 30 women deputy ministers, equivalent to 48.5 per cent of the total. In the Council of Ministers, 8 of the 34 members, or 23.5 per cent, are women. Of the 23 first deputy ministers, 10, or 43.5 per cent, are women. Of the elected governors and deputy governors, 53.3 per cent are women.
98. In State and government bodies, women hold 51.5 per cent of management positions. At the municipal level, 54.35 per cent of presidents and vice-presidents of municipal assemblies are women, as are 37.5 per cent of mayors.
99. In order to increase the number of women at all levels, outreach campaigns supported by the media have been decisive, with an emphasis on the capacity and suitability of women to hold positions and responsibilities.
100. Of the 4,487 professional trade-union leaders in the country, 63 per cent are women, an increase of 14 per cent since 2012. Women also account for 63.3 per cent of the provincial and municipal leaders.
101. More than 1.5 million members of the 15 national trade unions are women. Women lead five of those unions. At the provincial level, 8 of 15 leaders are women, while the figure for the municipalities is 120 women leaders, or 71.4 per cent of the total. Women account for 58.9 per cent of the leaders of grass-roots trade-union organizations. Of the general secretaries of union sections, women account for 63.6 per cent, of whom 61.5 per cent are union bureau leaders.
102. Female union leaders have represented the Confederation of Cuban Workers and the unions at various international events, for example, in 2018, at the World Working Women Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions and the first meeting of the Women's Committee of the Federation, and, in 2019, at the second meeting of women trade unionists of Mesoamerica, held in Mexico. Four Cuban women trade-union leaders hold international positions in global union federations.
103. In the Ministry of Justice system, 1,523 notaries, civil registrars and property registrars, or 80 per cent of the total, are women. Women hold 41 per cent of leadership positions: 3 deputy ministers are women, as are 16 directors of organizational and subordinate units, 1 head of department and 8 directors of justice at the provincial level and in the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud.
104. 1,419 prosecutors, or 80 per cent of the total, are women. Women hold 75 per cent of leadership positions in the Office of the Attorney General. In terms of decision-making positions, the Attorney General and one Deputy Attorney General are women. Of the management positions approved at the central level, 56 per cent are held by women. At the provincial level, 80 per cent of chief prosecutors are women; at the municipal level, the figure is 73 per cent.
105. Of the 932 judges in the country, 755, or 81 per cent, are women. Women hold 187 of the 248 leadership positions in the court system, equivalent to 75.4 per cent.

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<sup>11</sup> The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, the Ministry of Domestic Trade, the Ministry of Finance and Prices, and the Central Bank of Cuba.

106. In other areas, 28 per cent of radio station employees are women, of whom 2.2 per cent hold managerial positions. In television, 1,005 of the 2,455 artists on the staff, or 40.9 per cent, are women.

107. In the area of information, 167 of the 258 journalists, or 64.7 per cent, are women. Women hold 54.7 per cent of management positions at the various levels of the radio company Radio Cubana.

108. In television, 41.4 per cent of management positions are held by women, of whom 52 per cent are university graduates and 48.0 per cent are under 30 years of age.

109. In the cultural sphere, the proportion of decision-making positions held by women has increased significantly, to 49 per cent of all management positions in the sector and 45 per cent of management positions at the national level.

110. At the Ministry of Culture, two deputy ministers and one first deputy minister, or 50 per cent of the total number of leaders at this level, are women. Six women, or 54.5 per cent of the total, hold the position of national director. Of the presidents of the national councils and institutes, which are responsible for designing and implementing the country's cultural policy in their respective areas, three, or 42.8 per cent of the total, are women.

111. In the provincial directorates of the culture system, in 2018, 10 women held the principal position of director, or 66.66 per cent.

112. In the entities of the central State administration, 27 per cent of civil defence chiefs are women. In addition, 53.3 per cent of civil defence chiefs at the provincial level and 46.42 per cent at the municipal level are women.

113. When defence councils are activated in disaster situations, 33.3 per cent of their presidents at the provincial level and 42.2 per cent at the municipal level are women.

114. Of the current staff at National Civil Defence Headquarters, 52 per cent are women. In management positions, the figure is 56 per cent.

115. Involving women and expanding their role and representation at the international level remains a constant concern of the country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a total of 2,451 employees, in both the internal and external services. Of those employees, 1,034, or 42.18 per cent, are women (607 in the external service and 427 in the internal service).

116. In the internal service, 29 women hold leadership positions, distributed as follows: 2 deputy ministers, 4 deputy directors general, 13 directors, 3 deputy directors, 3 heads of department, 3 heads of centre and 1 head of an independent department. In the external service, 55 women hold leadership positions, including 40 ambassadors, 1 chargé d'affaires, 2 deputy heads of mission, 10 consuls general and 2 heads of office.

117. Women leaders from the Ministry of Education have attended high-level forums such as the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Education World Forum and the Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see annex 1).

118. The then Minister of Justice, a woman, led the Cuban delegations to various international meetings, including the presentation of the seventh and eighth periodic reports of Cuba to the Committee in 2013, the presentation of the reports of Cuba on the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2015, and the twentieth plenary assembly of the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Ibero-American Countries and the first meeting of the Conference's Committee for Gender Equity.

119. The Cuban delegations to the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris in 2015 and Katowice, Poland, in 2018, were led by a woman, the Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment.

120. The Secretary-General of the Federation of Cuban Women has led the Cuban delegations to the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, to the Regional Conference on Women of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and to meetings of the Presiding Officers of the Conference, in particular the fifty-sixth meeting, held in Havana in 2017.

121. Cuban women have the right to participate in NGOs on equal terms with men. Women are well represented in the more than 2,200 organizations of various types in the country. They are members of the organizations and of their governing bodies. The vast majority of Cuban women – 90.5 per cent, or 4.4 million – are members of the Federation of Cuban Women. They are also members of social organizations and professional associations, including the Asociación Nacional de Innovadores y Racionalizadores (National Association of Innovators and Rationalizers).

## Article 9

122. Cuban citizenship is acquired by birth or naturalization. Articles 34 and 35 of the Constitution set out the means of acquiring it. Article 37 establishes that marriages, including common-law marriages, and their dissolution do not affect the citizenship of spouses, partners or their children.

123. In Decree-Law No. 352, which entered into force on 1 January 2018, the requirement to have resided in the country for a fixed period (the residence requirement) prior to applying for citizenship was eliminated for minors born abroad to a Cuban father or mother, both of whom have equal rights to transmit nationality. Citizenship applications can be processed at Cuban consulates, or at the relevant offices of the Ministry of the Interior, if the interested party or their representative is in Cuba.

124. Decree-Law No. 335, on the public records system of the Republic of Cuba, entered into force in December 2015, with a view to the improvement and integration of these records, including the registry of natural persons – or civil registry – through the use of information and communications technology. The country ensures that a registrar is present in each maternity hospital to register births with the requisite immediacy. Births that take place in maternity hospitals, which comprise 99.9 per cent of all births, are registered immediately.

## Article 10

125. Article 73 of the Constitution establishes that everyone has the right to education and that education is the responsibility of the State. The Government ensures the provision of free, accessible, high-quality education for comprehensive development, from early childhood through to postgraduate university education.

126. Article 74 establishes that people have the right to physical education, sports and recreation, as essential components of quality of life.

127. The universalization of free, high-quality education for all – women and men alike – has had an essential and strategic role in promoting women's social participation and enabling significant progress towards the eradication of prejudice, exclusion and discrimination (see annex 2).

