



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

Distr.: General  
3 August 2023  
English  
Original: French  
English, French and Spanish only

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

**Eighth periodic report submitted by Congo under article 18  
of the Convention, due in 2022\***

[Date received: 30 June 2023]

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



## Introduction

1. The present report is prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which stipulates in its article 18, paragraph 1, that “States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect”.

2. To that end, the Congo has submitted three important reports covering the periods from 1982 to 2002 (initial report combining the second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports, in January 2003), the sixth report – [CEDAW/C/COG/6](#) (2003–2006), in February 2012 during the fifty-first session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, held in Geneva, Switzerland, and the seventh report, covering the period from 2012 to 2015, on 24 October 2018 during the seventy-first session of the Committee, held in Geneva, Switzerland.

3. At that 24 October 2018 presentation, the Congo had provided updated information and statistics disaggregated by sex on the situation of women in the country, in all areas covered by the Convention in the period from 2015 to 2018, on the basis of a list of issues provided by the Committee.

4. This eighth periodic report covers the period from 2018 to 2022. It describes the situation of the Congo on the implementation of the Convention, showing the progress made, the problems encountered and the opportunities that can be identified for the effective implementation of the Convention and all other international, regional and subregional legal instruments having the same objectives (paragraph 9 of the Committee’s concluding observations).

5. The report was prepared in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties (paragraph 56 of the Committee’s concluding observations).

6. The data used come from specialized public and private bodies (ministries, international agencies, academia and civil society organizations), whose actions complement each other (paragraphs 54 and 55 of the Committee’s concluding observations).

## Part I

### Responses to the concluding observations of the Committee following the submission of the seventh report

7. This part contains responses to the recommendations made by the Committee on the basis of its concluding observations on the seventh report with regard to the implementation of the Convention.

#### Sustainable development goals

8. The central role played by women in the country’s sustainable development is acknowledged in the 2022–2026 National Development Plan, the 2017–2021 National Gender Policy and the policies concerning agriculture, health, education, sustainable development and many others.

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 11, under “Legislative framework”**

9. The legislative reform process that is supposed to lead to the adoption of the eight draft revised codes is ongoing. However, the procedure had had to be restarted following an unfavourable opinion from the Supreme Court.

10. Nonetheless, significant progress has been made to fill the legal vacuum concerning the protection of women’s rights, notably with the adoption of:

- Act No. 10-2022 of 20 April 2022 establishing the Correctional Code of the Republic of the Congo, which did not exist before and paves the way for improved management of prison conditions;
- Act No. 4-2021 of 29 September 2021 establishing the right of asylum and refugee status;
- The Mouébara Act No. 19-2022 of 4 May 2022 to combat violence against women in the Republic of the Congo, which introduces innovations such as the criminalization of several forms of violence against women not contemplated in the Penal Code; mistreatment of widows (articles 19 and 60); punishment of law enforcement officers who impede criminal proceedings (article 40); extension of statutes of limitation (article 46) and punishment of revenge pornography (articles 67 and 68);
- Decree No. 2022-237 of 4 May 2022 establishing and setting out the terms of reference and organization of the National Programme to Combat Violence against Women; and the bill establishing the Mouébara centre for the reception and rehabilitation of women and girls who are victims of violence.

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 13, under “Definition of discrimination against women”**

11. The Mouébara Act No. 19-2022 of 4 May 2022 to combat violence against women in the Republic of the Congo has just filled that legal vacuum, notably through its article 11, which defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the effect or purpose of impairing the recognition of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of women on the basis of full and effective equality in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural realms, or that compromises such recognition or the enjoyment or exercise of these rights by women, regardless of colour, race, religion, belief, age, nationality, economic, social or cultural status, civil status, health status, language or disability.”

12. Advocacy efforts are also being made to ensure that this definition is taken into consideration in the drafting of the next Constitution, if necessary.

**Recommendation set out in paragraphs 15 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), under “Access to justice and traditional justice systems”**

13. **15 (a).** Act No. 022-92 of 20 August 1992 organizing judicial power in the Republic of the Congo, which is still in force, sets out the orders, levels of jurisdiction and competence of the various courts. One of the missions of the Ministry of Justice is to strengthen institutional capacities and set up the country’s judicial infrastructure.

14. As part of the ongoing development of the judicial apparatus, regional courts have been set up in each department. Two of such courts have been set up in Plateaux Department alone and a second is currently being built in the political capital Brazzaville. To date, five courts of appeal are running effectively, representing an average of one court of appeal for every two departments.

15. **15 (b).** As part of the partnership between the Ministry of Justice and civil society organizations, the platform established in 2019 with the support of the European Union is still taking measures to conduct a sectoral dialogue on human rights issues, including on the rights of women and girls and the means of upholding said rights.

16. There is also a strong partnership between the Government and civil society organizations that help to raise public awareness of women's rights, such as the Evangelical Church of the Congo, the Association of Women Lawyers of the Congo, Azur Development, Action de Solidarité Internationale and Catholic Relief Services.

17. **15 (c).** Human resource capacity-building efforts are continuing with the recruitment of quality court personnel, capacity-building for judicial officers and organization of training for judges and prosecutors at the national level, in partnership with the National School for the Judiciary located of Bordeaux, France and of other countries.

18. **15 (d).** All Congolese citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to State protection (article 15 of the Constitution of 25 October 2015). Act No. 001/84 of 20 January 1984 reorganizing legal aid has not been revised. However, talks are under way between the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples and various judicial officers (lawyers, notaries and bailiffs) with a view to reducing the cost of proceedings and, if necessary, ensuring that they are free of charge for poor people, including women.

19. **15 (e).** The country has a judicial council, which has a disciplinary committee responsible for investigating and punishing judges and prosecutors who commit corruption or other offences. A general inspectorate of courts is also responsible for investigating and reporting on the actions taken by judges and prosecutors in the course of their duties and forwarding the relevant reports to the judicial council. In recent years, the civil service disciplinary organ has been reactivated for all judicial bodies.

20. Since 8 June 2022, the High Authority for Combating Corruption, which is responsible for, among other things, investigating cases of corruption and financial impropriety, has been conducting a public awareness-raising campaign on the mechanisms for combating corruption, the place and role of the High Authority, the procedures for referring cases to that body, and the general overview of the anti-corruption law. This will make it possible for any citizen with any suspicion or hint of corruption concerning a person or an institution to report it to that body.

**Recommendation set out in paragraphs 17 (a) and (b), under “National machinery for the advancement of women”**

21. **17 (a).** The second-generation National Gender Policy (2017–2021) has been implemented and is currently being evaluated.

22. **17 (b).** It should be noted that the implementation of that policy has not been without difficulty, given the limited resources allocated to the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy, as well as the weak actions of gender focal points, the low uptake of the gender concept by the various public institutions (ministries and others), and the failure to set up the gender observatory. Advocacy efforts are continuing in order to ensure that the observatory is functional.

