



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

Distr.: General
18 May 2011

Original: English

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

Pre-session working group

Forty-ninth session

11-29 July 2011

**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the fourth periodic report**

Singapore*

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.



General

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues (CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/4)

1. The process of preparing Singapore's fourth periodic report involved the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the national coordinating body for local women's organizations, the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO), and other women's organizations; the members of the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Community Development, Youth and Sports; and women Members of Parliament (MPs).

2. The IMC was formed in 1996 to ensure a coordinated "whole-of-Government" approach to the domestic implementation of the Convention. It is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and comprises officials from relevant Ministries and statutory boards. These are: MCYS, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, the Ministry of Law, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the Ministry of National Development, the Prime Minister's Office (Public Service Division), the Attorney General's Chambers, Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore or MUIS), the Syariah Court, the Registry of Muslim Marriages, and the People's Association (PA). The MCYS Women's Desk, which is Singapore's national women's machinery, is the Secretariat to the IMC on the Convention. Members of the IMC are responsible for implementing and coordinating initiatives within their own agencies' purview to ensure compliance with the Convention and to better address the needs of women. The terms of reference of the IMC also includes preparing Singapore's periodic reports on the Convention.

3. As mentioned in paragraphs 7.16 and 7.17 of our fourth report, consultation sessions were held with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), members of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Community Development, Youth and Sports, and women MPs on the draft report. These sessions generated much discussion on the progress of women in Singapore and the issues that women continue to face, and were a useful way for the IMC to remain actively engaged with the situation of women on the ground. Inputs from the sessions were incorporated into the final version of our fourth report.

4. Singapore law does not require the reports submitted to United Nations treaty bodies to be submitted to Parliament. The Minister and Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports keep the Cabinet informed of developments affecting women's well-being and advancement.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

5. The Singapore Government has given serious and careful consideration to the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. With respect to the reservation to articles 2 and 16, a working group comprising representatives from MUIS, the Syariah Court and the Registry of Muslim Marriages was established in April 2008 to consider the matter, taking into

consideration the religious and cultural practices of the local Malay/Muslim community.

6. Following several rounds of consultations with women's groups, and after thorough study of the impact of the reservations on Muslim women, the Singapore Government is pleased to report that the reservation against articles 2 and 16 will be withdrawn in part to narrow the scope of its application. At this time, the Singapore Government considers it necessary to retain the other elements of this reservation to protect the rights of minorities in the practice of their personal and religious law. This is necessary to maintain the delicate balance of Singapore's multicultural society. Nevertheless, the Singapore Government is committed to an ongoing review process to meet the needs of a changing population.

7. With respect to the reservation to article 11, paragraph 1, the Singapore Government considers that it is necessary and important to retain this reservation in order to safeguard the welfare of women and their unborn children from certain hazardous occupations. This is also necessary in view of Singapore's small population and low total fertility rate. For this reason, women are, for example, excluded from certain hazardous occupations in the military to avoid deploying women in combat roles in time of hostility.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

8. The Singapore Department of Statistics (DOS), the national statistical authority, adopts a decentralized statistical system through the Research and Statistics Units (RSUs) in various government ministries and statutory boards for data collection and analysis in the public sector. This approach effectively meets users' needs for comprehensive economic and social statistics and is in line with our IMC framework. Each IMC member is responsible for the collection, compilation, and analysis of data, which pertain to the areas of the Convention under their agency's charge. The MCYS' Women's Desk regularly collates sex-disaggregated data from government agencies to monitor the progress of women and gender equality in Singapore and updates the gender statistics on its website.¹

9. Sex-disaggregated data is essential to our policy and programme formulation, development and monitoring purposes. For instance, the law enforcement agencies collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex so that the Government can identify and focus on vulnerable groups and their particular situations. The Labour Force Survey conducted by the MOM is the primary survey which yields statistical information on the economic activities of the population, including detailed characteristics of the labour force. The survey enables the generation of sex-disaggregated data on a wide range of manpower indicators, including the labour force participation rate, employment rate, unemployment rate, economically inactivity rate, usual hours worked and income.

¹ More information on gender statistics can be found at <http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/IssuesTopics/WomenCelebratingWomen/GenderStatistics.aspx>.

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues**

10. The principle of equality of all persons before the law is guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. Besides the Constitution, the rights of women are protected in various pieces of legislation² (see annex 1), which have been reviewed and updated over time.

11. Following Singapore's participation in the thirty-ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2007, the Cabinet was informed of the Committee's concluding comments on 22 September 2007. A media briefing was held on 2 October 2007 to inform the public and women's groups of the Committee's concluding comments and concerns. Relevant information and links on the Convention were posted on the MCYS website.³ To address the Committee's concerns, the IMC meets regularly for updates on the actions taken to review and implement policies and processes raised in the concluding comments. The updates are monitored by the Women's Desk. Singapore's response to the concluding comments and some of the policy outcomes and initiatives have been included in our fourth report and in our responses to the list of questions.

12. Regarding the statement in paragraph F.5 of our fourth report, Singapore's legal system is similar in this respect to other dualist jurisdictions modelled on the British legal system. In dualist jurisdictions, treaties and conventions do not automatically become part of national law unless they are specifically incorporated into the legal system. Further information on the Singapore legal framework can be found in part I, paragraphs 4.1-4.11 of Singapore's initial report (CEDAW/C/SGP/1).

13. An aggrieved party who is of the view that she has been subjected to unequal treatment by a legislative or administrative measure may invoke the constitutional guarantee of equality in a suit before the High Court. Apart from the Constitution, the objectives of this Convention are given effect in Singapore law through other legislative provisions, including the Women's Charter, the Employment Act and the Penal Code. An aggrieved party may report violations to the relevant authorities, which will look into the complaint, and take action to enforce the laws. Further information may be found in paragraphs 2.4-2.9 of our fourth report, paragraph 2.7 of our third report (CEDAW/C/SGP/3) and part II, paragraphs 3.1-3.2 of our initial report.

14. The Singapore Government assures the Committee that it is open to constructive suggestions regarding the implementation of this Convention. The Government will consider such suggestions carefully, taking into account the implications of proposed legislative amendments in the context of the existing national framework for implementing this Convention.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

15. Being a small city State with no natural resources, Singapore relies heavily on its human capital by developing and maximizing the potential of each individual, regardless of gender. The concept of substantive gender equality on the basis of

² Full text of acts may be found at the Singapore Statutes Online website:
<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/>.

³ <http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/IssuesTopics/WomenCelebratingWomen/CEDAWReports.aspx>.

meritocracy and equal opportunities and access to fundamental resources is ingrained in every Singaporean since youth through gender-neutral educational materials and school curriculum.

16. The system of impartiality, meritocracy and equal opportunities for all is fundamental to how the Civil Service operates and is part of the Service's Mission statement.⁴ It is highlighted in the Civil Service's mandatory training courses for all new officers, including law enforcement officers and educators. All law enforcement officers are trained in handling female suspects or victims, and there is strict adherence to the relevant laws and guidelines where gender sensitivity is concerned. Judges are guided by the Code of Conduct⁵ for Judicial Officers, as well as the Equal Treatment Bench Book which stipulates that all parties who appear before them are treated equally, fairly and with respect. All public prosecutors are trained to uphold the highest standards of integrity and specifically instructed that discretion must be exercised fairly and objectively.