128. The growing participation of Cuban women in every sphere of social life, the high rates of school enrolment for girls and boys, the gender parity index in primary

education, as a general indicator of gender equality, access to and retention in education, and the current expenditure budget, which continues to increase for education, ensure that these rights are protected in practice. In 2020, 24 per cent of the total budget was allocated to education. The figure was 23.7 per cent in 2019 and 22 per cent in 2018.

129. There exist objectives and materials that support the development of non-discriminatory behaviour patterns in the national education system.

130. The comprehensive programme on sexual health and rights education from a gender perspective is implemented at every level of education, including early childhood education in its two formats, namely, day-care centres and the “Educa a tu Hijo” (Educate Your Child) programme, through the provision of guidance to families and in every organizational form in which the educational process takes place, and in accordance with the knowledge and development of each age group. The Ministry of Education and the Federation of Cuban Women have a joint workplan on this subject. There is a representative of the Federation of Cuban Women on the school council of every educational institution in Cuba.

131. Special attention continues to be given to comprehensive sexuality education for children, adolescents and young people, through teaching materials aimed at families, teachers and students at all educational levels, especially basic secondary school.

132. In post-secondary education, more girls are enrolled in technical courses and studying for skilled occupations (see annex 3).

133. The Ministry of Education has continued to develop its strategy for the professional advancement of women. Of a total of 220 holders of doctoral degrees in pedagogical sciences, 115, or 52.27 per cent, are women.

134. The proportion of women staff at the Ministry of Education has continued to increase. In the 2018/19 academic year, there were a total of 177,376 women, comprising 80.5 per cent of the total.

135. In terms of women’s advancement, since the 2013/14 school year, 60 per cent of women in the education sector, on average, have received professional advancement and training courses, which have contributed to enhancing their professional preparedness.

136. Women’s participation in the higher education sector in Cuba is significant: of a total of 85,353 employees, 52,515, or 61.5 per cent, are women. Of a total of 62,640 professors, 37,072 (59.18 per cent) are women.

137. Between 2000 and July 2018, 16 university programmes for older adults were established, along with 550 affiliated centres and classrooms. More than 125,000 older adults have graduated from the programmes. Of these, more than 95 per cent are women. Approximately 53,000 students have enrolled in continuing education courses.

138. The Ministry of Higher Education has incorporated a gender perspective into the core and elective components of the curricula of all university degrees. Humanities degrees include in their study plans activities designed to address the gender perspective in an explicit way, as part of some subjects and through the contributions of others. A notable example is the sociology studies programme, one of whose broad objectives encompasses researching sociological thought and social processes with reference to gender, and which therefore includes a dedicated course on gender and an interdisciplinary approach that makes it possible to fully address the topic.

139. Degrees in the technical, natural, economic and agricultural sciences include activities to train students in analyses that incorporate the gender perspective, as part of their comprehensive education. To this end, taught elective courses related to the

issue are developed, and women's participation and the elimination of stereotypes are promoted through extracurricular activities.

## Article 11

140. Article 64 of the Constitution recognizes the right to employment and establishes that anyone able to work has the right to a decent job, in accordance with their preferences, qualifications, skill set and the requirements of the economy and society.

141. Equal pay is among the principles established in the Labour Code. Remuneration for work is without discrimination of any kind and is based on the goods produced or services provided, their quality and the actual time worked, in accordance with the principle of socialist distribution from each according to their ability to each according to their work.

142. Cuban women are paid the same as men for work of equal value, a milestone reached many years ago.

143. Working mothers' rights are guaranteed and protected by law. They are entitled to maternity leave and social protection for up to one year, which may be shared between the father and the mother, a provision that is reinforced by article 68 of the new Constitution. Through Decree-Law No. 56/2021, mentioned above, women's rights and protection were expanded, as were those of fathers and families in general, with a view to protecting maternity and caring for children. In the Decree-Law, the sharing of the responsibility for childcare between mothers and fathers is promoted, and women are encouraged to remain in and rejoin the workforce.<sup>12</sup>

144. Decision No. 26/2017 of 23 January 2017, of the Minister of Finance and Prices, provides for a discount in the payment of monthly personal income tax contributions for self-employed women who have two or more children under 17 years of age,

<sup>12</sup> The benefits for working women are the rights to attend medical and dental appointments, to prenatal and postnatal rest, and to a period of breastfeeding. Both parents are eligible for certain childcare benefits; in the event of the mother's death, the working father or other working relative (Ministry of Labour and Social Security) (such as maternal or paternal grandparents, or siblings) who is caring for the child is protected; and differentiated care is provided for those children who require it. The benefits are paid from the social security budget; their amount is calculated on the basis of the record of the period of employment and the salary of the person receiving the benefit.

Mothers are entitled to prenatal and postnatal maternity leave. Prenatal leave begins at the thirty-fourth week of pregnancy, or the thirty-second week of a multiple pregnancy, and may be extended for a further two weeks until the birth. Postnatal leave ends 12 weeks after the birth. If a worker has not been employed for the required period, she is entitled to supplementary paid maternity leave and, if the need for protection of her immediate family is established, she may receive immediate protection from the Social Assistance Office.

Once the working mother's postnatal leave is over, she and the father of the child may decide which of them (or which other family member) will take care of the child. In the event of the mother's death, the father may decide which of the family members will take care of the child. The working mother is guaranteed six weeks of paid postnatal leave to recover when, as a result of certain circumstances, her child dies before or during the birth, or within the first four weeks of life. She is also entitled to one hour's paid leave per day for breastfeeding and one day's paid leave per month to attend the paediatric care centre; her right to take unpaid leave and then return to her job is also recognized.

If the mother or father is unable to work because they are caring for the child, they are entitled to an unpaid leave of absence for a period of up to nine months, as long as the child is under 1 year of age, for those who do not meet the requirements for the payment of the social benefit; and, in order to care for a minor of up to 17 years of age, up to six months, initially granted for a minimum period of one week and a maximum period of three months, extendable by a further three months if the reasons for the request persist.

consisting of a 50 per cent reduction in those contributions, taking into account the economic income of the family unit.

145. At the end of 2021, there were 1,086 day-care centres in operation, serving a total of 141,773 children, of whom 64,613, or 47.7 per cent, were girls. These centres provide care for infants from a very early age, making it possible for women to work. This service benefits working mothers, creating the conditions for women's economic independence. Efforts to meet demand, including the training of teaching and support staff, are ongoing.

146. In June 2021, Decision No. 58/2021 of the Ministry of Education, published in Official Gazette No. 62, ordinary edition, provided for the establishment of workplace crèches as an early childhood education alternative. At these crèches, services are provided for the children of mothers, fathers or guardians employed by entities whose economic and material capacity enables them to set aside resources for the crèches' opening, maintenance and sustainability. We have 41 of these institutions, serving 820 children, within organizations and institutions throughout the country.

147. Women's participation in the economic life of the country is reflected by indicators such as the economic activity rate for women, which is 53.2 per cent, and the unemployment rate, which is 1.6 per cent (the lowest in the region). Of employed women, 78.5 per cent work in the State sector. Women comprise 35.4 per cent of self-employed workers; these women benefit from social guarantees, such as maternity leave, on an equal footing with women in the State sector.

148. The proportion of the workforce comprising women has risen from 37 per cent to 39 per cent, thanks to the entry into the workforce in 2021 of 49,000 women, who comprised 35 per cent of all new workers.

149. Employed women account for 63 per cent of higher education graduates and 48 per cent of researchers. They represent 49.7 per cent of managers; 66 per cent of the country's technicians and professionals; more than 81.9 per cent of professors, teachers and scientists; and more than 70 per cent of prosecutors, presidents of provincial tribunals, professional judges and the workforce in the health and education sectors. Women make up 49.3 per cent of those employed in the science, innovation and technology sector, and 53 per cent of scientists. They represent 70.9 per cent of public health sector employees, 62 per cent of doctors, 64.2 per cent of the staff who provide collaborative services in various countries around the world and 72.2 per cent of specialized physicians.