23. Although the budgetary allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment is obviously included in the annual finance law, there is a gap between that allocation and the needs, as illustrated below. That gap is, however, filled with aid from development partners.

	<i>Total budget (in CFA francs)</i>	<i>Resources concerning gender equality</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
2019	2 067 673 000 000	4 093 948 619	0.19
2020	1 525 297 000 000	4 752 310 420	0.31
2021	1 671 635 000 000	4 752 310 420	0.28
2022	2 825 058 000 000	5 385 489 045	0.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 089 663 000 000</b>	<b>18 984 058 504</b>	<b>0.23</b>

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 19, under “National human rights institution”**

24. **19 (b).** The independence, effectiveness and visibility of the human rights institution, in line with the Paris Principles, are recognized in Act No. 5-2003 of 18 January 2003 establishing the terms of reference, organization and functioning of the National Human Rights Commission, which is still in force.

25. The National Human Rights Commission has the option of self-referral and receives help and assistance from the public authorities.

26. To that end, it has an annual budget of 1,600,000,000 CFA francs, which is often released with difficulty owing to the procedures put in place by the Ministry of Finance (only 50 per cent), making it difficult for the institution to function.

27. With regard to human resources, the National Human Rights Commission is composed of 45 members chosen for their competence and experience in the field of human rights as well as for their impartiality, morality and integrity.

28. They receive capacity-building training.

29. The bureau is composed of five members (three men and two women).

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 21, under “Civil society organizations and women human rights defenders”**

30. The State recognizes and guarantees, under the conditions set by law, the freedoms of association, assembly, procession and demonstration (article 27 of the Constitution of 25 October 2015).

31. In addition, the establishment under the Constitution (article 238) of an advisory council of civil society and non-governmental organizations responsible for issuing opinions on matters concerning the participation of citizens in the life of the nation, in an effort to promote the rights and freedoms of citizens and republican values, reflects the willingness of the public authorities of the Congo to ensure that citizens participate in the life of the nation.

32. Each year, a sectoral dialogue is held between the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Promotion of Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations and the European Union.

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 23, under “Special temporary measures”**

33. **23.** The quota of at least 30 per cent of electoral lists for local elections being composed of women, set out in Act No. 1-2016 of 23 January 2016 amending and supplementing certain provisions of Acts Nos. 5-2007 of 25 May 2007, 9-2012 of 23 May 2012 and 40-2014 of 1 September 2014 amending and supplementing certain provisions of the electoral law, is still being applied. However, the Act does not contemplate any sanction in the event of failure to comply with that provision.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 24 and 25, under “Stereotypes and harmful practices”**

34. **25 (a).** In the Republic of the Congo, the recognition of the principle of gender equality in the Constitution and other legal texts is a crucial element in the fight against discriminatory stereotypes that prevent women and men from fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in the family and at all levels of society.

35. The work initiated at the National Institute for Educational Research to remove stereotypes from school textbooks is continuing, as are awareness-raising campaigns for a change of behaviour organized by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy, on the basis of the National Gender Policy, and by non-governmental organizations and religious associations and denominations.

36. Article 23 of the Mouébara Act prohibits “advertising and dissemination, by any means or media, of materials containing stereotypical images, scenes, words or acts that are prejudicial to the image of women or that encapsulate violence against women or mitigate the seriousness of such violence”.

37. Anyone violating that article is liable to imprisonment of six months to three years and a fine of 200,000 to 2,000,000 CFA francs.

38. **25 (b).** Forced marriages and child marriages are prohibited by Act No. 4-2010 of 14 June 2010 protecting children in the Republic of the Congo, which is still in force. In the Family Code, the legal age of marriage is 21 years for boys and 18 years for girls. However, in practice, girls are married before the legal age, especially in rural areas.

39. Female genital mutilation is not practised on a large scale in the Republic of the Congo; it is mostly practised by West African subjects residing in the Congo. However, under article 4 of the Mouébara Act, in general, “mutilation of certain parts of the body” constitutes physical violence. That issue is being taken into account in the ongoing revision of the Personal and Family Code. Every year, awareness-raising campaigns are conducted during the celebrations of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, the International Day of the Girl Child and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

40. **25 (c).** Area, neighbourhood and village chiefs, religious leaders and community leaders participate in campaigns to raise awareness of women’s rights.

41. **25 (d).** During the 2021-2022 period, 84 judges and prosecutors from the five courts of appeal in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Dolisie, Owando and Ouessou) received training in the following areas: handling of domestic violence cases; money-laundering and the fight against terrorism; care for girl victims of violence; care for victims of violence; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; charges and the Mouébara Act.

42. Awareness-raising campaigns are also organized for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement officers and medical personnel on the need to implement the provisions of criminal law relating to the suppression of child marriages, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and levirate.

43. **25 (e).** All these issues are taken into account in the Family Code, which is currently being revised, and in the Mouébara Act, but the work consists much more in raising awareness for a change of mentality.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 27 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), 28 and 29, under “Gender-based violence against women”**

44. The points raised in paragraphs 32 (a), (b), (c) and (d) of the Committee’s concluding observations have been reviewed and efforts are being made.

45. **27 (a).** The statistical data currently provided, namely those collected in the survivor care units and those resulting from the studies carried out, are disaggregated by sex and age. No nationwide study has been conducted in recent years. However, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy had carried out a study funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in December 2019 on gender-based violence in hospitals and on the population of Brazzaville.

46. The first study on violence in schools and online in the Republic of the Congo, conducted in 2019 and published in 2020 by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the Government, shows that a large number of adolescents in the country, in particular girls, are affected by violence, including online violence.

47. According to the study, five types of violence were taken into account: verbal or psychological violence, physical violence, economic violence, sexual violence and online violence. Pupils (boys and girls) and teachers/administrative staff (men and women) were asked if they had endured these types of violence in the preceding twelve months. More than seven out of ten (73.8 per cent) said they had been the victim of verbal or psychological violence at school at least once in the twelve months preceding the study. While the extent of the violence suffered varies according to the type of violence considered, at least three out of ten people reported having endured physical violence (37.4 per cent), 33 per cent said they had endured sexual violence, 31.1 per cent said they had endured economic violence, and 12.4 per cent said they had been victims of online violence, the least common type of violence.

48. **27 (b).** The 2021–2025 National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence and the 2021-2025 Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence were validated in November 2020. These two documents constitute a common framework for action to strengthen the prevention of and holistic response to gender-based violence in the Republic of the Congo.

49. The Mouébara Act No. 19–2022 of 4 May 2022 to combat violence against women in the Republic of Congo has been adopted by both houses of parliament and promulgated by the President of the Republic. It has been in force since 4 May 2022. It was strengthened through decree No. 2022-237 of 4 May 2022 establishing and setting out the terms of reference and organization of the National Programme to Combat Violence against Women.

50. **27 (c).** The Mouébara Act aims to enhance the prevention of all types of violence defined therein, including domestic violence, in order to improve the support provided to victims and to better punish the perpetrators of violence. This represents significant progress compared with the current Penal Code of the Republic of the Congo, which does not take into account all forms of violence against women.