17. In order to build a culture in support of full and equal enjoyment of human rights on the basis of equality with men, MCYS, together with the SCWO, jointly organized several consultation sessions in 2008, 2007 and 2004 with local women's organizations to disseminate information on the Convention and discuss the progress of women in Singapore. The participants included the People's Association's Women's Integration Network (PA WIN) Council and the National Trades Union Congress Women's Development Secretariat (NTUC WDS). MCYS maintains a dedicated webpage⁶ on the Convention. This webpage contains Singapore's periodic reports, the Committee's concluding observations on the reports, and documents to raise awareness of the Convention. MCYS also updates the Executive Committees of SCWO, PA WIN Council and NTUC WDS on the latest developments on the Convention through regular meetings.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

18. While the legal basis for gender equality may not be as specific as the Committee would like, article 12(1) of our Constitution provides sufficient guarantee of equality to all Singaporeans, men and women, and regardless of their marital status, age, disability and national origin. All domestic laws are based on this principle of equality of all persons before the law. In addition, there are specific laws that protect the rights of women in particular areas (see annex 1). Any person who is of the view that his or her rights under the law have been infringed upon can bring an action in the local courts. Women are treated equally at all stages of the proceedings before the courts and tribunals. The State administers legal aid for those who are unable to afford a lawyer. Free legal advice is also available from the Law Society of Singapore, the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers and other voluntary welfare organizations to ensure that affordability is not a barrier to legal recourse.

⁴ <http://www.careers.gov.sg/The+Singapore+Public+Service/Our+Mission+Our+Goals+Our+Beliefs+Core+Values/>.

⁵ More information on the Code of Conduct can be found at www.agc.gov.sg/aboutus/values.htm#Code.

⁶ <http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/IssuesTopics/WomenCelebratingWomen/CEDAWReports.aspx>.

19. In each Ministry, there are formal channels to track and monitor complaints and feedback. Thus far, there is no indication of insufficient channels for women to challenge acts of discrimination.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

20. The practice of sharia law in Singapore is progressive, and takes into account changing societal contexts and norms. The Legal (Fatwa) Committee of the MUIS regularly discusses points of Muslim law, and recommends measures to meet these changes, in line with Islamic principles and legal philosophy. The Singapore Government is pleased to report a major milestone in the continuous development of the sharia law as it applies in Singapore in the area of property rights. The MUIS Fatwa Committee issued new fatwas on joint tenancy and Central Provident Fund (CPF) nominations in 2008 and 2009 respectively to align sharia law with civil law. The new fatwa on joint tenancy now recognizes the surviving spouse as the legal owner of the property held jointly. Previously, the surviving spouse could only serve as the trustee of the deceased's share in a joint tenancy arrangement, to be distributed to the beneficiaries. The new fatwa on CPF nominations now recognizes that when a Muslim CPF account holder makes a nomination in favour of his wife or children, the nomination is considered as a valid inter vivos gift. The new fatwas improve the welfare of women and their dependants under sharia law as it applies in Singapore.

21. The practice of sharia law may vary among countries and MUIS monitors these variations and developments. Studies on comparative jurisprudence and legislation of other countries have been undertaken, particularly on gender and family law in Islam. To understand the evolving gender roles and trends in Singapore and their impact on the Muslim community, MUIS held consultations with women's groups under the SCWO such as the Young Women Muslim Association of Singapore and the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE). Insights gathered from these consultations culminated in initiatives aimed at raising interest in and deepening discussions on gender issues among the Muslim community in Singapore and other Muslim-majority countries.

22. Academics were engaged to share their research findings on comparative Islamic jurisprudence. These included the publication of the MUIS 8th Occasional Papers Series in 2009, which featured an academic paper entitled "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform" by Professor Ziba Mir-Hosseini. Following this, a seminar was organized in November 2009 on "CEDAW and Women in Islam" as part of the MUIS Islam and Contemporary Issues Series.⁷ Through these initiatives, MUIS was able to gain a deeper understanding of the different strategies for reform on Islamic family law and its applications in countries such as Malaysia, Iran and Morocco. To further strengthen the local Muslim community's awareness and resources to undertake comparative studies on the reform and application of Islamic family law in other countries, MUIS has also designed a specific module on gender and the Convention for participants of the Advanced Asatizah (religious scholars) Executive Development Programme and collaborated with AWARE to conduct a workshop on the Convention for religious leaders on 30 October 2010.

⁷ The speaker for the seminar was Associate Professor Najibah Zin from the Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Law, International Islamic University Malaysia.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

23. As the national machinery for the advancement of women, the Women's Desk drives gender equality primarily through the IMC. The Women's Desk, which currently comprises four officers who report to the Coordinating Director, monitors the developments and fulfils a coordinating role. To ensure the development and effective implementation of gender equality policies, the political authority, human and financial resources, and capacity are drawn not only from the Women's Desk, but from the full complement of Government agencies represented on the IMC. This is in line with the Government's commitment to a "whole-of-Government" approach to gender equality policy and the domestic implementation of the Convention. The sixteen agencies represented on the IMC are listed in paragraph 2 of our response to paragraph 1 of the list of issues.

24. The IMC framework is a multidisciplinary, integrated approach. Any instances of discrimination against women can be addressed under the relevant laws and regulations under the purview of the relevant agency. If there is any practice of discrimination, the Government would not hesitate to take the necessary measures to address the situation. This "whole-of-Government" approach has served Singapore well. Many of the significant developments cited in our fourth report were effected through the work of the agencies represented on the IMC.

Temporary special measures (article 4, paragraph 1)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

25. Women in Singapore are not perceived as a disadvantaged or marginalized group, warranting special attention. Our approach to gender equality is founded on the principle of equal opportunities for men and women on the basis of meritocracy. Even without special measures, women in Singapore have made rapid and significant progress over the last few decades and have been able to participate fully and equally in all spheres of life and at all levels. However, we do recognize that there are some areas, such as employment, in which the Government can further facilitate women's advancement through various initiatives.

26. To encourage women to enter and remain in the workforce, Singapore's strategy is to improve women's educational and skills profile, provide employment and training assistance, as well as to help women better balance their careers and family, with measures to promote work-life harmony and flexible work arrangements. The concerted effort by the tripartite partners (Government, employer organizations and the trade union) has resulted in an increasing number of companies adopting work-life strategies to attract and retain women employees who would otherwise drop out of the workforce. Thus, we have seen a significant increase in the resident employment rate of women in the prime working ages of 25 to 54 from 61.1 per cent in 1999 to 71.7 per cent in 2010.

27. The Government provides all Singaporean children, girls as well as boys, equal access to quality education. It passed the Compulsory Education Act⁸ in 2003, which mandates compulsory education for the first six years of primary education.

⁸ The link to the Act can be found at http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non_version/cgi-bin/cgi_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-51&doctitle=COMPULSORY%20EDUCATION%20ACT.