150. Women made up 59.2 per cent of the total of 625 graduates in middle-level education in the arts, and 55.83 per cent of graduates in higher-level arts education.

151. Women account for 43 per cent of the staff of the Computer and Electronics Youth Clubs. For managerial positions, the figure is 59.34 per cent.

152. At the telecommunications company Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba, women account for 44 per cent of the workforce. Most of them hold managerial or technical positions.

153. Of a workforce of 10,244 at the information and communications business group Grupo Empresarial de la Informática y las Comunicaciones, 3,809, or 37 per cent, are women. Women represent 38 per cent of staff across all categories. The proportion of women is 47.6 per cent among staff holding scientific posts and women account for 46 per cent of managers.

154. There are 9,566 committees of innovators and rationalizers. Of their 203,008 members, 88,984, or 43.8 per cent, are women. Of the 30,751 innovators leading this work, 13,955, or 45.3 per cent, are women.

155. Articles 68, 69 and 70 of the Constitution enshrine the rights to social security, occupational health and safety, and social assistance.

156. The Labour Code provides broad protection to women workers in the area of occupational health and safety, and has multiple regulations to ensure that Cuban women's labour rights are respected (see annex 4).

157. In 2017, women accounted for 51.6 per cent of the members of the labour justice bodies and presided over 47 per cent of these bodies.

## Article 12

158. Articles 46 and 72 of the Constitution establish that everyone has the right to health. It is the State's responsibility to ensure access to free and high-quality care, protection and recovery services. To make this right effective, there is a health-care system at all levels, which is accessible to the population and includes preventive and educational programmes.

159. In 2019, the overall mortality rate was 9.7 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants. For women, this rate was 8.8 and for men, 10.7. The number of years of life potentially lost<sup>13</sup> was 65.2 per 1,000 inhabitants aged from 1 to 74 years; the figure was lower for women.

160. The incidence of the main causes of death per 100,000 inhabitants is lower among women. The incidence of heart disease is 219.6 for women and 256.9 for men, the incidence of malignant tumours is 191 for women and 255.3 for men, and the incidence of cerebrovascular diseases is 85.3 for women and 93.0 for men.

161. The maternal and childcare programme has been improved and is a priority of government bodies and the health authorities throughout the country. The early neonatal mortality rate in 2019 was 1.8 as a result of the quality of perinatal and neonatal care, which has been improved through systematic training for the professionals who provide care for mothers and children, beginning with primary care.

162. The under-1 mortality rate is lower for girls (4.0 deaths per 1,000 live births) than for boys (6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births). The same is true of the mortality rates for children under 5 years of age (5.4 deaths for girls and 7.8 deaths for boys per 1,000 live births). The percentage of children who survive to the age of 5 is 99.3.

163. In 2019, the maternal mortality rate decreased from 43.8 to 37.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. Direct causes accounted for 23.7 deaths and indirect causes accounted for 13.7.

164. The main direct causes of death were complications related to ectopic pregnancy, delivery and puerperium, with respective rates of 2.7, 1.8 and 12.8 deaths per 100,000 live births.

165. Priority care is given to the termination of pregnancies in order to avoid complications. Abortions are performed in health-care centres by qualified personnel with the appropriate certifications, and in accordance with protocols and safety standards. The high level of compliance with infection prevention standards and the use of the medical abortion method have reduced the incidence of complications.

<sup>13</sup> The potential years of life lost indicator is used to measure the loss suffered by society as a result of the death of young people or premature deaths. The assumption on which the indicator is based is that the earlier the death, the greater the loss of life.

166. Transmissible diseases are monitored through a dedicated programme with a view to continuing to reduce morbidity and mortality, and monitoring risk factors related to outbreaks and epidemics. The programme for the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections remains in operation. Highly effective antiretroviral treatment is provided, free of charge, to anyone who needs it, in the same way as other services.

167. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the rights to abortion and to make free and responsible decisions regarding fertility, are protected, and are part of the free and universal health-care services. The measures adopted have never been to the detriment of women's right to make choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health, the number of children they have or the spacing of their children. Women and men have access to necessary specialized family planning services. We continue to work to ensure access to high-quality contraceptives for the country. People have complete freedom to choose how many children to have and when to have them. Free family counselling and planning programmes are available countrywide.

168. In Cuba, the average population aged 60 and over is 2,357,313, with women making up 53.6 per cent of this group.<sup>14</sup>

169. There is a national programme for the care of adults aged 60 and older. A total of 41 per cent of this population group is enrolled in one of the 15,430 existing grandparents' centres, which are intended to promote a healthy lifestyle. There are 287 grandparents' centres, with 9,658 places, and they provide the facilities for institutional care while families work. There are seven grandparents' centres for the care of those with mental disabilities.

170. The 362,222 registered persons with disabilities, of whom 45.3 per cent are women, have universal and free access to various support services, including health and education services.

### **Article 13**

171. The largest share of gross domestic product (28 per cent) is dedicated to funding public health and social assistance.

172. In Cuba, 200,000 people receive social assistance.

173. At the close of the first half of 2018, the total number of widows receiving a social security pension was 292,681, while the number of working widows was 22,054.

174. Women can access social security credits, loans, subsidies, services and programmes on equal terms with men, without discrimination.

175. Women's right to participate in recreational activities, sport and cultural life is protected.

176. Of those who regularly engage in sport in Cuba, 47.2 per cent are women. Plans like the Turquino Plan facilitate women's access to sporting activities, not only in the city, but also in coastal and rural areas.

177. Women aged 60 and older receive specialized care through a programme for older adults. Through the programme, which has 652,044 women members, women are encouraged to participate in physical activity in open spaces.

178. Women make up 40 per cent of the teaching staff at the Manuel Fajardo University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences. They also account for 50 per cent

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<sup>14</sup> Population Statistics Series, 2021. See <http://www.onei.gob.cu/node/15858>.

of sports journalists and commentators. In 2018, 63 Cuban women were international referees and 1,415 were national referees.

179. In addition, four women are directors of provincial sports medicine centres; six are directors of provincial centres for information technology in sport; two are directors of beginners' sport schools; three are directors of provincial physical education schools; and six are assistant directors at athletic training schools.

180. At the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation, 11 per cent of female staff hold decision-making positions. Of these, 1 is Vice-President; 8 are managers in international sport cooperation programmes; 8 are directors and heads of national departments; 33 are provincial directors and assistant directors; and 6 are high-performance sports commissioners.

181. The historical medal table for multiple sporting events shows the decisive contribution of Cuban sportswomen to the results achieved by our country (see annex 5).

182. Women have the right to participate, on equal terms and without discrimination, in every aspect of the country's cultural life. There is a strong female presence in every cultural field and institution in all spheres.

#### **Article 14**

183. Cuba has continued to focus on the development of rural life and those who live in rural areas, including rural women, who enjoy all the rights established by law. Rural women also benefit from various policies and programmes, such as the comprehensive development programme known as the Turquino Plan, which has an emphasis on the importance of women's advancement in the economic, social and family spheres.

184. Rural women, like women in urban areas, have free access to health-care services, where they receive medical care, information and family planning advice, in accordance with the provisions of national health-care programmes. The same is true with regard to education services. There are maternity homes to ensure that women living in remote areas can give birth in safe conditions.

185. The right to work is also a reality in the rural parts of Cuba.

186. In the agricultural sector, 219,772 women are employed, comprising 25 per cent of the total workforce; of those women, 13 per cent are involved in production. In the specific field of building the scientific potential of the agricultural system, 1,959 women are employed, accounting for 42 per cent of all staff. There are 96,669 female cooperative members, representing 44 per cent of all members.