51. Article 40 introduces new provisions to better punish the perpetrators, co-perpetrators and/or accomplices of violence against women and girls. Investigators and their superiors in the police and gendarmerie who prevent victims from reporting their perpetrators are also punished.

52. **27 (d).** With regard to resources, segment 1 of the action plan for the implementation of the 2021–2025 National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence in the Republic of the Congo contains 47 actions concerning the prevention

of gender-based violence against women and girls (social mobilization, awareness-raising, education, communication and civic engagement), totalling 8,252,000,000 CFA francs (US\$ 16,504,000).

53. Mobilization strategies have been established to solicit funds from technical and financial partners and national private sector businesses.

54. Under article 30 of the Mouébara Act, the State has a duty to prevent violence against and provide assistance to victims.

55. **27 (e).** This issue is taken into account in the draft codes that are being revised (Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Family Code).

56. **29.** Although the conflict in Pool Department has come to an end, with a normal resumption of activities by women and a decrease in the number of acts of sexual violence linked to the conflict, women and girls continue to endure acts of violence, which are increasingly perpetrated exclusively by former combatants. The focus currently is on redress and rehabilitation. A UNFPA team of psychologists and doctors is working in the Department to rehabilitate survivors.

57. However, the perpetrators of acts of violence go unpunished owing to the culture of silence.

58. Several advances have been recorded thanks to the implementation of the 23 December 2017 peace and cessation of hostilities agreement in Pool Department.

59. They include the involvement of former combatants from Pool Department in projects co-funded by the Government of the Congo and the United Nations in 2019 to rehabilitate agricultural tracks, schools and health centres.

60. The 2017–2020 Danish project to restore the dignity of women in Pool Department and foster their socioeconomic reintegration, implemented by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women with the support of the World Food Programme and UNFPA, had two components: the first concerned the distribution of dignity kits to 18,000 girls and women, particularly those who were victims of gender-based violence, while the second focused not only on raising awareness of gender-based violence, but also on caring for victims of gender-based violence and strengthening the capacities of various health and community actors.

61. The project to support the strengthening of the food and nutritional security of the people of Pool Department and to resume agropastoral and fishery activities in the Department, implemented from 20 February 2019 to 19 March 2020 in the districts of Mindouli, Kindamba, Kimba, Vindza and Mayama was meant not only to strengthen food and nutritional security, but also to kickstart agropastoral and fishery activities designed to revamp the local socioeconomic fabric and to strengthen intercommunal cooperation in Pool Department. The project is a continuation of the post-conflict early-recovery activities related to the return of internally displaced persons and the transition to the Department's development for peacekeeping purposes.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 31 (a), (b), (c) and (d) and 33 (a) and (b), under “Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution”**

62. **31 (a) and (b).** In its efforts to collect data on trafficking in persons, and children in particular, the Republic of the Congo uses the records of the national police and the gendarmerie, as well as those relating to emergency calls to the 1444 line (emergency hotline for victims or witnesses of violence to anonymously report cases of violence), which is hooked up to the police emergency number (117). The statistics collected from the 1444 hotline indicate that 532 female victims of trafficking were rescued in 2020 and 121 in 2021.



63. **31 (c).** The Republic of the Congo has had a law to combat human trafficking since 2019 (Act No. 22-2019 of 17 June 2019), which has filled the legal vacuum that existed in the Congo, to enable the competent authorities to suppress trafficking in women and girls.

64. **31 (d).** There are ongoing advocacy efforts to encourage decision makers to ratify the protocol.

65. **33 (a) and (b).** Prostitution is not legalized in the Republic of the Congo; it is practised informally. However, in the absence of a strategy for a comprehensive approach to combating prostitution, or to implementing support programmes for women and girls who wish to leave prostitution, awareness-raising and outreach activities are being undertaken by the relevant ministry and non-governmental organizations, associations and religious denominations. Some associations organized by female sex workers or prostitutes (ACO in Pointe-Noire and UAFPA in Brazzaville<sup>1</sup>) are making efforts to assist prostitutes by providing them with specialized health and safety services. They are also assisting those who want to leave prostitution by helping them to develop income-generating activities.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 35 (a), (b), (c) (d) and (e), under “Participation in political and public life”**

66. **35 (a).** The Republic of the Congo is making efforts to improve the representation of women in decision-making bodies. Act No. 1-2016 of 23 January 2016 modifying and supplementing certain provisions of Acts Nos. 5-2007 of 25 May 2007, 9-2012 of 23 May 2012 and 40-2014 of 1 September 2014 amending and supplementing certain provisions of the electoral law is one such effort, although it does not prescribe any penalties in the event of non-compliance.

67. The Act sets the quota for women’s representation at no less than 30 per cent of each candidate list, with strict rotation with regard to the positioning of women in the upper echelons. The leaders of political parties are also being urged to comply with this provision.

68. For the legislative and local elections held in July 2022, the Ministry of Territorial Administration ensured that each list submitted by political parties complied with the Electoral Act, including with respect to the quota and the positioning of women on the lists.

69. **35 (b).** Pending the adoption of the law on gender parity in all political, elected and administrative roles in the Republic of the Congo, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns are being conducted on the issue of parity. The aim is to increase the uptake of the concept, the understanding of which varies from one segment of society to another.

70. The issue of gender and women’s empowerment remains a challenge.

71. With regard to women’s representation in decision-making bodies, it should be noted that:

- In the current Government, 8 out of 38 ministers (21.05 per cent) are women.

72. In other institutions, the representation of women is as follows: Constitutional Court (33.3 per cent), High Court of Justice (25 per cent), Economic, Social and Environmental Council (50 per cent), National Human Rights Commission (40 per cent).

<sup>1</sup> ACO = Association Cœur d’Océan; UAFPA = l’Union pour l’Assistance des Femmes Prostituées d’Afrique.

- Two of the country's twelve prefects (16.67 per cent) are women.

73. In Congolese diplomatic missions abroad, there are currently 6 of the 39 (15.38 per cent) of the ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary are women.

74. The percentage of women in the Senate rose from 19.44 per cent in the 2012–2017 legislature to 22.9 per cent in the 2017–2022 legislature.

75. In the National Assembly, the percentage of women rose from 8.76 per cent in the thirteenth legislature to 11.25 per cent in the fourteenth and then to 16.55 per cent in the fifteenth legislature; however, women remained in the minority in the departmental councils (18.8 per cent) and the city councils (23.4 per cent), for the 2017–2022 term.

76. **35 (c).** The draft law on parity is now before the Supreme Court. The procedure has been restarted.

77. **35 (d).** In accordance with the national programme to promote women's leadership in political life for the period 2017–2021, women's capacities in politics, leadership, resource mobilization and communication have been strengthened. As such, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy has made efforts to provide media coverage of female electoral candidates. In a similar vein, training sessions were conducted in the 12 departments for female candidates in the July 2022 legislative and local elections. In total, 1,200 women were trained.