Singapore has achieved a high literacy rate for women (93.8 per cent in 2010) and women are already well represented at all levels of the education sector: nearly three quarters of all schoolteachers are female while two thirds of school vice-principals and school principals are female; one of the two Senior Ministers of State for Education, and the MOE Permanent Secretary, Second Permanent Secretary and Director-General are women.

28. Similarly, women are well represented in the public sector. Women constitute 56 per cent of the Civil Service and 59 per cent of Division I and Superscale, which are the top two categories of officers. There are now six female Permanent Secretaries out of a total of 22 and eight female Deputy Secretaries out of a total of 29.

29. Women are also making progress and occupying important positions. A Singaporean, Noeleen Heyzer, became the first female to be appointed Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on 30 July 2007. In the judiciary, women judges made up 51.3 per cent and 16.7 per cent in the Subordinate Courts⁹ and Supreme Court¹⁰ respectively in 2010, up from 44.1 per cent and 11.8 per cent respectively in 2000.

30. More Singaporean women are actively involved in community work. The number of women grass-roots leaders increased 81 per cent from 7,079 in 2000 to 12,112 in 2009. The number of women in chairmanship positions in the grass-roots organizations increased from 104 in 2000 to 412 in 2010. The female membership for Women's Executive Committees grew from 1,296 in 1995 to 2,324 in 2010. The composition of their members has broadened to include young women, housewives, working professionals and businesswomen. Women from all walks of life are encouraged to join the grass roots and take up leadership positions. There are grass-roots leadership training courses open to both male and female grass-roots leaders.

31. Singapore consciously and continually seeks out women who could be potential MPs, despite difficulty persuading them due to the desire for privacy. But we are making progress: based on data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as at 3 March 2011, Singapore was ranked 43 out of 186 countries in terms of the percentage of women in the Lower or Single House. Singapore's 23.4 per cent of women in Parliament currently exceeds the IPU world average of 19.2 per cent (both Houses combined).

32. Singapore will continue to engage relevant stakeholders and explore partnerships to increase the number of women in decision-making positions at all levels and in all areas.

Discriminatory stereotypes

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

33. The public awareness-raising campaigns, programmes and activities have helped to progressively eliminate traditional stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women. The stereotype of a woman's role being confined to that

⁹ There were 30 women out of 68 judges as at end 2000, and 39 women out of 76 judges as at end 2010.

¹⁰ There were 2 women out of 17 judges as at end 2000, and 3 women out of 18 judges as at end 2010.

of a homemaker has changed. In 2010, 68.4 per cent of women in Singapore¹¹ were in the labour force, up from 58.6 per cent in 1999. Significantly, the Government has, with effect from Year of Assessment 2010, allowed female taxpayers to claim spousal tax relief of S\$ 2,000 if their husbands meet the same qualifying conditions of the current wife relief, which is a relief granted to male taxpayers who take care of their wives, subject to the income threshold for dependants. The expansion of “wife relief” to “spouse relief” is in recognition of the increasing number of female breadwinners in Singaporean households, and is intended to support such working women. Women have made great strides in education and are well-represented in traditionally male-dominated subjects as stated in paragraph 10.19 of our fourth report. Last year, for the first time, a woman was awarded the Singapore Armed Forces Overseas Scholarship. According to the United Nations Human Development Report 2009, Singapore was ranked 16th out of 182 countries for gender empowerment.

34. The Government recognizes that traditional gender roles for parenting evolve with shifts in society. Concerted efforts are being made to promote shared parenting responsibility through the “Dads for Life” movement, a national fathers’ movement to involve fathers in their children’s lives. The Singapore Fatherhood Public Perception Survey 2009 points to the need for and desire of Singaporean fathers to be more involved in active fathering; among other findings, 96 per cent of the men who were surveyed felt very committed to their role as fathers. In the Public Awareness Survey on “Dads for Life” Initiatives conducted in October 2010, 90 per cent of fathers surveyed who had heard about the movement said it encouraged them to think about how to be better fathers in the future and 87 per cent said the movement made them take steps towards being better fathers. Eight-nine per cent of all respondents who were familiar with the movement recognized more strongly the importance of a father in a child’s life.

35. For the private sector, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) continues to promote awareness of fair employment practices, encompassing non-discrimination on the basis of gender, among employers (both public and private sectors), and the general public. TAFEP provides a range of services, tools and resources to help organizations implement fair employment practices and to comply with employment legislation. To date, more than 10,000 people have received training and briefings. TAFEP has launched three e-resource tools, namely, e-learning on “Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices” and “Fair Recruitment and Selection Process” and an online Fair Employment Self-Assessment tool. TAFEP also welcomes feedback from the public on their discrimination experiences and provides advice and assistance to those who have experienced discrimination at the workplace.

Violence against women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

36. A wide range of qualitative and quantitative data is collected on incidence of violence against women. These include instances of outrage of modesty, rape, and domestic violence. The statistics on cases of rape and outrage of modesty offences are at annex 2.

¹¹ Resident female population aged 25 to 64 years old.

37. Culprits known to rape victims account for the increase in rape cases. They include statutory rape cases (i.e. consensual sex with minors), date rapes and rapes, which take place when the victim is intoxicated. Outrage of modesty cases were generally committed by unknown culprits, and victims were usually molested at common indoor areas such as in lifts or lift landings, staircases or staircase landings, void decks or along the common corridors. There have been no marital rapes since the amendment of the Penal Code in 2008,¹² though there was one rape case each in 2008 and 2009 involving ex-husbands.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

38. The reported incidents of violence against women generally arose from various types of disputes such as family disputes. As explained in our response to paragraph 11 of the list of issues, the persons who were convicted of rape were primarily individuals known to the victims, while those who committed outrage of modesty were typically unknown to their victims. Between 2007 and 2010, there were two cases of women murdered by their husbands/ex-husbands.

39. Section 359 of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010 provides powers to the Court to order the person convicted of an offence to make payment of compensation to the person injured. Such an order for compensation shall not affect the right of a victim to take up civil action against the perpetrator. Since January 2011 after the Criminal Procedure Code 2010 came into operation, the court had, in one case involving a breach of a personal protection order, ordered the perpetrator-husband to compensate his wife for her injuries.

40. Singapore's existing legislation criminalizes acts of violence against women, and allows the relevant authorities to take the necessary action to protect all vulnerable groups. More information on the legislation that protects women against violence, in particular the Women's Charter, the Penal Code and the Mental Capacity Act can be found at annex 1. In addition, there are specific provisions that create offences for sexual exploitation of minors and persons who are mentally disabled. The Court will take into account the age of the victims in passing sentence e.g. whether elderly women were specifically targeted.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

41. The police have received very few reports of marital rape since the Penal Code was amended, and have thoroughly investigated all of them. Police officers handling such sensitive cases are trained with specialized interview techniques to better provide care to the victims. Depending on the facts of the case, appropriate actions have been taken against the perpetrators, such as for breaching a personal protection order. Thus far, there have been not been any cases with grounds for prosecution under the offence of marital rape.