187. There are 78,580 women members of the National Association of Small Farmers, representing 19.74 per cent of the total. The number of women members of the 3,312 brigades organized by the Association and the Federation of Cuban Women has increased to 73,674. They contribute to the completion of productive work and training on gender issues for rural families, and to the promotion of women's participation in food production.

188. In urban, suburban and family farming, there are 378,580 women workers, accounting for 43 per cent of the total; this is 130,580 more women workers than in 2018.

189. In order to encourage food production, more than 17,000 women have been granted land ownership, with full access to credit, technical assistance and other opportunities.

190. More than 10,900 Cuban women were landowners at the end of 2018, pursuant to the legal right of inheritance.

191. The encouragement and recognition of rural women continues to increase, alongside an expansion of women's training and capacity-building programmes offered by different entities, rural organizations, professional associations and the Ministry of Agriculture.

192. Women are playing an increasing role as leaders in environmental protection and conservation, as well as in risk management aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and preventing disasters. A large number of women are heads of risk-reduction management centres or are responsible for early warning stations in their regions, or have responsibilities within their communities.

### **Articles 15 and 16**

193. Women and men enjoy equal legal capacity and equal guarantees to protect its exercise. Women are legally empowered to sign civil and commercial contracts of all kinds, to administer property, and to access financial credit, on equal terms and without discrimination.

194. Women and men have equal rights to free movement and freedom to choose their residence and domicile, in accordance with national laws.

195. Women and men have equal inheritance rights, regardless of whether the legator is testate or intestate. Women have full capacity to inherit. The surviving spouse is entitled to the same portion as the rest of the heirs with whom he or she is competing.

196. Women have access to the courts of law on an equal footing with men for all types of proceedings.

197. There is no discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relations. Article 82 of the Constitution establishes the equal rights, obligations and legal capacity of spouses.

198. Women and men enjoy equal rights to marry and to freely choose their spouses.

199. They have equal rights and responsibilities throughout marriage, and also upon its dissolution, including in relation to their children. Children's best interest is the primary consideration in the assessment of cases.

### **Cuban women in the scientific response to coronavirus disease**

200. Cuban women have played a decisive role in the economic and social development of the nation through their significant scientific contributions. They have received a number of national awards from the Cuban Academy of Sciences for authoring relevant scientific publications and patenting new inventions.

201. Women account for 34 per cent of the current membership of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, making it the academic institution with the highest proportion of women members in the world. Of the three Vice-Presidents of its Board of Directors, two are women.

202. In 2021, the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization recognized that Cuba had achieved gender parity in the sciences, with women accounting for more than 50 per cent of Cuban scientists.

203. Women are the primary creators of 6 of the 10 Cuban inventions that have been awarded gold medals by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

204. In the COVID-19 response, Cuban women actively participated in the introduction of various therapeutic protocols and in new research projects, and co-led the trials of the country's candidate vaccines.

205. Of eight Cuban academics selected in 2020 to participate in the COVID-19 Expert Group of the InterAcademy Partnership, an advisory group established to support the global response to COVID-19, two are women: Tania Crombet, clinical director of the Centre for Molecular Immunology, and Guadalupe Guzmán, head of research and diagnosis at the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine.

206. Women who played a prominent role in the effort to develop candidate vaccines against the pandemic include Dr. Marta Ayala, Director of the Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, who worked on the proposals for the candidate vaccines Mambisa and Abdala, and Dr. Miladys Limonta, manager of the Centre's COVID-19 vaccine programme.

207. Among those leading the work to develop the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, which has won the Cuban Academy of Sciences Award three times, is Dr. Dagmar García, Research Director at the Finlay Vaccine Institute.

208. Other female Cuban scientists who have gained recognition include Rosa Elena Simeón, who led the fight against African swine fever, and Concepción Campa, leader of the research behind the only vaccine with proven efficacy against meningitis B and C. In addition, Beatriz Marcheco, of the National Centre for Medical Genetics, Martha Ana Castro, of the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine, and Mayra Hernández, of the Institute of Materials Science and Technology, were the 2017 winners of the Sofia Kovalevskaja award, which is conferred by the Foundation of the same name.

## **Information on the Committee's conclusions and recommendations**

209. With regard to the recommendation in paragraph 7 of the Committee's concluding observations,<sup>15</sup> the National Assembly of People's Power has permanent and temporary working committees that help it to understand and prioritize situations and to draw up work plans or programmes.

210. One such committee, which is permanent, is the Committee for Youth, Children and Women's Equal Rights, which has prepared, and submitted to the National Assembly, studies on the effectiveness of the legal rules relating to women, as well as draft amendments to existing laws.

211. With regard to the recommendations in paragraph 9, Cuba conducts ongoing outreach and awareness-raising work on the international human rights instruments to which it is a party, including the Convention. One example is the project on justice from a gender perspective of the National Union of Jurists of Cuba, an organization that has promoted a rights-based culture and expanded knowledge of the principal international instruments, not only among the general public, but also so that the instruments are used in the arguments of legal professionals.

212. There are annual meetings, workshops and seminars with representatives of NGOs on various human rights issues, including international instruments.

<sup>15</sup> CEDAW/C/CUB/CO/7-8.

213. For instance, in 2017 an online forum on human rights was held to discuss recommendations from the universal periodic review and others made by human rights treaty bodies. The participants included representatives of the Government, civil society, religious groups, women, educators and medical societies.

214. Through a programme entitled “Por un mundo al derecho” (For a World of Rights), which is led by the Ministry of Justice and in which several institutions participate, a culture of rights has been promoted and awareness about the main international instruments has been raised.

215. In general, the country is taking steps to improve the population’s legal awareness and legal education to foster a legal culture in which people are familiar with and able to defend the fundamental principles and guarantees that are set forth in the Constitution and other laws.

216. With respect to the recommendation in paragraph 11, the harmonization of national laws with the international instruments that Cuba has ratified has always been a guiding principle for the Cuban State and Government.

217. Cuba therefore recognizes the need to continue to advance in order to ensure that the regulatory and material modifications prescribed in the Convention are made.

218. Although there is no explicit definition of discrimination against women, equality is one of the principles that underpins our laws, and it has constitutional status.

219. Under both the Constitution and other regulations in force, discrimination of any kind, and specifically discrimination based on sex, is prohibited and is punishable by law.

220. As part of the current process of strengthening the country’s democratic and participatory institutional framework, a new Family Code has been adopted.

221. With regard to the recommendations in paragraph 13, in Cuba there are solid laws that contain guarantees and expeditious means for accessing justice and appealing decisions, making it possible for both administrative and judicial claims to be substantiated or contested. Work is being done to raise the awareness of and train police and legal personnel on gender issues and violence prevention, among other things, and to develop protocols for action that prevent women’s revictimization.

222. Pursuant to article 92 of the Constitution, the State guarantees, in accordance with the law, that individuals may have access to judicial bodies in order to obtain effective protection of their legitimate rights and interests. Compliance with judicial decisions is mandatory, and those who fail to respect them are held liable.

223. In terms of access to justice, there are no distinctions whatsoever, nor is there discrimination of any kind. Women are guaranteed this right, under equal conditions, in order to resolve family, administrative, labour, criminal and other disputes.

224. There are courts in every municipality. The Office of the Attorney General represents, at all levels, minors who do not have legal representatives or whose interests are in conflict with those of their representatives, as well as persons who have been declared legally incapable and do not have legal guardians, and protects the rights of persons in vulnerable situations. The collective law firms have lawyers who are available to the public.