78. Furthermore, a national communication strategy was developed to enhance the image of women and explain the concept of equality. The aim was to also promote cultural concepts and traditional practices that positively portray female leadership. It was also crucial to change the image of women leaders in the media, where they are underrepresented.

79. **35 (e).** In this context, awareness-raising campaigns on female leadership are being conducted throughout the country, with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours, among both women and men, for greater uptake of the issues involved in women's participation in national public and political life. Political party leaders were also sensitized to the need for women to be included at the management level in political parties.

#### **Recommendations set out in paragraphs 37 (a), (b) and (c), under “Women and peace and security”**

80. **37 (a).** In collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in October 2021, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy updated the 2021–2023 national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security, establishing a road map with an estimated activities budget of 3,100,000,000 CFA francs (US\$ 6,200,000). The main activities concerned the prevention of conflict and sexual and gender-based violence and the protection and safety of women (pillar II); women's participation in the peace and reconciliation processes and in post-conflict governance (pillar III); and recovery (pillar IV).

81. The follow-up plan is based on the strategic framework, which contains the strategic areas, activities, activity outcomes, indicators, targets, entities responsible for conducting the activities and the budget and time frame for the execution of those activities.

82. **37 (b).** As a result of the signing of cessation of hostilities agreements, the Commission ad hoc mixte paritaire has been dissolved.

83. **37 (c).** The 2021–2023 national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security addresses that concern.

84. In December 2021, the Republic of the Congo hosted the ministerial meeting of the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security in Central Africa. A road map was adopted.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 39 (a), (b) and (c), under “Nationality”**

85. **39 (a).** The Nationality Act has not yet been amended, but it does take into account the naturalization of foreign spouses of Congolese women.

86. **39 (b).** Campaigns on the importance of registering births are regularly conducted, in order to encourage parents to do so in a timely fashion. Act No. 5/2011 of 25 February 2011 contains specific provisions protecting and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Act is still in force, along with its implementing legislation, including Decree No. 2019-199 of 12 July 2019 setting out special measures for issuing civil registry documents to Indigenous Peoples. Mobile sessions are held regularly, to increase awareness of the need to register births.

87. **39 (c).** The Congo has acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (Act No. 36-2020 of 5 August 2020 authorizing the ratification of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Implementing Decree No. 2020-260 of 5 August 2020). The procedure for the submission of instruments is ongoing. In August 2022, the Republic of the Congo also developed a national policy to reform and modernize the civil registry, as part of the national strategy on civil registry and combating statelessness. On 3 August 2022, the Cabinet adopted a draft decree establishing an inter-institutional technical committee for the eradication of statelessness.

**Recommendations set out in paragraph 41, under “Education”**

88. **41 (a).** In the Congo, the enrolment of girls in school continues to face various obstacles, which must be addressed. One of the measures taken to that end was the development of the 2015–2021 education sector strategy, which was revised five years later, to cover the period 2021–2030. The strategy includes a three-year national action plan for the period 2021–2023. The national vision that is a core priority of the strategy is primarily to establish high-quality, free and compulsory basic education, so as to equip Congolese citizens from all ethnic groups and social strata, in particular young people, girls and vulnerable children with regard to cognitive abilities, life skills and civic and cultural values.

89. To support the Government in that regard, UNESCO collaborated with the Ministry of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy to launch a support programme for the education sector strategy, in Brazzaville, on 24 November 2021. The programme, which received US\$ 10.7 million in funding from the Global Partnership for Education for a three-year period, will help to promote inclusive, sustainable and high-quality education.

90. The aim is to implement actions to transform resources under the support programme for the education sector strategy, focusing on three areas: increasing equity in the education system, enhancing the efficiency of the education system, and improving the learning outcomes of students, especially vulnerable students, such as Indigenous girls, children with disabilities and orphans, who have difficulties continuing their education beyond middle school. Since they cannot be enrolled in regular schools, they are enrolled in specialized schools, which fall under the purview of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

91. The proportion of Indigenous students enrolled in middle and high schools is therefore very low, notwithstanding Decree No. 2019-204 of 12 July 2019 setting out special measures for facilitating access to education for Indigenous children and to literacy programmes for adults.
92. Enrolment rates are higher at the primary level, owing to the presence of schools participating in the ORA programme (Observe, Reflect, Act), which account for 5,670 students. Unlike regular schools, ORA schools use observation-based teaching methods as well as native and national languages.
93. Vulnerable students represent more than 5 per cent of the enrolment in trade centres, with 39 Indigenous students, 77 young people with disabilities, 103 orphans and 107 teenage mothers. There are approximately 1,001 (15 per cent) vulnerable children attending vocational middle schools, of whom 79 per cent are girls. Similarly, 957 vulnerable students are attending technical high schools, of whom 648 or 68 per cent are girls.
94. Girls and boys have almost equal access to early childhood education. They have similar retention rates across primary education.
95. The gaps widen at the secondary level.
96. In general, girls' schooling seems to vary according to their backgrounds. In urban areas, for example, girls outnumber boys at the end of primary school and in middle school. The proportion of girls attending high school is lower, at 40 per cent, and even lower in rural areas.
97. **41 (b).** Encouraging female students to embark on scientific studies is critical, as it would enable them to go into scientific careers when they become adults. Girls are less likely to study sciences. In public high schools, girls are more likely to choose literary fields of study than scientific ones. Across the country, girls only represent 41 per cent of students in the final year of middle school and 38 per cent of those in final year of high school majoring in mathematics and science. These percentages are even lower in rural areas. Interest in mathematics and science is not very high among young girls.
98. The Government conducts awareness-raising campaigns in schools to encourage girls to take up scientific careers, through the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy and the Ministry of Higher Education, and in partnership with the Congolese Foundation for Medical Research.
99. Moreover, at the secondary level, girls are given extra support to study physics, mathematics and life and Earth sciences. A total of 30 girls, or 2 girls per school, will be provided with such support, across the country.
100. The facilitators of that programme will be paid by the Ministry of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy and other partners.
101. At the end of their secondary schooling, after sitting their school-leaving examinations, the girls enrolled in this programme will be awarded prizes and scholarships. Guided tours will be offered during school holidays and inter-school science competitions will be held.
102. Admission to technical and vocational schools takes place through competitive examinations. Differences in enrolment between girls and boys are the result of personal choices and perceptions of the different vocations. While the overall proportion of female learners is 54.8 per cent, the rate varies by discipline and drops to 10.8 per cent in industrial subject areas. In contrast, most students in commercial subject areas are girls.

103. The area of skills training is still in its very early stages, despite the establishment in 2010 of the General Directorate for Skills Training and Employment, whose main objective is to supply the job market with a skilled and in-demand workforce.

104. Across the country, the teaching of science (knowledge and teaching practices) and the use of information and communications technologies are limited by a shortage of equipment and skills among teachers and school authorities.