42. For the amended Penal Code to achieve the desired impact on the ground, wives must be fully apprised as to how they can avail themselves of the enhanced protection measures. The key therefore is through public education and the provision of counselling. The rights of family members to protection from family violence, including sexual abuse by a spouse, as well as the avenues for help, are currently covered under the Women's Charter and supported by a spectrum of family

¹² More information can be found in paragraphs 16.11-16.14 of our fourth report.

violence support networks and public education programmes, as explained in paragraphs 24.12-24.16 of our fourth report. The various channels for women to seek legal advice are explained in paragraphs 15.7-15.15 of our fourth report.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

43. Between 2004 and 2010, a total of 7,447 persons benefited from the mandatory counselling programme. MCYS tracks the recidivism rate for perpetrators that have undergone the mandatory counselling programme by tracking if the perpetrator breached a personal protection order within one year of completion of the programme. During the period 2006 to 2009, the recidivism rate was less than 2 per cent.

44. Aside from tracking the annual recidivism rate, a qualitative study of 30 victims and 31 perpetrators was conducted in 2005 on the effectiveness of the mandatory counselling programme. The study revealed that the majority of victims and perpetrators experienced positive changes after the programme, with 90 per cent of perpetrators and 60 per cent of victims reporting no violent behaviour subsequently. The majority of perpetrators also exhibited desirable behaviour and used the knowledge and skills gained during the programme. Seven out of 10 victims said that their lives had improved and that they had learned safety plans that they could use to protect themselves against violence. MCYS continues to monitor and evaluate the programme and works closely with the social service agencies that run the programme in the community.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

45. Singapore is currently studying the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Singapore currently adopts the definition of “trafficking in persons”, as defined in the Protocol, as its working definition. To ensure that all front-line law enforcement officers are aware of the signs and definition of trafficking, the Singapore Police Force has developed a “TIP (trafficking in persons) Card” which contains the key elements of trafficking, including action, means, purpose and consent as defined by the Protocol.

46. Singapore adopts a coordinated multi-agency approach to enforce our laws against trafficking in persons. Our legal and policy measures against trafficking in persons are continually reviewed to take into account the changing landscape and dynamics of crime in Singapore. In March 2011, an Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons was created to, inter alia, review and identify areas of improvement in the current system. Besides focusing on prevention through proactive identification of potential trafficking victims, prosecution¹³ and protection of trafficked victims, the Singapore Government has proactively identified upstream

¹³ Singapore has in place a comprehensive regime of robust laws and dedicated law enforcement resources targeted to protect minors and women against trafficking. Our keystone anti-trafficking laws are enshrined in the Penal Code, Children and Young Persons Act and Women’s Charter. Examples of our laws protecting women and children against various forms of trafficking and prostitution can be found in Part II: article 6 of our fourth report.

measures as an area that can be strengthened, which would involve working with relevant stakeholders to act against trafficking syndicates that operate in source countries. In recognition of Singapore's situation as an attractive and open city State with a high inflow and outflow of people, the Government has engaged various embassies, overseas police forces and NGOs for the purpose of countering human trafficking as well as human smuggling.

47. Amendments were made recently to two key pieces of legislation that guard against trafficking in persons, namely, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Children and Young Persons Act. More information on the amendments can be found in annex 1.

48. Victims of trafficking are not subjected to deportation or forced returns; neither are they charged for offences committed as a direct result of being trafficked. As mentioned in Singapore's response to paragraph 10 of the Committee's 2007 list of issues and questions on our third report, MCYS has close working relationships with NGOs running shelters and providing services under the National Family Violence Networking System (NFVNS). Using this network, MCYS has put in place clear protocols on how cases are managed and how victims of trafficking may be referred to various points of help e.g. legal, medical, psychological. Shelters are available for adult victims of trafficking, where male and female victims may be admitted separately. For victims who express their desire to return home, Singapore facilitates their return and works closely with their home countries.

49. The Child Protection Service (CPS) in MCYS has protocols to ensure that the needs of child victims of trafficking are met. In instances where a foreign child is suspected to be a victim of trafficking, CPS may place him/her in a place of safety under section 16 of the Children and Young Persons Act while the police commence their investigation. The Embassy of the child's country of origin will be informed and residential care is provided for victims while investigations are under way. Medical attention is provided for the child if needed. CPS will work with the relevant agencies in consultation with the Embassy on arrangements for the child's return to his/her country. If a governmental agency is not available, CPS will work with a suitable NGO or the International Social Service to ensure that the child is returned to a safe care environment and support services are available to the child and his/her family.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

50. Human traffickers have been charged for multiple offences and sentenced to varying lengths of imprisonment and fines, depending on the circumstances of the case. Detailed information on the substantiated cases in 2004 was reported in the response to paragraph 12 of the Committee's 2007 list of issues and questions on our third report. There were no substantiated cases of trafficking between 2005 and 2007. Between 2008 and 2010, there were nine cases where the full elements of trafficking in persons were made out and which led to the prosecution of the perpetrators. The perpetrators in the two cases in 2008 were sentenced to varying punishments including imprisonment (ranging from 3 months to 12 months) and fines (\$17,000), or both. In 2009, the perpetrators in the two cases were punished with sentences of between 9 weeks and 19 months imprisonment. One of the perpetrators was also sentenced to a fine of S\$ 20,000. The perpetrators in the five

cases in 2010 were sentenced to punishments ranging from fines between S\$ 1,000 to S\$ 20,000, imprisonment of between 4 to 10 months, or both.

51. Victims of trafficking were granted appropriate and adequate protection, such as the option of staying in shelter homes where they were protected from further harm, and provided with all necessary amenities including meals, medical attention and counselling. On conclusion of each case, arrangements were made with the respective embassies by the police for the victim's safe return to her home country.

52. The Singapore police keep data on all reported cases, including sex-disaggregated data. Thus far, all the cases where the victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation were female. This information allows the Government to have a comprehensive understanding of the trafficking situation in Singapore. This information is also analysed and used to inform periodic policy reviews. The Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons created in March 2011 will focus on reviewing the situation in Singapore, including how data is collated and monitored.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

53. In keeping with standard protocol, all 28 cases of alleged forced prostitution and importation of women on false pretences were investigated thoroughly. For the majority of the reported cases, it was revealed that personal disputes or disputes over agreed working arrangements, including commissions and pay, led to the cases being reported to the authorities. Investigation ultimately revealed the supposed victims were aware of, and were willing parties to, their working arrangements. None of the cases were substantiated.

54. The Singapore Government's tough enforcement measures against immigration offenders are widely publicized in parliamentary debates, the media, and various public education efforts to raise awareness of trafficking in persons and deter would-be human smugglers and traffickers. The relevant agencies, including but not limited to MHA, MOM and MCYS, also work closely on initiatives such as training sessions, workshops, programmes and crime-awareness talks to raise awareness of the recent Penal Code amendments which enhanced the protection of young persons against commercial sexual exploitation. The police *Crimewatch* television programme is another medium which the police use to spread crime prevention messages. Local television programmes such as *Get Real!*, which feature current affairs in Singapore, also give coverage to the topic. The newly created Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons (first mentioned in the response to paragraph 15 of the list of issues) will, as part of its work, coordinate Singapore's engagement with foreign embassies, NGOs and the media to raise awareness of trafficking. The Taskforce will be developing and coordinating public information campaigns with this aim in mind.