225. As mentioned above, the country has an extensive system for attending to the population at every level of State and Government and through community-based and grass-roots organizations. In addition, labour justice boards function within entities to settle disputes. There are units of the National Revolutionary Police available to the population throughout the country.

226. Access to lawyers is guaranteed. When a woman, or any other person, is unable to bear the costs of legal representation, the State appoints a public defender free of charge.

227. Systematic efforts to increase information and outreach continue with a view to ensuring that people, including women, know where to turn and what rights they have when they find themselves in certain situations.

228. The legal provisions on labour matters guarantee access to justice and protect the right to contest administrative decisions. Women workers, including those in the non-State sector, have the right to initiate proceedings before the competent bodies, authorities and courts to obtain recognition and fulfilment of the labour and social security rights that are enshrined in law. Workers employed by natural persons can go directly to court to claim their rights.

229. The Federation of Cuban Women, through its women's and family counselling centres, its public offices and its direct work in communities, guides, supports and accompanies women who are experiencing situations of gender-based, familial or other forms of violence.

230. As mentioned above, prostitution is not a crime in Cuba, but it is a socially repudiated activity because of its direct and indirect effects on key sectors, such as public safety and public health. Prostitution is also not a recognized occupation, since it imposes serious vulnerabilities and risks on those who practise it, particularly women.

231. The authorities investigate and prosecute, in accordance with the law, anyone who induces others to become prostitutes or benefits from their prostitution, even when such prostitution is voluntary.

232. Cases involving criminal offences related to the practice of prostitution have been identified.

233. In Cuba, crime victims are not criminalized, but rather protected and reintegrated into society.

234. The Federation of Cuban Women, in coordination with other institutions, offers support to women who work as prostitutes, with an emphasis on prevention and education. This has made it possible to bring many women into employment, the study of trades and other activities.

235. With regard to the recommendations in paragraph 15, article 61 of the Constitution recognizes people's right to submit complaints and requests to the authorities, which are obliged to process them and provide timely, relevant and well-founded responses within the time period and in accordance with the procedure established by law.

236. Cuba has an extensive and effective inter-agency system, also involving NGOs, to receive, process and answer any complaint or request from individuals or groups of individuals in respect of the enjoyment of any right.

237. In addition to the Office of the Attorney General, there are other bodies and mechanisms that respond to human rights-related complaints and requests. These include social organizations, departments that deal with the public in each of the bodies of the central State administration, the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, the standing committees of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State's mechanisms for dealing with the public.

238. The functions of the Office of the Attorney General include addressing complaints submitted by citizens about alleged violations of their rights; the Office therefore plays a central role in the system for dealing with claims.

239. Seeking to expand the channels and mechanisms available to the public for submitting complaints and requests, in 2014 the Office of the Attorney General made available additional channels, including a 24-hour telephone line that operates year-round. In addition, email addresses and an interactive web portal were rolled out, as well as the option to submit complaints via social media. Prosecutors have also reached out to inhabitants of hard-to-reach communities in mountainous and coastal areas.

240. In 2019, 55,407 women received personalized attention at the Office of the Attorney General, and were offered the guidance needed to solve their problems and ensure the effective exercise of their rights. Anonymity is guaranteed when women request it or when the procedure requires it, and it is used whenever accusations of any kind are made.

241. In 2019, 9,941 claims were received and processed where the plaintiffs were women; 708 of those claims, representing only 4 per cent of the total, were linked to the exercise of the women's rights. In the vast majority of these cases, the plaintiffs were provided with legal guidance to settle their claims and action was taken to address the alleged violations of their rights, in order to restore compliance with the law.

242. The Federation of Cuban Women and the Confederation of Cuban Workers have a mechanism for attending to the public at each of their municipal and provincial offices and at their national headquarters. The mechanism is staffed by highly qualified specialists who provide advice free of charge. The main issues that women have raised through the mechanism are related to the functioning of the organizations themselves, housing, labour issues and other legal matters.

243. The possibility of establishing an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles is being evaluated and studied.

244. There is no single model for the establishment of national human rights institutions. Cuba will therefore maintain its focus on ensuring that any new form adopted by the mechanisms to this end complies with the objective of helping to achieve better results in terms of the fulfilment and expansion of protections aimed at ensuring citizens' enjoyment of all their human rights.

245. Regarding the recommendations in paragraph 17, the Federation of Cuban Women constitutes the national machinery for the advancement of women in Cuba, pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 198/2021.

246. Regarding the recommendation in paragraph 19, it should be noted that NGOs are consulted about and play an active role in the process of designing and implementing policies, programmes and measures aimed at the advancement of women. These include the National Association of Cuban Economists and Accountants, the Cuban United Nations Association, the National Union of Architects and Engineers, the gender and journalism group of the Union of Cuban Journalists, the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, the gender programme of the National Association of Jurists of Cuba, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians, and the Cuban Animal Production Association. These and other organizations participate in the consultations that inform the preparation of the national reports submitted by Cuba.

247. With regard to the recommendation in paragraph 21, the country has taken various temporary special measures related to information, guidance and training in

different non-traditional specialties and trades, which were intended to support women's participation in the labour force and raise their level of education. The most recent measures include the priority given to single mothers in the granting of subsidies to build houses; the additional benefits for working mothers with multiple children in terms of day-care fees, which is an aspect of the policy aimed at increasing the birth rate; and the 50 per cent personal income tax reduction for single mothers who have more than two children and who work in the non-State sector.

248. Opportunities for women in terms of education and work, which prepare them to exercise all of their acquired rights and to achieve genuine autonomy, have gradually come to form part of their life expectations. This has reduced the need to resort to temporary special measures.

249. However, temporary measures are now being implemented to address the gender disparity in managerial roles.

250. The State committee charged with overseeing promotions to managerial positions within State and government entities continues to require the nomination, for management positions, of one woman and one man who meet the criteria to discharge the responsibility in question. Where there is clear equality of conditions, and depending on the requirements of the position, women are given priority.

251. Temporary measures are also being applied in other labour-related areas, for instance to support the inclusion of women with physical disabilities who are seeking to work or enrol in educational programmes.

252. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 23, attitudes based on stereotypes, or that are discriminatory, persist in the behaviour of some people.

253. There is a need to continue to educate people at the level of the family. In this regard, a general objective of the national programme for the advancement of women is to promote women's advancement and their equal access to the rights, opportunities and options that are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba; as well as to further bring to light the objective and subjective factors that, as expressions of discrimination, persist in Cuban society and hinder the achievement of better results in the economic, political, social and family spheres, with a view to eliminating these factors.

254. The number of women heads of household is increasing, not because more women live alone or do not have a husband or companion, but because of the recognition of women as heads of households by the other members of their family group. This is a sign of independence, since women no longer rely on men to support them, as in other societies or bygone eras.

255. Discussion of these issues is encouraged at the community level, including through publications of Editorial de la Mujer, in particular its magazines *Mujeres* and *Muchacha*; on the weekly television programme *Cuando una Mujer*; and on provincial and municipal radio and television programmes. The subject of women and communication has become more visible in our society in recent years.

256. The National Assembly of People's Power, through its Committee for Children, Youth and Women's Equality, has specifically discussed the dissemination of pejorative messages about Cuban women in musical and humorous television programmes.

257. In the artistic and literary sphere, several spaces for discussion and reflection have been established, some specifically dedicated to women, feminism, gender and creation in these fields. Cross-disciplinary spaces have also been established, with the participation of specialists in various areas of social science and the humanities;

participants have discussed the many manifestations of residual inequality and discrimination.

258. There is a growing number of academic research studies on gender and communication, considered from different perspectives and at different levels.