105. **41 (c).** School infrastructure (such as classrooms, latrines, water points and school desks) is insufficient, in the light of increases in enrolment. This has led to a higher student/classroom ratio at all levels. Schools are scattered across the entire country, and most are not fenced, especially at the primary and middle school levels. An increasing number of elected officials are helping to improve learning conditions by building schools within their constituencies. In a similar fashion, the Congo Assistance Foundation, which is chaired by the spouse of the Head of State, is working to build schools in remote areas.

106. School desks and classrooms have been vandalized in several schools. In rural areas, many schools are in an advanced state of disrepair. Parents are resorting to traditional seating solutions, such as using tree trunks. To address the lack of school desks, in 2018, the Government launched an extensive operation to ensure that no student would have to sit on the floor.

107. In middle schools, the lack of classrooms is one of the reasons behind the use of a two-shift system. In fact, there is a country-wide shortage of middle schools. As a result, the courses taught, especially in the scientific and technical areas, tend to be more theoretical in nature.

108. In terms of distance education, the Government, through the Ministry of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy and drawing from its experience with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, has set up a radio and television channel at the Révolution high school to provide permanent distance education. Curricula for all subjects are being prepared and teachers are being trained to broadcast lessons via radio and television.

109. **41 (d).** In 2007, the Congo introduced free schooling to reduce the cost of education for households. As such, registration fees were abolished for public primary, middle and high schools. However, as a result of the practices of some teachers, students are obliged to buy learning materials, such as reams of paper and photocopied lessons.

110. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy continues to advocate the installation of appropriate sanitary facilities for girls. While UNICEF is assisting the Government in the construction of latrines, with the help of local communities, in order to eliminate open defecation by 2025, unfortunately, that objective is far from being achieved, especially in schools.

#### *School feeding facilities*

111. School feeding programmes were reintroduced in the Congo in the 2000s, to encourage children to return to school, following the armed conflicts that the country had experienced. The programmes were subsequently expanded to allow children from poor and vulnerable families in rural areas to have access to education. The Government receives support for these programmes from two of its partners, namely the World Food Programme and the International Partnership for Human Development.

112. The guidelines under these programmes are as follows:

- The Government and its partners train and support small-scale producers in enhancing the quality and quantity of their production. This ensures that all children enrolled in schools providing basic education have access to healthy, balanced, sustainable and high-quality local products.
- The Ministry of Education sets out the technical guidelines for school feeding programmes and ensures compliance with the procedures outlined in national school feeding policies.
- School feeding support is provided for under the Ministry's budget.
- The National Multisectoral Council for School Feeding coordinates the different organizations and ministerial departments involved in advocating school feeding among funding agencies, donors, and other entities.

113. Unfortunately, meal coverage remains very scattered and limited countrywide, owing to the limited number of school feeding programmes.

114. The Government of the Republic of the Congo has set itself another objective, to equip 287 early childhood education centres with school feeding facilities and provide meals to all students enrolled in 93 per cent of early childhood education centres and primary schools for the period 2024–2025. Indigenous children will be prioritized, to enable them to overcome their marginalized situations and address the deficits in this area of economic and social life. Current coverage, which stands at 41.6 per cent, is expected to increase to 94 per cent nationwide.

115. **41 (e).** Article 1 of Decree No. 2017 of 29 December 2017 setting out the functions and organization of the General Directorate for Literacy provides for, among other functions, the promotion of the national policy on literacy and informal education, with a view to eradicating illiteracy

116. The Directorate is implementing a nationwide literacy and school reintegration programme.

117. Among women, the trend is more toward functional literacy.

118. The National Institute of Educational Research is responsible for curricula and syllabus reform across the entire education system. It is also involved in the preparation of textbooks and other teaching documents, and in the continuous training of teachers.

119. The different line ministries (Ministry of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy, Ministry of Technical and Professional Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technological Innovation) have developed and are implementing the 2021–2030 education sector strategy, with a view to improving the education system in the Congo and preventing discrimination against women.

Departments	Literacy		Re-enrolment		ORA		Post-literacy		Total	
	T	W	T	W	T	W	T	W	T	W
Bouenza	284	154	35	17	340	160	–	–	659	331
Brazzaville	1 798	970	1 815	926	–	–	434	261	4 047	2 157
Hole	69	28	257	133	–	–	96	56	422	217
Cuvette-Ouest	113	67	20	09	–	–	–	–	133	76
Kouilou	50	22	91	47	–	–	–	–	141	69
Lékoumou	95	44	–	–	–	–	–	–	95	44

Departments	Literacy		Re-enrolment		ORA		Post-literacy		Total	
	T	W	T	W	T	W	T	W	T	W
Likouala	–	–	–	–	5 094	2 438	–	–	5 094	2 438
Niari	36	28	39	17	–	–	–	–	75	45
Pointe-Noire	539	353	89	37	–	–	126	57	754	447
Plateaux	216	88	118	53	–	–	10	01	344	142
Pool	27	08	286	120	–	–	–	–	313	128
Sangha	159	110	–	–	1 867	957	–	–	2 026	1 067
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 386</b>	<b>1 872</b>	<b>2 750</b>	<b>1 359</b>	<b>7 301</b>	<b>3 555</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>7 161</b>	<b>7 161</b>

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 43 (a), (b), (c) and (d), under “Employment, economic empowerment and economic and social benefits”**

120. **43 (a).** There is no legislation that discriminates against women with regard to access to employment or in the course of employment in the formal sector. In practice, however, women are less likely than men to obtain certain jobs, especially because of illiteracy, lack of qualifications, psychological constraints, and lack of knowledge about ways to seek employment and recruitment procedures.

121. The 2019 estimates of the International Labour Office show that the unemployment rate is higher among women (10.2 per cent) than men (9 per cent). Female employment seems to be concentrated in agriculture, where women play a predominant role and account for 70 per cent of the workforce, most of them working in the informal sector with no social security coverage.

122. To minimize these trends, the Government and civil society organize several awareness-raising campaigns in schools and within the family to encourage girls to discover innovative fields and providers of jobs. Special emphasis is placed on science.

123. The Government has provided incentives for the construction of day-care centres in the private sector. As a result, the provision of childcare services has improved.

124. **43 (b).** The main objective of the operationalization of the Universal Medical Insurance Fund, established by Act No. 12-2015 of 31 August 2015, is to support anyone living in the Republic of the Congo, including women. It will come into effect on 1 July 2023, and will make health care accessible to all, especially the weakest among the citizens of the Congo, thanks to the solidarity of both the Government and the most wealthy towards the most vulnerable.

125. **43 (c).** This issue is taken into account in the revision of the General Tax Code.

126. The Families and Children in Need Fund, established in 2012, enables support to be provided to women and children. The family and children in need scheme managed by the National Social Security Fund will, following the effective dissolution of the latter, come under the purview of the Families and Children in Need Fund.

127. The new scheme consists of the following segments:

- Maternity, including prenatal allowances, birth grants and daily maternity benefits;
- Family assistance: family support allowance, back-to-school allowance, family allowances.