55. Singapore is also part of the Regional Education Campaign against Child Sex Tourism, an initiative by ChildWise, among ASEAN member States and Australia. More recently, the focus of the campaign has been to encourage responsible tourists to report suspected cases of child sex tourism by their nationals overseas. Information developed by ChildWise, which included the Singapore Police Force hotline, was distributed to encourage reporting of cases of child sex tourism. As child trafficking and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation are closely linked, such campaigns have helped raise the awareness of sex trafficking among a wider audience.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

56. Despite continued vigilance, to date, the police have not received any information or come across evidence of Singapore citizens or permanent residents being involved in child sex tourism overseas since the Penal Code was amended in 2010. The police take a very serious view of such crimes and remain alert to any signs of such activity. They will fully investigate any leads or evidence uncovered of such activities. A person who is charged in Singapore for, inter alia, making or organizing any tours outside of Singapore for commercial sex with minors under 18 and who is found guilty of organizing such tours or facilitating them is liable for imprisonment for a term of up to 10 years, or a fine, or both.

57. The police also collaborate with their foreign counterparts and embassies on all possible leads to facilitate investigations. Success is largely dependent on the level of cooperation and coordination, which may be beyond Singapore's ability to control. The newly developed Inter-Agency Taskforce will also look into child sex tourism as part of Singapore's efforts to counter human trafficking holistically.

Political participation and participation in public life**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues**

58. Please see our response to paragraph 9 of the list of issues for Singapore's approach to gender equality and our initiatives to promote women's participation in political and public and decision-making at all levels and in all areas including employment, education, political and public life, and the judiciary. The Singapore Government strongly encourages all women to participate actively in political and public life, including those belonging to minority groups and women with disabilities. Please see our response to paragraph 24 of the list of issues on the measures taken to protect the rights of employment of women belonging to ethnic minority groups and to paragraph 29 on measures taken to protect and promote the rights of women with disabilities and eliminate discrimination against them.

59. The proportion of women employers has been increasing — 25.3 per cent¹⁴ in 2010, up from 16.8 per cent in 1999. SCWO officially launched the *BoardAgender* on 9 March 2011 to strengthen women's representation in decision-making positions. *BoardAgender* is an online forum which aims to enhance awareness of the benefits of gender diversity at top levels of management and encourage more women to take up senior leadership positions in boardrooms and committees. *BoardAgender* will work with the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School's Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organizations to launch the Singapore Board Diversity Index which will track female participation on corporate boards on a regular basis.¹⁵ *BoardAgender* organized regular talks in 2010 to give insights on topics related to women in corporate boardrooms. *BoardAgender* also initiated the "100 Champions Campaign" to recognize business leaders whose individual and organizational initiatives support gender-balanced business and the advancement of women into senior leadership roles.

¹⁴ As at June 2010, women made up 26,400 of the 104,400 employers in Singapore, which translates to 25.3 per cent of the total number of employers. This is an increase from 20.1 per cent in 2003, when there were 19,043 women employers out of a total of 94,951 employers.

¹⁵ More information may be found at the website at <http://www.boardagender.org/singapore-nus-business-school-and-boardagender-track-gender-diversity-in-the-boardroom/>.

Employment

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

60. While Singapore does not intend to enact legislation on equal pay as this would introduce rigidity into the labour market, we are committed to the principle of equal pay for equal work. Please refer to paragraphs 11.1-11.3 of our third report for details of Singapore's ratification of International Labour Organization Convention No. 100 (1951) on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value in May 2002 and actions taken to enforce it. As of November 2010, 25 per cent of collective agreements by unionized companies under the tripartite partners (i.e. the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), the Singapore Business Federation/Singapore National Employees Federation and MOM) had included a clause on equal remuneration into their collective agreements.

61. Singapore has made progress in addressing the gender wage gap. The median gross monthly income for full-time employed females (for all sectors) was 91.9 per cent of that of males in 2009, up from 86 per cent in 2006. The wage differential varies by age and is smaller for the younger cohorts of workers. In 2009, females aged 25 to 29 in fact earned a higher median gross wage than their male counterparts, by as much as 24 per cent for those in sales and services jobs to 7 per cent for managerial posts and 5 per cent for professionals. To further narrow the gender wage gap, Singapore's strategy has been to help women remain in the workforce or return to work after their children are older. More information can be found in the Report on Labour Force in Singapore 2010.¹⁶ A summary of the median monthly basic and gross wages of selected occupations in all industries for both females and males as at June 2009, from the Occupational Wage Survey is at annex 3.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

62. The Singapore Government encourages family-friendly initiatives to enable both women and men to share family responsibilities while contributing fully at the workplace. These include the "Work-Life Works (WoW!) Fund" and "Flexi-Works!" which help employers kick-start implementation of flexible work arrangements by providing grants of up to \$20,000 and \$100,000 per company respectively. As at March 2011, S\$ 11.88 million had been disbursed under the "WoW! Fund". Over 180 companies have come on board the "Flexi-Works!" scheme, with 1,900 workers recruited (as at February 2010) on flexible work arrangements since its inception; "Flexi-Works!" has been extended to December 2012.

63. The Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy involves the Government, public and private sector employers, unions and the human resource industry in promoting the adoption of flexible work arrangements by employers. As the Committee believes that work-life harmony is not of concern only to women, special attention is given to highlight stories of men achieving or contributing to work-life harmony where possible. For example, for the biennial Work-Life Leadership Award started in 2008, which celebrates business leaders for their important contributions to employees' work-life harmony, there have been two male

¹⁶ http://www.mom.gov.sg/Documents/statistics-publications/manpower-supply/report-labour-2010/mrsd_2010LabourForce.pdf.

award-winners out of a total of four winners, one each in 2008 and 2010. The Committee also formed a work group that looks into redesigning jobs to allow employees to work from home. This is made possible through Singapore's advanced and holistic "infocomm" infrastructure. With a nationwide ultra high-speed national broadband network coming in 2012, it will be increasingly viable for employees to work from home. Businesses are not only able to better manage their manpower resources and reduce overhead costs such as office rental and transport, workers are also poised to enjoy greater work-life harmony.

64. To encourage more private sector companies to embrace work-life balance, the Government works closely with the Employer Alliance, a network of corporations committed to promoting work-life integration. The Alliance encourages more employers to adopt various work-life measures. It also offers work-life resources and consultation to members and champions best practices in different industries.

65. The NTUC offers a one-hour talk programme called "Live@Work" which gives tips on how employees may better balance their multiple roles and manage their time effectively. NTUC also organizes the "Little Ones@Work" programme which encourages employees' children to join their parents at their respective participating workplaces for a day. NTUC encourages companies to take this up by incorporating workshops into the programme and funding 50 per cent of the actual cost incurred, capped at \$500 per company.

66. Through these promotional efforts, working parents are increasingly made aware of the work-life harmony options available at the workplace. The Government also promotes shared parenting responsibilities through the "Dads for Life" movement (as mentioned above in the response to paragraph 10 of the list of issues). One of its programmes, "Fathers@Schools", encourages fathers to be more active in their children's school lives. The Government also works closely with community partners to run parenting programmes for couples which touch on gender roles and expectations within marriage.