259. In recent years the presence of women in Cuban cinema has increased, in particular among the new generations of filmmakers who are graduates of the Higher Institute of Art and the International School of Cinema and Television. Women are actively involved in film editing, production and photography, but remain in the minority in directing.

260. Despite the progress made in the media sphere, there are still communication products that portray Cuban women in a stereotyped manner that does not reflect the changes in gender relations that have occurred in our country.

261. Some video clips and song lyrics continue to present women as sexual objects, and men as being linked to violence and macho stereotypes, and as identifying success with the possession of material goods.

262. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 25, the Government protects women from gender-based violence in all its manifestations and is establishing institutional and legal mechanisms for that purpose. Effective protection exists, although there is no specific law on violence against women.

263. With the entry into force of the Criminal Code, Act No. 151/2022, gender-based and domestic violence and all forms of discrimination are addressed under criminal law, and the legal framework relating to articles 42, 46, 81, 82 and 85 of the Constitution of the Republic has been developed.

264. In that regard:

- Efforts to address these phenomena are reflected in 36 offences, including offences involving gender-based or domestic violence or discriminatory grounds and resulting in specific penalties that are more severe in the vast majority of cases.
- The possibility of imposing a new additional penalty related to the ban on approaching the victim or injured party, his or her family and close relatives, a penalty that is also included as a precautionary measure in the new Criminal Procedure Act and in the Code on Proceedings for the Resolution of Family Conflicts, has been incorporated.
- A special adjustment rule for offences involving gender-based or domestic violence, whereby the penalty may be adapted to the nature of such crimes, resulting in an increase in the upper limit of the penalty by one third, has been established.
- Intimate domestic partnership has been added to the scope of protection of criminal law, under the relevant aggravating circumstance, in the case of offences in which the spouse is considered to be the victim of the crime, and in the case of assault, murder, threats, sexual harassment, sexual affront and blackmail, as provided for in articles 182, 345, 378, 398 and 420.
- The following aggravating circumstance has been added: the offence is committed as a consequence of gender-based or domestic violence, or for discriminatory reasons of any kind.
- The offences of “rape” and “violent pederasty” have been combined into a single offence known as “sexual assault”, which includes serious forms of the offence of “sexual abuse” and other acts to be considered as offences of this nature; in

this formulation, discriminatory treatment based on gender and sexual orientation, which is included among the current offences mentioned above, has been eliminated.

- Reformulated provisions concerning “offences against the right to equality”, focused particularly on aspects related to the forms of discrimination proscribed under article 42 of the Constitution, have been set out.

265. Many activities contribute to preventing and addressing violence against women, starting in communities. One example is educational work, which has contributed to raising public awareness. Legal advice services have also been implemented.

266. In addition, efforts to address violence against women have been strengthened using scientific approaches, through the identification and prioritization of lines of research on the matter and the implementation of research projects.

267. Violence-related matters, with a gender perspective, are increasingly being addressed in diploma courses, master’s degree courses and publications for the preparation and training of professionals.

268. There is a movement of activists and social workers who are receiving training in order to assist women and their families, helping to prevent and eradicate violence.

269. Educational work is being carried out through discussions and lectures, and through training for law enforcement officials, medical emergency personnel, judges and prosecutors, teachers, professors and journalists, as well as through the media, with the issue being discussed on television and on the radio. The matter is systematically addressed in women’s magazines.

270. Conferences, workshops and seminars are being organized in all provinces, and awareness-raising initiatives have been conducted systematically among various segments of the population.

271. Artistic tours focused on eliminating violence and analysing its various manifestations are being conducted.

272. Campaigns such as “Eres más” (You are more), a national campaign promoted by the Centro Oscar Arnulfo Romero and involving television spots, have had an impact on the prevention and combating of violence against women.

273. Women victims of violence receive various forms of support. They are protected by law enforcement authorities, who are the guarantors of public safety. In addition, the social workers of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and social and community organizations, acting separately or together, support the protective measures required to create a safe environment for victims and ensure that the appropriate measures are taken in respect of offenders.

274. The Federation of Cuban Women also has, in each municipality, women’s and family counselling centres, whose teams of professionals, comprising psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, teachers, lawyers and others, provide assistance to victims, work with offenders and train local leaders to better address problems and help to solve and eradicate them.

275. With regard to temporary shelters, as a result of the country’s complex housing situation it is not possible to establish shelters for victims. However, their safety is ensured as a result of the control measures imposed on offenders, either through community pressure or the influence of government institutions and civil society representatives.

276. As stated above, if a woman or any other person is unable to bear the costs of legal representation, the Government will assign that person a court-appointed lawyer free of charge.

277. With regard to collecting data on violence against women, the national survey on gender equality, previously mentioned in this report, includes a section on the matter. Violence in intimate partnerships was investigated, and the data showed that 26.7 per cent of women had been subjected to some type of violence in the 12 months before the survey, with psychological violence being the most prevalent form. Of the women who had been subjected to violence by their intimate partners at some other time in their lives, 39 per cent had not been subjected to such violence in the previous 12 months.

278. This last figure suggests that they managed to escape that situation and are not currently experiencing such violence, a positive development that could be explained by the empowerment and independence achieved by women as a result of the policies implemented in order to promote equality and non-violence over the years.

279. The results of the survey have become an important source for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for other national processes that are being developed in the country for this purpose.

280. Information pertaining to the recommendations contained in paragraph 27 has been provided in the section of this report relating to article 6 of the Convention. Aspects of that information are nevertheless highlighted below.

281. In February 2017, the 2017–2020 national action plan for the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons and the protection of victims was adopted. In April 2017, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, visited Cuba.

282. The limited number of cases identified at the domestic level are not linked to organized criminal networks. Almost all of these cases are related to sexual exploitation in the family or immediate social circle, and the perpetrators of the crimes have been prosecuted in accordance with the law. No cases of trafficking related to the removal of organs, slavery or forced marriage have been verified.

283. In 2019 and 2020, 15 cases involving crimes with characteristics typical of trafficking in persons were tried.<sup>16</sup>

284. The low incidence is essentially due to the eminently preventive nature of the social and State policies of Cuba, the zero-tolerance policy, and the absence of organized criminal networks in the country.

285. Of the above-mentioned cases, 15 involved trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and 1 involved trafficking for purposes of forced labour. A total of 18 victims were identified, of whom 10 were girls and 8 were women. The criminal penalties for the perpetrators ranged from 6 to 12 years of imprisonment. Of the 17 defendants identified, 11 were men and 6 were women.

286. In 2020, the Ministry of Education continued to improve the preventive education strategy, in particular through the application, monitoring and evaluation of the procedure for the design, implementation and control of preventive work, as a means of providing support, from the perspective of the system of methodological scientific work, to students and their families who need it.

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<sup>16</sup> Understood as the forced exploitation of persons or the exploitation of minors, as established in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol).

287. In conjunction with other bodies and organizations, the Ministry of Education held, in every municipality in the country, a preparatory course on the prevention of trafficking in persons from a gender and legal perspective in educational institutions. The course was held at 1,311 venues, with 6,547 facilitators. There were 97,779 participants, of whom 93,460 were from the education sector and 4,319 were from other bodies, entities and organizations, including 1,427 from local government bodies.

288. Through the process of diagnosis and characterization carried out in schools by the Ministry of Education, support was provided to 219 students identified on the basis of signs or practices associated with prostitution. In all cases, preventive education strategies were developed for the support and protection of minors, and measures were taken in conjunction with the legal representatives.

289. The implementation of two protocols for specifically addressing behaviours related to prostitution and violence continued. Both protocols have been incorporated into the work system at the various educational levels.