128. **43 (d).** The Republic of the Congo has identified women who went on to receive financial support to help them to restart their activities.

129. In the same vein, women have been made aware of the need to combat malnutrition and to form women's groups/cooperatives in order to receive material and financial support (Project to Support Income-Generating Activities and the Project to Support the Development of Commercial Agriculture).

130. In the implementation of the Lisungi project, a social safety net system designed to extend the coverage of the Lisungi cash transfer programme funded by the World Bank, several women victims of the conflicts in Pool Department and women employed in the informal economy are taken care of as members of the households included in the single social register as part of efforts to combat poverty and to promote women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

131. Women are also supported in the implementation of the project to strengthen the Kobikisa health system, which will affect pregnant women, children and the poorest households. The aim is to increase the use of reproductive and mother-and-child health care and services in targeted areas, particularly among vulnerable households.

132. The remit of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women has been expanded to include the informal economy.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 45 (a), (b), (c) and (d), under "Health"**

133. **45 (a).** Improving access to health care, especially in rural areas, involves setting up integrated health centres and revitalizing health districts (priority No. 3 of the Ministry of Health).

134. Several actions have been carried out, in particular the construction and opening of two general hospitals: Kombo in Brazzaville and Ngoyo in Pointe Noire; rehabilitation of the maternity and children's unit at the Kinkala base hospital; and the rehabilitation of the Vinza and Kindamba integrated health centres in Pool Department.

135. The construction of 10 general hospitals in the various departments is ongoing; the other general hospitals are continuing to abide by the standards; a community-based approach is being implemented with regard to the availability of health care and services; and the quality of care is improving at all levels, particularly in maternal, child and adolescent health.

136. The capacities of human resources have been strengthened with the PARAMED project, which has enabled 1,510 health-care providers, including midwives, State-qualified nurses and laboratory technicians to be retrained.

137. Nearly 3,000 medical and biomedical students have been trained in Cuba.

138. Recent measures include:

- Decree No. 2019-202 of 12 July 2019 setting out special measures to facilitate access to health and social services for Indigenous Peoples and to protect their pharmacopoeia;
- Development of a national strategy to reduce maternal, neonatal, infant and adolescent mortality;
- Decree No. 2022-75 of 28 February 2022 establishing, allocating and organizing the national programme for the management of caesarean sections, extrauterine pregnancies, emergency care for new-borns by caesarean section and other major obstetric procedures to combat maternal mortality. The programme also



involves conducting inquiries on the provision of free caesarean sections, with a view to bringing such services into effect.

139. The Congo is currently implementing two projects with the support of its partners:

- A project entitled “Eboteli”, which means the way to reproduce or to give birth, launched in August 2020. Resulting from cooperation between the Government of the Republic of the Congo (through the Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy), Philips Healthcare (Royal Philips) and UNFPA, the Eboteli project aims to improve the quality of maternal and child health care and to cover unmet obstetric and neonatal care needs, and to support the strengthening of the maternal and neonatal health care ecosystem in order to help reduce maternal and neonatal deaths by at least 50 per cent in the Congo;
- A 27 billion CFA francs project to strengthen the Kobikisa health system, launched on 19 November 2021, and funded by the World Bank, in order for it to be able to carry out its activities to cover 36 health districts for 2,400,000 beneficiaries, in particular mothers and children in the poorest households.

140. **45 (b)**. Abortion is prohibited under Congolese law. A training programme in post-abortion care exists for health-care providers. The programme is also integrated into school curricula, including sexual and reproductive rights.

141. Nonetheless, the Republic of the Congo takes note of the recommendation and intends to take action in that area.

142. **45 (c)**. Real progress has been made in family planning in recent years, thanks to the implementation of the family planning repositioning plan and the availability of modern contraceptive methods provided largely by UNFPA. Almost all women (98 per cent) and men (99 per cent) are aware of at least one modern contraceptive method. The Implanon implant is used by many women in both urban and rural areas. The Congolese Association for Family Well-Being is also involved in raising awareness of and addressing family planning issues.

143. **45 (d)**. The teaching of sexual and reproductive rights is integrated into school curricula, starting in the primary cycle and continuing through to middle school.

144. Social communication sessions are organized for women and girls on an ongoing basis, particularly on the importance of HIV testing. Women community leaders have been trained to deliver training on family planning techniques.

145. A manual has been produced to help primary school pupils learn more about HIV/AIDS.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 47 (a), (b) and (c), under “Rural women”**

146. **47 (a)**. Article 23 of the Constitution of 25 October 2015 states that: “Property and inheritance rights are guaranteed. No one may be deprived of his or her property except in the public interest, in return for fair and prior compensation, under the conditions laid down by law”.

147. To that end, Act No. 21-2018 of 13 June 2018 establishing the rules for land occupation and acquisition is being disseminated to ensure uptake by rural women, who use it to assert their rights.

148. **47 (b)**. The Government’s land and land allocation policies are in no way discriminatory.

149. Indigenous Peoples fully enjoy the right to occupy their land. The Constitution of 25 October 2015 provides for fair and prior compensation, under the conditions laid down by law in the event of expropriation for public utility purposes.

150. **47 (c).** Under the law, rural women enjoy the same rights and benefits as urban women. In reality, however, inequalities between the two categories persist, despite the efforts made by public authorities and development partners to improve access to basic social services.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 49 (a), (b), (c) and (d), under “Disadvantaged groups of women”**

151. **49 (a).** The mistreatment of widows is taken into consideration in the Mouébara Act No. 19-2022 of 4 May 2022 to combat violence against women in the Republic of the Congo, notably in its articles 19 and 60.

152. **49 (b).** Awareness-raising campaigns are carried out throughout the country by public authorities, churches and civil society organizations, through talks and debates as well as the broadcasting of documentaries on the conditions of widows and their rights. The launch of campaigns to publicize the Mouébara Act bolsters the measures already in place to change traditional attitudes towards widows.

153. **49 (c).** Data is currently being collected by the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of the Lisungi safety net system project; the latest census of vulnerable households, conducted with the aim of setting up a single social register, is also part of that process.

154. **49 (d).** While their applications are being processed, women and girls seeking refugee status are placed under the responsibility of the National Refugee Assistance Committee and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which partners with the Government and collaborates with other mechanisms in different areas, such as UNFPA for reproductive health and gender-based violence, and UNICEF for hygiene and sanitation.

155. **49 (e).** Pending the promulgation of the Asylum Act, the State provides protection for asylum seekers, and more specifically legal assistance in obtaining an identity document that protects and guarantees the rights of the individual in the land of asylum.

**Recommendations set out in paragraph 51, under “Marriage and family relations”**

156. **51 (a) and (b).** All of these concerns were taken into account in the draft Personal and Family Code, which is pending validation. The Republic of the Congo is making every effort to prioritize its legislative reform process. However, marital rape is defined and punished under article 8 of the Mouébara Act to combat violence against women in the Republic of the Congo (Act No. 19-2022 of 4 May 2022).