67. The Singapore Civil Service has also taken measures to ensure work-life programmes target both men and women. Previously, only married female officers were eligible for full-pay unrecorded leave to look after a sick child; however, this provision was extended to male officers in 2002. Similarly, whereas previously only married female permanent officers with children were eligible for the part-time employment scheme, since 2003, the scheme has been extended to male officers. Policies introduced subsequently, for example, staggered working hours, telecommuting, and unpaid infant care leave for public servants, have all been gender-neutral.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

68. The provisions under the Penal Code and the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order & Nuisance) Act may be used to prosecute persons for sexual harassment, where the facts fit the offence. The number of cases of outrage of modesty, an offence under the Penal Code, is contained in our response to paragraph 11 of the list of issues. Between January and March 2011, 31 cases of outrage of modesty and 2 cases of insulting the modesty of a woman in the workplace were recorded.

69. The police will investigate all reports and/or complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace. Police officers are trained to be sensitive to the victim's trauma

and specific guidelines are in place to help victims in distress. Substantiated cases will be prosecuted and victims are referred to counselling services for further assistance.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 of the list of issues

70. The Continuing Education and Training (CET) Masterplan was launched by Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in February 2008. Under the Masterplan, the Government will set up new CET centres and expand existing ones in growth areas such as aerospace, allied health care, and digital media. A new Institute for Adult Learning was also established to develop trainer capability and conduct applied research into adult training. The Government spends about S\$ 200 million or 0.1 per cent of GDP on adult worker training annually and expects to spend, on recurrent expenditure alone, S\$ 400 million per year on CET.

71. The Workforce Development Authority (WDA) now has 50 CET Centres and about 500 accredited training providers (including CET Centres) delivering Workforce Skills Qualification (WSQ) training. As the system grows, the quality of the WSQ training providers and programmes are similarly raised. From 1 April 2011, mandatory qualification requirements for trainers, assessors and curriculum developers engaged by WSQ training providers were introduced. A sectoral approach is being adopted to help industries address their unique workforce challenges. These efforts will further enhance the CET system and foster a culture of lifelong learning among workers, both men and women.

72. As at end December 2010, the WDA had developed 26 Workforce Skills Qualification (WSQ) frameworks that provide practical, competency-based training courses in various sectors. More than 270,000 workers were trained under the WSQ system in 2010, about half of whom were women.

73. CET Centres are open to all. Targeted at preparing workers for a new job, career switch or skills progression, the CET system is kept affordable and accessible to all, regardless of gender. Though the system has traditionally provided strong support for rank-and-file workers, its scope is being expanded to include professionals, managers, executives and technicians.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

74. The Singapore Constitution carries specific provisions for the protection of racial and religious minorities. It imposes a responsibility on the Government to care for the interests of racial and religious minorities. The core principles of meritocracy, secular government and multiracialism ensure the Government adopts an even-handed approach to all communities.

75. Singapore does not condone discrimination in any form, including that against women of ethnic minority groups in the workplace. We have adopted a promotional and educational tripartite approach (involving employers, unions and the Government) in guiding employers on fair and responsible practices. We have found this to be effective, instead of a legislative regime which may introduce rigidities while not addressing core issues of raising awareness and facilitating adoption of fair and responsible employment practices.

76. Since 2006, TAFEP has been promoting the adoption of fair (i.e. non-discriminatory) and responsible employment practices among employers,

employees and the general public. For details on TAFEP's work, please refer to paragraphs 11.2-11.3 of our fourth report. A key principle of the TAFEP guidelines is that employers should "recruit and select employees on the basis of merit (such as skills, experience or ability to perform the job) and regardless of age, race, gender, religion, family status and disability". The guidelines also prohibit job advertisements which make race a criterion for application. In line with these guidelines, the Civil Service job application form does not have data fields for race, religion, gender, marital status and title. Candidates are shortlisted based on individual merit relevant to the job, such as qualifications, work experience and skills.

77. TAFEP's various promotion activities include training sessions, seminars and conferences, on-site visits and advisory services. A Conference on Fair Employment organized in April 2010 also saw international and local speakers discuss ways to better harness women's economic potential. TAFEP has achieved significant results. Most employers approached by TAFEP for discrimination complaints heed its advice. As at April 2011, over 1,650 employers have signed the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices. Statistics reveal that only 0.2 per cent of economically inactive women of all ethnic groups cited discrimination (all forms of discrimination e.g. employers preferring younger workers) as the main reason for not working.¹⁷

78. Singapore's employment legislation provides recourse for employees who feel they have been unfairly dismissed, including dismissal on the grounds of their minority status. They may appeal to the Minister for Manpower for reinstatement. In appropriate cases, any private individual may raise article 12 of the Singapore Constitution as a constitutional issue in an action for judicial review before the High Court.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 25 of the list of issues

79. Please see our response to paragraph 30 of the list of issues for details on legislative measures protecting foreign domestic workers. All such workers are protected under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) which imposes legally binding work permit conditions on employers to look after the well-being of their foreign domestic workers. These include provisions on personal safety, proper accommodation, prompt salary payment, adequate food and rest. A standard employment contract for foreign domestic workers was introduced in 2006 by the accreditation bodies of foreign domestic workers' employment agencies. The contract provides for rest days but allows for foreign domestic workers to choose compensation in lieu of a day off. Such contracts provide more flexibility to meet the needs of both parties. MOM has, on its part, encouraged employers to grant foreign domestic workers rest days. Employers who do not provide their foreign domestic workers with sufficient rest or breach any work permit conditions are punished with a fine of up to S\$ 5,000 and/or a jail term of up to six months. Those who default on salary payments may be ordered by the courts to make that payment in addition to the fine and/or jail sentence. In 2009 and 2010, eight and seven employers respectively were successfully prosecuted for failing to pay the wages of foreign domestic workers.

¹⁷ Survey conducted by the MOM for the Report on Labour Force in Singapore, 2010 (table 92).

80. The security bond ensures employers provide safe repatriation¹⁸ and timely payment of salary of foreign domestic workers at the end of their employment. Security bond conditions were amended with effect from 1 January 2010 to remove employers' liability if the foreign domestic worker violated her obligations under the conditions of her work permit. In cases where the foreign domestic worker absconds, only half of the Security Bond (comprising \$2,500 out of \$5,000) is forfeited so long as the employer made reasonable efforts to locate the worker. Hence there is no reason for the security bond to impede on or be used by employers to impede on the freedom of movement of foreign domestic workers.

81. Foreign domestic workers are protected under Singapore's general criminal laws such as the Penal Code. From 2001 to 2009, 32 employers, spouses or household members have been jailed for abuse of foreign domestic workers. Employers convicted of abuse are permanently barred from employing another foreign domestic worker and employers who do not take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of their foreign domestic workers can be charged in court for criminal negligence. In 2009 and 2010, a total of five employers were prosecuted for endangering the lives of their foreign domestic workers.