290. The central helpline of the Office of the Attorney General has been in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and has allowed people to make reports and complaints on various matters, including trafficking in persons. In 2020, 129,020 citizens contacted the helpline, and although no specific allegations were received regarding the crime of trafficking in persons, 1,923 allegations regarding violations of the rights of minors and women were received, handled and responded to in a timely manner.

291. Cuba continues to collaborate internationally to investigate and solve cases that cannot be addressed within the national framework.

292. Action has been taken at the border to identify and alert young people who fit the profile of victims and intend to travel abroad. In addition, Internet publications related to job offers abroad are systematically monitored, which has allowed the neutralization of three Cuban citizens linked to the recruitment of artists without legal protection.

293. The Government of Cuba continues to collaborate internationally to investigate and solve cases of trafficking that cannot be addressed within the national framework.

294. The Government also continues to pay attention to the phenomenon of prostitution. Its goal is to prevent prostitution, address its causes and manifestations and provide the women who engage in it with new alternatives, through joint work focused on guidance, education, persuasion and prevention, and by creating opportunities for employment and social reintegration for those who wish to quit prostitution.

295. With respect to the recommendations contained in paragraph 29, the Government of Cuba remains willing to continue to improve national laws in order to strengthen the approach to gender equality. The Constitution of the Republic, as discussed earlier in this report, is an example of progress in this area.

296. With regard to women in decision-making positions, figures showing progress in bodies such as the National Assembly of People's Power, the Council of State and the Council of Ministers have been provided earlier in this report. The results achieved demonstrate that, with political will, positive outcomes can be achieved, without imposing numerical targets or quota systems.

297. The same is true for women in the country's various economic sectors, in which women's representation continues to be promoted. Although progress has been made, in terms of their preferences women remain inclined towards professions and trades that they have traditionally performed. Even when specialties in a career such as

medicine are considered, women prefer paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, gerontology, and ophthalmology over surgery, neurology and cardiology.

298. In general, there has been a marked increase in women's representation among highly skilled workers. Accordingly, there are more women than men in professional careers in scientific and technical fields.

299. Relevant information on the results of efforts to promote women's active and equal participation in all areas of life in the country, including the political and public spheres, is provided in the section relating to articles 7 and 8 of the Convention.

300. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 31, girls and women in Cuba have equal rights to enrolment at all levels of the national education system.

301. At the end of 2021, 1,086 day-care centres were in operation, with a total of 141,773 students, of whom 64,613, or 47.7 per cent, were girls. At the primary level, there were 721,647 students, of whom 352,016, or 48.76 per cent, were girls. Of the total of 670,382 students enrolled at the basic secondary level, girls accounted for 330,614, or 49.3 per cent. Of the total of 133,982 students enrolled at the pre-university level, girls accounted for 84,428, or 63.01 per cent. Of the 193,916 students enrolled in technical and professional studies, 72,535, or 37.4 per cent, were women.

302. Women account for 64 per cent of university students and are very well represented not only in fields traditionally dominated by women, such as pedagogy (80 per cent women) and social sciences and humanities (74.6 per cent), but also in other fields, such as medical sciences (68 per cent), economics (67.2 per cent) and natural sciences and mathematics (61.87 per cent).

303. Progress has been made in the area of free and universal education, as 63 per cent of university graduates and 48 per cent of researchers are women. There is gender parity in primary and secondary education.

304. School dropout rates are negligible in terms of numbers, although there is always a small proportion of girls who, for various reasons, do not complete the compulsory primary and secondary levels of education. They are being reintegrated into the education system, as demonstrated by the number enrolled in adult education during the 2019/20 academic year, in which, of the total of 104,216 students enrolled in adult education, 49,779, or 47.7 per cent, were women. Of those women, 493 were studying to complete primary education and 1,359 to complete basic secondary education.

305. Of the 22 universities under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education, 14, or 64 per cent, are directed by women rectors. This represents an increase of 56.3 per cent compared with the previous report.

306. In line with efforts to advance progress in the recognition and protection of equal rights for women and men, as well as in the areas of prostitution and the prohibition of sexual exploitation, the Ministry of Education is implementing, in the school curriculum and in teacher training institutions, the programme on sexual health and rights education from a gender perspective. The programme is set out in Ministerial Decision No. 139/2011, which promotes inclusive and equitable learning about sexuality, gender, individual and collective rights, sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health, and other topics that contribute to the comprehensive and high-quality education of children and adolescents.

307. During the Ministry of Education's third drive to improve the education system, nine components were developed, including health and sex education in order to ensure that children and adolescents have a healthy and sustainable lifestyle at the

individual, family and social levels. Such education promotes responsible sexuality, with a focus on gender and rights, in order to promote the physical, psychological, spiritual and social well-being of children and adolescents.

308. Teachers at all levels of instruction continue to receive education and training on gender, discrimination and violence.

309. With respect to the recommendations contained in paragraph 33, as discussed earlier in the report, in Cuba women receive equal pay for work of equal value. The Labour Code enshrines, among the fundamental principles underpinning the right to work, the principle of equal pay.

310. The Labour Code is applicable to all sectors of the economy, State entities, workers in the non-State sector, agricultural and non-agricultural cooperatives, foreign investment arrangements, and branches and representatives of foreign corporations located in Cuba, in the latter two cases with the adjustments set forth in the Foreign Investment Act.

311. With regard to women's working conditions, the Labour Code provides that the employer is responsible for ensuring appropriate working conditions and the protection of the rights recognized in labour laws, as well as for developing appropriate relations with workers based on attention to their opinions and complaints, the protection of their physical and psychological integrity, and due respect for their dignity.

312. The National Labour Inspection Office of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and its provincial and territorial offices conduct labour inspections and monitor compliance with labour and social security laws, as well as stipulating and applying legally established measures in relation to employers who commit violations.

313. Violations of the fundamental rights of women workers are also subject to regulations.

314. This report has already addressed the benefits for women of Decree Law No. 56/2021, on working women's maternity and the responsibility of families, in which broad recognition is given to the social role of maternity, women's entry and re-entry into the workforce, and the provision by other family members of care and attention to minor children. The new Constitution enshrines the concept of shared responsibility by including the protection of paternity in its articles 68 and 84.

315. Men are being encouraged to share more parental responsibilities, and in particular to take paternity leave.

316. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 35, the use of modern methods of contraception for family planning (condoms and hormonal methods) is increasing, primarily among young women. Total contraceptive coverage has remained high and stable, at over 77.1 per cent. Condom use accounts for 14.5 per cent, hormonal methods (pills and injectables) for 9.4 per cent, intrauterine devices for 50 per cent, female sterilization for 23 per cent and other methods for 3.1 per cent. A total of 19 per cent of adolescent girls use intrauterine devices, 30 per cent use condoms, 13 per cent use oral hormonal contraceptives and 3 per cent use injectables.

317. The negative consequences of pregnancy termination for women are widely publicized through all possible channels, and the need for pregnancy termination to be the responsibility of both partners is reaffirmed. The purpose is to introduce the idea of responsible and conscious maternity and paternity into the understanding and behaviours of young people.

318. However, pregnancy termination in Cuba is a free and safe health service, like all others that are provided, and is accompanied by appropriate care and information about the decision to be taken. This is the right of the couple and, ultimately, the woman.

319. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and free and responsible choice over fertility, are upheld and are incorporated into women's and family health services, including family planning, informational and educational services.

320. One hundred per cent of primary health-care institutions offer comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. In urban and rural communities, family doctors and nurses providing primary health care give priority to women of childbearing age facing preconception risks, pregnant women, recently pregnant women, newborns and children under 5 years of age. There are 2,610 doctors who specialize in obstetrics and gynaecology, and 1,355, or 52 per cent, of them are women. There is a total of 2,606 paediatricians, of whom 1,920, or 73.6 per cent, are women. Of the total of 748 neonatologists, 620, or 82.8 per cent, are women.