157. Awareness-raising campaigns are also necessary to change mindsets.

158. **51 (c).** The issue of dowry amounts has also been addressed in the code revision process. Many Congolese families do not adhere to the amount set by the Family Code that is currently in force. As a result, outreach campaigns are being conducted to raise awareness among the public. Polygamy remains an option.

159. **51 (d).** Awareness-raising campaigns on family law have been strengthened with the adoption of the Mouébara Act and are continuing throughout the country.

**Recommendation set out in paragraph 53, under “Data collection and analysis”**

160. **53.** The National Statistical Institute takes into account all these issues, with the exception of ethnicity, when conducting the population and housing census. Unfortunately, the results of the census have not been released on time due to a funding shortfall.

**Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention**

161. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

162. **55.** The Republic of the Congo produces its report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action every five years. Both documents were taken into account in the development of the National Gender Policy (first and second generations), and particular attention was given to the priority areas set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

163. **Dissemination.** The concluding observations on the seventh report were widely disseminated among Congolese institutions.

**Technical assistance**

164. **57.** The Republic of the Congo implements its gender equality and women’s empowerment policy with the support of United Nations system agencies: United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNFPA, Food and Agriculture Organization, UN-Women, World Food Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization, UNESCO and World Bank.

**Ratification of other treaties**

165. **58.** The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of human activity. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.

166. The Congo has been a signatory of that Convention since 6 February 2007 and pledges to do its utmost to accede to it.

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

167. **59.** The Congo was unable to act on this recommendation within two years of submitting the last report due to the grave situation caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the first case of which was reported on 14 March 2020. All attention was focused on the pandemic, with all the restrictions that followed.

**Recommendations set out in paragraphs 60 and 61, under “Preparation of the next report”**

168. **60.** This report covers the period since the submission of the seventh report.

169. **61.** It was prepared in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties.

## **Part II: Review of progress according to the provisions of the Convention**

### **Chapter One: articles 2 to 6**

#### **Article 2**

*States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:*

*(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;*

*(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;*

170. The Mouébara Act has filled that gap by defining the term “discrimination”.

171. Of the texts that are being revised, the Correctional Code has already been adopted.

*(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;*

*(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;*

*(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;*

*(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;*

*(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*

#### **Article 3**

*States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.*

172. Among the measures taken by the public authorities to ensure the enjoyment by women of their rights, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development, which has been supplemented with the portfolio of the informal economy, a sector where women make up the majority, remains part of the government team that was renewed in 2022.

173. The adoption of the Mouébara Act in May 2022.

#### Article 4

*Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.*

174. The commitment made by President Denis Sassou N'guesso in November 2021 to promote positive masculinity in an effort to combat violence against girls and women is a strong signal militating in favour of the elimination of discrimination against women.

*Adoption by States parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.*

175. Maternity protection measures taken include the establishment of a national programme for the management of caesarean sections, ectopic pregnancies, emergency care for caesarean babies and other major obstetric procedures.

#### Article 5

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:*

*(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;*

176. In addition to laws on the elimination of gender stereotypes based on socio-cultural factors, awareness-raising work is continuing on a national scale, through talks and debates, radio and television broadcasts and the broadcasting of documentaries for a change of mindsets. Awareness-raising campaigns at the local level and on the airwaves (with illustrations and edifying sketches) are widely followed by the population, thanks to the installation of radio and television channels in remote areas by local elected officials and the commitment of civil society.

*(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.*

177. Programmes on reproductive health are always broadcast in partnership with United Nations agencies, covering the monitoring of pregnant women and the involvement of men together with women throughout pregnancy and children's development. Integrated health centres create spaces to facilitate the presence of men with women in maternity wards at antenatal and post-natal consultations, childbirth and the monitoring of mothers and children.

#### Article 6

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.*

178. The Republic of the Congo today has a law to combat human trafficking, namely Act No. 22-2019 of 17 June 2019.

## Chapter II, articles 7, 8 and 9

### Article 7

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:*

*(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;*

To date, Congolese women continue to have the right to vote and they participate in all electoral processes.

*(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;*

179. Freedom of choice of training and work is recognized for both men and women by the 2015 Constitution, which is still in force. The only problem remains the underrepresentation of women in various areas. The percentage of women holding positions of responsibility in the institutions of the country remains low.

180. The number of female members of the National Assembly rose from 15 (11.25 per cent of the membership) in the 14th legislature (2017–2022) to 25 (16.55 per cent of the membership) in the 15th legislature (July 2022 elections).

181. However, the current bureau that was set up in August 2022, comprising seven members, includes only one woman, who holds the position of deputy quaestor.

182. Only two of the eight bureaux of the standing committees are chaired by women.

183. In the Government, the number of women ministers has remained stable: 8 out of 38, or 21.05 per cent.

184. The Economic, Social and Environmental Council is the only institution chaired by a woman and the only one to apply the principle of parity on the bureau and in the services.

*(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.*

185. Freedom of association is guaranteed under article 27 of the Constitution. Congolese women are still active in associations.

### Article 8

*States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.*

186. The representation of women in this area remains low. There are currently six women among the ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary in the 39 embassies abroad; there is no woman among the consuls general in the five consulates general abroad; and neither of the heads of the two permanent missions to international organizations is a woman. At the national level, there is one woman with the rank and prerogatives of ambassador (chief of staff to a minister).

187. Congolese women are part of the other categories of staff at embassies and diplomatic missions abroad, even though the principle of equality is not respected. They are also part of Congolese delegations to various meetings, such as those of the

United Nations agencies and the Commission on the Status of Women, and of the universal periodic review process, even though their numbers are always lower than those of men. (Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, la Francophonie and the Diaspora).

#### **Article 9**

*States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, and in particular shall ensure that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband with respect to the nationality of their children.*

*States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.*

188. No change on this point.

### **Chapter III, articles 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14**

#### **Article 10**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

*(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;*

189. Congolese law grants men and women equal rights to education and vocational guidance.

*(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;*

190. Congolese law on schooling continues to grant to girls and boys the same rights of access to the same curricula, the same examinations, the same teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality.

*(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;*

191. The work that started in 2008 with UNFPA and UNESCO on the analysis of gender stereotypes in school textbooks is continuing with the training of officials responsible for the preparation of textbooks.

192. All general and technical education schools in the Congo are coeducational.

*(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;*

193. Scholarships granted by the public authorities (various ministries) and foreign organizations (embassies, International Organization of la Francophonie, World Bank, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Programme) benefit girls and boys on an equal footing. However, throughout the processes to be completed for young people to be granted scholarships, discriminatory practices are often reported by some participants: racketeering, fraud, harassment or sexual abuse, intimidation, extortion and deal-making. Faced with the costs of these parallel transactions and influence peddling, many families and girls do not follow the necessary administrative steps and miss out on scholarships. These practices, which are considered marginal, only add to the traditional challenges that limit the chances of success of girls and children from poor families.

194. More actions are being promoted by civil society organizations that provide scholarships to girls (Forum of African Women Educationists and Youth and Development).