82. Complaints from foreign domestic workers of physical and sexual abuse by employers are referred to the police for criminal investigation under the Penal Code. During the course of investigations, foreign domestic workers would be housed in dormitories or shelters run by VWOs or their respective embassies. Counselling would be provided to the victims as required.

83. For foreign domestic workers with complaints of abuse, salary non-payment and other offences, MOM will facilitate a temporary change of employer for the duration of investigations and criminal proceedings which can be effected without the need for their employers' consent. The foreign domestic workers may work for another employer while these criminal proceedings are in progress. Every effort would be made to facilitate the continued presence of the foreign domestic worker if she is a witness. Foreign domestic workers are given the option to convert their temporary employment to permanent when the case is concluded. The number of substantiated cases of abuse of foreign domestic workers handled by the police has fallen from 157 cases in 1997 to 60 cases in 2009. This is despite an increase in the foreign domestic worker population of 22.5 per cent since 2005.

84. Employment agencies serve as the intermediary between employers and workers in foreign domestic worker recruitment. Singapore regulates the behaviours of the agencies via the regulatory framework set out in the Employment Agencies Act, employment agency rules and administrative conditions such as employment agency licence conditions.¹⁹ Foreign domestic workers and employers who have disagreements concerning their contracts can approach CaseTrust or the Association of Employment Agencies (Singapore) for mediation. The employment agencies regulatory framework was amended with effect from 1 April 2011 to raise the standard of recruitment practices and minimize malpractices in the industry.

85. As Singapore is a small country with limited land, population controls are needed to ensure population growth is sustainable. It is with these considerations

¹⁸ More information on proper repatriation can be found in paragraph 11.43 of our fourth report.

¹⁹ More information on the regulation of employment agencies may be found at paras. 11.49 to 11.53 of our fourth report.

that the mandatory pregnancy testing and marriage restriction policies for work permit holders were instituted. All work permit holders, including non-foreign domestic workers and regardless of gender, are subject to these restrictions where applicable. Pregnancy testing also provides female foreign workers with information on their pregnancy status and suitability for their work. Applications by work permit holders to marry Singaporeans are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

86. Foreign domestic workers are able to report grievances through channels such as a toll-free foreign domestic worker helpline manned by MOM officers; feedback forms in prepaid envelopes distributed to all foreign domestic workers at the Safety Awareness Course; random interviews conducted by MOM with foreign domestic workers working for the first time in Singapore during their initial months; and home visits conducted by MOM officers. These interviews and visits also allow MOM to determine if the foreign domestic workers have adapted to the Singapore work environment.

Health

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

87. Singapore believes that education on sexual health and rights, as well as family planning and education, are closely intertwined and should be inculcated at an early age. The sexuality education programme implemented in schools focuses on the holistic development of the individual and includes the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and moral dimensions of sexuality. The aim is to equip the young with the knowledge and skills to make responsible value-based decisions on sexuality matters. It is premised on the importance of the family, and respect for the values and beliefs of the different ethnic and religious communities. Sexuality matters are also covered in curricular subjects such as health education for upper primary levels and science and civics and moral education for secondary levels. Safe sex practices, such as use of contraception and information on sexually transmitted diseases, are taught in lower secondary science as they are related to health issues.

88. Training programmes, such as in-service courses for teachers, as well as other workshops/symposiums, are conducted for teachers and youth workers to update their knowledge on sexually transmitted infections (STI)/AIDS and to equip them with skills to reach out to young people on this subject matter. Health extension workers and medical personnel are also provided with relevant training in this aspect.

89. The Health Promotion Board (HPB) works with NGOs (e.g. World Vision Singapore, Action for AIDS, Family Service Centres) as well as media partners (e.g. LIME Magazine, Mediacorp Pte Ltd) to reach out to women and youths.

90. The behavioural intervention programme was introduced by the HPB in collaboration with community partners to empower working Singaporean women aged 21-40 with knowledge and skills for greater control over their sexual health. It utilizes platforms such as sexual reproductive health workshops, roadshows, educational materials and online social marketing campaigns. Since 2007, over 80,000 women have received its messages promoting self-esteem, communication, decision-making and problem-solving as well as sexual health. Post-workshop surveys indicated that women who acknowledge the importance of high self-esteem

in protecting themselves from HIV/STI and who show better understanding of sexually transmitted infections increased by 7 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. In addition, 86 per cent of women admit, at post-event surveys, that they will use condoms to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS while 83 per cent acknowledge that they will go for HIV testing if they think they are at risk.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

91. HPB collaborates with voluntary community-based organizations and registered charities such as Action for AIDS (AFA) as well as the Department of Sexually Transmitted Infections Control (DSC) of the National Skin Centre to raise awareness on sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. In the pipeline is the development of a training package on STI/AIDS with family service centres, for youth workers dealing with at-risk youths.

92. Project Streetwalker, implemented in 1997 in partnership with DSC, aims to increase awareness of safe sex practices among female sex workers aged 28-50. Outreach activities were conducted in red light districts as well as entertainment outlets frequented by sex workers. In 2010, more than 27,000 condoms and educational materials were distributed, and 184 women participated in talks on sexually transmitted infections at drop-in centres. 287 women also accepted HIV/STI tests under this programme.

93. HPB introduced a pilot women community outreach programme in 2010, in collaboration with AFA, for women aged 35-45.²⁰ Utilizing health talks at family service centres and relevant events organized for women, the programme aims to raise awareness of HIV.

94. Sexual and reproductive health education talks/workshops are also conducted regularly under the Female-Friendly Clinic programme (previously called the Women Wellness Clinic) to reach out to women at risk. Subsidized HIV testing coupons are distributed during these activities to encourage early HIV testing among women. A Female-Friendly Clinic Day was launched in July 2010 to promote HIV testing among women.

95. From December 2004, antenatal HIV screening has been included in the routine antenatal screening package for all pregnant women. The take-up rate for antenatal HIV screening in public hospitals and polyclinics was about 99 per cent in 2009. Twenty-two pregnant women were found to be HIV-positive between 2008 and 2009, but none of their children were born HIV-positive due to timely medical intervention.

96. HIV-positive cases among Singapore resident females aged 15 and above have remained consistently low (less than 0.1 per cent) over the past decade. The National Behavioural Surveillance 2007 Survey revealed that 78 per cent of women surveyed know at least two ways to prevent HIV/AIDS.

²⁰ This age group was determined by HPB after evaluating the profile of HIV-positive cases in Singapore.

Disadvantaged groups of women**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues**

97. The Singapore Government shares the Committee's concern at the situation of foreign wives of Singaporean citizens. It is for this reason that there is a robust framework under Singapore law to protect all women against violence and abuse. Those who violate any law under this framework are firmly dealt with. The Singapore Government has established a tight network of support and assistance for all victims of violence and abuse. This network ensures multiple access points for victims, where they would be referred to relevant services and assistance such as medical help, counselling services or temporary accommodation. These multiple access points include:

- (a) The Family Court, when a victim makes a complaint of family violence;
- (b) The police, when a report of suspected family violence is received;
- (c) The hospitals, when a victim seeks medical attention for physical injuries.