321. At the end of 2019, the number of primary care institutions providing sexual and reproductive health services was 13,131 (10,869 clinics, 449 polyclinics and 132 maternity centres).

322. In 2019, the rate of induced abortion was 27.0 per 1,000 women between 12 and 49 years of age, 66.7 per 100 births and 39.8 per 100 pregnant women.<sup>17</sup>

323. All health institutions, including primary care institutions, have abortion medications and have trained personnel and equipment in order to perform safe abortions and provide post-abortion care.

324. In 2019, the overall fertility rate was 42.5 live births per 1,000 women between 15 and 49 years of age.

325. Medical care for children and pregnant women is ensured in areas that are mountainous or difficult to reach.<sup>18</sup> In 2019, 90.6 per cent of pregnant women located in these rural areas received care during the first trimester of pregnancy. Of those women, 1,609 were under 20 years of age.

326. With respect to the recommendations contained in paragraph 37, all women in Cuba, irrespective of their status, have access to health-care services, social benefits and participation in political and public life.

327. For example, 90 per cent of women living with HIV and requiring therapy receive antiretroviral treatment free of charge. Coverage is increasing in line with the changes in criteria recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

328. Cuba was the first country in the world to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, as certified by WHO in 2015. WHO certified these results again in 2019.

329. Steady progress is being made in raising social awareness with regard to the elimination of gender stereotypes and sexist patterns that are damaging to women, while a greater understanding and acceptance of sexual diversity and of people living with HIV is being achieved.

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<sup>17</sup> 2019 *Health Statistics Yearbook*, 2020 edition.

<sup>18</sup> Indicators of maternal and child care under the Turquino Plan, by province. 2016 *Health Statistics Yearbook*, p. 170.

330. The activities of the Centre for Comprehensive Health Care for Transsexual Persons, an institution of the national health system authorized to perform full or partial medical treatment for sex reassignment purposes, should be noted. The work of the National Commission for Comprehensive Care for Transsexual Persons, led by CENESEX, is also noteworthy.

331. There are 150 health institutions<sup>19</sup> (nursing homes) dedicated to the care of older persons living alone, with a total of 11,898 beds.<sup>20</sup> In addition, there are 3,744 day-care places for people in this age group. The total number of women in nursing homes is 3,736,<sup>21</sup> representing 34 per cent of the 10,998<sup>22</sup> older adults in those institutions.

332. In its efforts to build a society in which all citizens have the same opportunities, the Government of Cuba pays special attention to persons with disabilities. The policy gives priority to ensuring the full and effective participation of such persons in their social environment. To that end, the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, aimed at promoting, coordinating and implementing policies, strategies, programmes and services to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities, and at ensuring equal opportunities, inclusion and the active participation of such persons in economic and social development, is being implemented.

333. In 2021, a total of 4,037 mothers of children with disabilities were protected by the social assistance system.

334. Girls and women with disabilities benefit from general protection aimed at ensuring their comprehensive development. They have unrestricted access to the universal and free national education system, including special education targeted at women and girls who have an intellectual disability and require specialized care.

335. The Ministry of Education is improving teacher preparation in order to achieve a higher quality of care for children with special educational needs. Such children are guaranteed access to assistive devices that enable their participation in society, including individual adaptations involving cochlear implants and prostheses, among other facilities.

336. Particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring access to new information and communications technology for persons with disabilities. The Computer and Electronics Youth Clubs include in their programmes support for girls and women with various types of disabilities, focusing on the development of educational software and educational and instructional games.

337. Girls and women with disabilities enjoy the benefits of the comprehensive, universal and free national health system. Specialized centres and highly qualified personnel exist to meet their specific needs. There are 30 psychopedagogical medical centres that provide care for persons with intellectual disabilities and 420 rehabilitation centres at the primary health-care level for persons with physical-motor disabilities. The artistic creation and appreciation workshops of associations of persons with disabilities benefit 25,000 people.

338. There is a government service for assistance in the care of children, sick persons, persons with disabilities and older persons.

339. With regard to marriage and the requirement to establish the same age limit of 16 years for girls and boys and to mandate court authorization in all such cases, these

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<sup>19</sup> 2019 *Health Statistics Yearbook*, 2020 edition.

<sup>20</sup> 2019 *Health Statistics Yearbook*, 2020 edition.

<sup>21</sup> 2019 *Health Statistics Yearbook*, 2020 edition.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

issues have been modified with the approval of the Family Code, in which the age of marriage was raised to 18 years, with no exceptions.

340. In relation to the recommendation contained in paragraph 41, the system of demographic and social statistics in Cuba has disaggregation enabling the development of gender-related indicators according to national requirements. As a statistical exercise of major importance, Cuba conducted, in 2016 and 2017, the above-mentioned national survey on gender equality. That survey included the following topics: sociodemographic characteristics of individuals, dwellings and households; conceptions of equality; use of time and care; family and intimate partner relationships; and violence against women in intimate partner relationships. Currently, as a result of the implementation of the national programme for the advancement of women, the Scientific Monitoring Centre on Gender is being established to monitor the correct use of the gender perspective in the development of indicators and the collection of statistics, and to carry out comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses on equality-related matters so as to contribute to the adoption of public policies.

341. There are plans to improve the above-mentioned statistical system through the inclusion in the 2022 census of a series of questions that will enable an in-depth understanding of gender issues and of the related indicators.

342. With regard to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, mentioned in paragraph 43 of the Committee's concluding observations, to date Cuba has not considered it necessary to assume obligations that would involve supranational procedures and bodies in the processing of individual communications, or to seek the assistance of international investigations in order to ensure that persons residing in its territory enjoy the full protection and enjoyment of the rights and remedies provided for in international human rights instruments. The country has the necessary resources and mechanisms for that purpose.

343. The appropriate use of the remedies established under national laws has made it possible to avert any violation in Cuba of the provisions set forth in the Convention and other international human rights instruments.

344. Regarding the content of paragraph 44, compliance with commitments related to gender equality and women's empowerment, including the observance and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the agreements of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the commitments agreed upon during the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular the Montevideo Strategy, is a basic aspect of the concept of prosperous and sustainable development in Cuba and is used to design activities that contribute to the implementation of the Convention in the country, as well as to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the mainstreaming of gender into the other Sustainable Development Goals.

345. With respect to paragraph 45, on the basis of the characteristics and structure of the political system in Cuba and as part of the process of updating the country's economic and social development model, mechanisms ensuring the advancement of women in Cuba and of gender equality are being improved. The Montevideo Strategy is also becoming a crucial tool for the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the sustainable development framework and for the appropriate mainstreaming of gender into national policies, strategies and plans.

346. The document "Bases of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development up to 2030: Vision for the Nation, Topics and Strategic Sectors", endorsed by the National Assembly of People's Power in June 2017, was subject to

broad public consultation. This document has an appropriate gender perspective, promotes the advancement of women, and supports and upholds their rights.

347. Information relating to paragraph 46 has been provided earlier in this report.

348. With regard to paragraph 47, the Government of Cuba is still reviewing the international instruments to which it is not a party, including the human rights covenants. A sovereign decision to ratify these instruments will be taken when conditions are such that the country's actions in these areas will not be subjected to political manipulation or targeting. However, the fact that these instruments have not yet been ratified has not prevented compliance with their spirit and letter, both in the country's internal affairs and in its international activities, in keeping with its consistent practice of observing and respecting all human rights.

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