*(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;*

*(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely; The same possibilities exist for girls to participate actively in sports and physical education.*

195. The Republic of the Congo drew up its 2021–2030 education sector strategy paper following a wide-ranging national consultation process. Partners and civil society organizations were first involved, at the time of the sector review, in December 2019, with a sharing of the analysis of the situation and a debate on difficulties and expectations.

196. Literacy and informal education target the 15–45 age group and children outside the school system, through informal basic education structures.

*(g) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.*

## **Article 11**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:*

197. From a legal standpoint, access to employment in the Congo remains egalitarian. In practice, however, women often encounter difficulties in recruitment, especially in the private sector, because of their reproductive status.

*(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;*

*(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;*

*(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;*

*(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;*



198. There is no discrimination from a legal standpoint with regard to the issues raised in points (a), (b), (c) and (d), as noted in the seventh report. Cases of discrimination appear when it comes to promotions.

*(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;*

All these rights are recognized in the laws on workers' rights.

*(a) (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.*

199. The law on medical insurance is still being examined and will soon be available.

*In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:*

*(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;*

*(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;*

*(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;*

200. The situation has not improved substantially, and nurseries and day-care centres remain the preserve of the private sector and are still not sufficient to meet demand. The solidarity system therefore needs to be strengthened.

*(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.*

201. Protective legislation relating to the matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technical knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended, as necessary.

## **Article 12**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.*

*Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.*

202. The Republic of the Congo has recently strengthened its caesarean section programme with Decree No. 2022-75 of 28 February 2022 establishing, setting out the terms of reference of and organizing the national programme for the management of caesarean sections, extra-uterine pregnancies, emergency care for new-borns from caesarean sections and other major obstetric procedures.

203. Several projects are also being implemented with the support of partners to improve the quality of care provided to women during pregnancy and during and after

childbirth, including the Kobikisa and Eboteli projects mentioned in the responses to the Committee's recommendations.

### Article 13

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:*

(a) *The right to family benefits;*

(b) *The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;*

204. The observation remains the same.

(c) *The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.*

205. Articles 34 and 35 of the Constitution of 25 October 2015 remain valid.

### Article 14

*States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.*

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:*

(a) *To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;*

206. Women participate in thematic meetings organized in the departments and their contributions to diagnostic studies are taken into account in the development of strategies.

(b) *To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;*

(c) *To benefit directly from social security programmes;*

(d) *To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;*

207. All departments have literacy centres (see table on p. 23).

(e) *To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;*

208. Information, education and communication/communication for change of behaviour campaigns on income-generating activities and the promotion of mutual assistance cooperatives are carried out across the country by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy. A list of women's groups and cooperatives has been drawn up and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries to be taken into consideration in the ministry's programmes.

(a) (f) *To participate in all community activities;*

209. Generally speaking, the socio-cultural prejudices that prevent rural women from taking part in community activities are now being overcome thanks to awareness-raising campaigns in the departments. Women are increasingly taking part in activities, such as meetings where community problems are discussed.

(g) *To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;*

210. Access to credit in formal banks remains a problem for rural women, thus limiting their ability to undertake major actions.

(h) *To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.*

211. The public authorities, through the Société Energie Electrique du Congo, are working hard to bring electricity to rural areas.

212. This enables people in general, and women in particular, to benefit from new information and communications technologies (mobile phones, money transfers). However, women still face difficulties in obtaining water supplies due to the country's poor coverage. They spend a great deal of money on water supplies from private service providers with tanker trucks for cassava processing, the main stage of which is retting. Although boreholes have been dug in villages, they do not cover the entire country.

213. The continuation of the Government's programme to build roads and agricultural tracks through the Rural Roads Development and Rehabilitation Project, with support from the World Bank, along with the establishment of protected agricultural zones by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries are helping to improve the living conditions of rural women. The development objective of the Commercial Agriculture Development Support Project is "to improve farmers' productivity and enhance market access for producer groups and for micro, small and medium agro-industrial businesses" in selected areas, and to provide an immediate and effective response in the event of a crisis or emergency situation meeting the eligibility criteria. One of its development indicators is reaching 500,000 direct beneficiaries, 50 per cent of whom should be women.

## **Chapter IV, articles 15 and 16**

### **Article 15**

*States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.*

*States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.*

*States parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.*

*States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.*

214. There has been no change.

#### **Article 16**

*1. States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

*(a) The same right to enter into marriage;*

*(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;*

*(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;*

*(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;*

*(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;*

*(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;*

*(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;*

*(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.*

*2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.*

215. All these issues are part of the national agenda and are being discussed in the commissions revising the laws that contain discriminatory provisions against women. The revised texts are still being awaited.

#### **Chapter V, article 18**

#### **Article 18**

*1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:*

*(a) Within one year after entry into force for the State concerned; and*

*(b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.*

2. *Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.*

216. The present document, which covers the period from 2019 to 2022, constitutes the eighth period report of the Congo under the Convention.

## **Chapter VI, article 24**

### **Article 24**

*States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.*

217. All issues discussed in the present report reflect the existence of political will to properly implement the Convention.

### **Difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Convention**

218. The difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Convention during the period under review are more financial in nature.

219. Indeed, the drop in the price of a barrel of oil, the principal resource of the country, and the concentration of resources to combat COVID-19 since 2020 have slowed down considerably the Government's efforts to allocate the appropriate resources to the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment.

220. This is in addition to the barriers that limit women's access to basic social services and the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, including:

- (a) Lack of knowledge among women about their rights;
- (b) Illiteracy among women;
- (c) Persistence of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- (d) Weak enforcement of laws for the promotion and protection of women's rights;
- (e) Low level of ownership of the topic of gender at the national and sectoral levels, as well as inadequate alignment between the gender perspective and the institutional gender framework;
- (f) Weak engagement by the public authorities to ensure the representation of women in appointed positions;
- (g) The shortage of gender-disaggregated data and reliable information on gender disparities and gender-based violence;

221. Low rate of reporting and punishment of cases of gender-based violence.

### **Looking forward**

222. It is important for the Congo to effectively combat de facto discrimination and violence against women by emphasizing the principle of "positive masculinity" in combating against violence against women and girls.

223. It should also:

- Finalize the process of adopting the law on parity and apply it once promulgated;

- Allocate appropriate financial resources to the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Integration of Women in Development and the Informal Economy;
- Kickstart the codes revision process;
- Intensify information, education and communication/communication for change of behaviour campaigns to change behaviours at all levels of society;
- Create centres to care for victims of violence, including widows;
- Strengthen its partnership with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations.
- Improve rural women's access to basic social services;
- Continue efforts to facilitate the enrolment and retention of girls in school.

## **Conclusion**

224. The Government of the Congo remains more concerned than ever about the need to strengthen the promotion and protection of women's rights, as evidenced by the range of achievements described, despite lingering difficulties that deserve particular attention from the public authorities. These difficulties are cross-cutting issues for all development programmes at the national level.

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