98. For victims requiring temporary accommodation, crisis shelters offer protection, practical assistance, and emotional support. Crisis shelters also help victims to work out plans for their future and assist them to obtain alternative accommodation and employment where necessary. There are three crisis shelters which provide interim accommodation for women (including foreign wives) who are victims of family violence, with funding from the Government. The Government works closely with the crisis shelters to ensure that services to victims are adequate. The capacity of the three crisis shelters is currently sufficient; the occupancy rate of the shelters in 2010 was 79 per cent. MCYS monitors the capacity of the shelters closely and will provide more places where necessary.

99. Foreign wives of Singaporean citizens or permanent residents who wish to work in Singapore can apply for a work pass, which will more likely be granted as compared to other foreigners with no family or relatives in Singapore. Such applications are assessed without any discrimination against the gender of the applicant.

100. Foreign wives of Singapore citizens or permanent residents can apply for Singapore citizenship or permanent residence through the Family Ties Scheme. The intention of this Scheme is to maintain the family unit. A foreign spouse of a Singaporean can submit an application for Singapore citizenship if she or he has resided continuously in Singapore for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding the date of the application. Each citizenship application is assessed based on the merits of each case and in accordance with the prevailing immigration policies. Besides the applicant's length of residence in Singapore and his/her marriage to a Singaporean, a key consideration is whether the Singaporean spouse could support his/her foreign spouse financially. Similarly, a foreign spouse may have to fulfil certain residency requirements before being considered for permanent residence. Nonetheless, a foreign spouse who is not eligible for permanent residence at the time of application can be considered for the grant of a long-term visit pass.

101. Foreign spouses may be subject to marriage of convenience requirements and may have to fulfil certain residency requirements to satisfy the Immigration and

Checkpoints Authority that the marriage is genuine before they can be considered for permanent residence. This is a necessary safeguard to deter abuse of permanent residence facilities by foreigners who use fake marriage as an easy conduit to secure long-term stay in Singapore. Such a measure, which is not intended to discriminate, is also commonly adopted in other countries. As Singapore is a very small and densely populated city State, we cannot afford to have an unregulated flow of foreigners into the country. Some controls are therefore necessary for the grant of work permits and citizenship.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

102. Singapore's vision is to be an inclusive society where men and women with disabilities are given the opportunity to become equal, integral and contributing members of the society. To achieve this vision, the Government set up the Enabling Masterplan Steering Committee, comprising members from the people, public and private sectors, to review and chart services and programmes in the disability sector from 2007 to 2011.²¹ While families continue to be the first line of care and support for persons with disabilities, there are services, programmes and resources to support families in caregiving. The Government set up the Centre for Enabled Living in 2009 to serve as an information and referral centre for disability services and elder care.

103. Employment is key to ensuring that persons with disabilities maximize their potential and live as independently as possible. TAFEP promotes the adoption of non-discriminatory and responsible employment practices. A guidebook for employers which sets out best practices, advice and practical suggestions on employment of persons with disabilities²² is available on its website. To equalize employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the Government set up an inter-agency work group, which oversees the implementation of initiatives such as Post Special Education Pre-Employment Training Project and IT Apprenticeship Programme run by the Society for the Physically Disabled.

104. The Open Door Fund (ODF) provides a grant of up to S\$ 100,000 per company to encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities by supporting them in job redesign and the modification of the physical workspace. Since April 2009, the ODF has been revised to include apprenticeship training and enhanced job support for persons with disabilities (e.g. job coaches). A network of pro-disability employers, the Enabling Employers Network, was set up in 2007 to promote employment of persons with disabilities in various sectors.

105. Early identification and intervention are pivotal to the prognosis of a child with special needs. MOH oversees nationwide neonatal screening for overt physical and developmental abnormalities. It runs a comprehensive Child Development Programme through two tertiary hospitals with specialized child development units. The Child Development Programme aims to support and prepare children with developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential in the appropriate educational stream. Singapore adopts a mixed health-care financing system with multiple tiers of protection to ensure no Singaporean is denied access to appropriate care. In addition to the basic health-care tiers which cover subsidies and insurance

²¹ Information on the Masterplan available at <http://www.mcys.gov.sg/enablingmasterplan/MainReport.html>.

²² <http://www.fairemployment.sg/assets/files/Publications/Open%20Door%20Fund%20Handbook.pdf>.

for all citizens, EldersShield, an affordable severe disability insurance scheme which provides basic financial protection to those who need long-term care, especially during old age, is available to guard against the financial risks involved.

106. To protect and promote the rights of women with mental incapacity, under the Mental Capacity Act, the donees who are authorized to make decisions on their behalf are not allowed to make decisions concerning certain health issues such as sexual sterilization, the termination of pregnancy, registering or withdrawing an objection under the Human Organ Transplant Act, making or revoking an advance medical directive under the Advance Medical Directive Act, or the carrying out or continuation of life-sustaining treatment or any other treatment that a person providing health care reasonably believes is necessary to prevent a serious deterioration in the condition of the person lacking capacity.

107. All children, regardless of gender and including those with disabilities or special needs, have access to quality education in Singapore, achieved through fee subsidy schemes and various outreach efforts. MOE dedicated S\$ 15 million to deploy special needs officers into mainstream schools to support children with dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders from 2005 to 2010. Today, almost all children with special needs attend either special education or mainstream schools. There are very few — eight in the 2010 Primary One cohort — who did not do so, due to very severe disabilities or medical conditions. Such cases are monitored, and if necessary reviewed for the need for other interventions. The aim is to allow children with disabilities to enjoy a more customized education system to cater to their special needs, which enables them to obtain the best educational support possible. This flexibility requires them to be exempted from the Compulsory Education system which imposes a standard education curriculum for children.

108. Singapore has instituted compulsory education firstly to provide young Singaporeans with a foundation for life-long learning, and secondly, to enhance national identity and social cohesion through a common educational experience in national schools. In Singapore's context, compulsory education is defined as education in national schools. Singapore respects the rights of non-citizen children to attend either a national or non-national school. As such, Singapore does not have plans for the Compulsory Education Act to be extended to non-citizen children.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 30 of the list of issues

109. Given its geographical size, dense population and limited land and natural resources, Singapore has tight immigration policies to keep the population size manageable. While Singapore is not in a position to accept persons seeking political asylum or refugee status, we may, however, assist them by providing humanitarian assistance, so that they can depart for a third country. Singapore respects the principle of non-refoulement in a refugee context.

110. Singapore has a comprehensive set of legislative, administrative and educational measures to protect foreign domestic workers. Our framework operates on the basis of three key principles. First, the well-being and basic rights of foreign domestic workers are protected by laws which are effectively enforced. Second, foreign domestic workers and employers should be made aware of their employment rights and responsibilities and the freedom to negotiate a fair and enforceable contract of employment. Third, there should be open avenues for foreign domestic workers to raise issues with the authorities should their rights be infringed.

Information on foreign domestic workers can be found at paragraphs 11.28-11.56 of our fourth report.

111. Singapore regularly reviews the foreign worker management framework to enhance the protection and well-being of all foreign domestic workers in Singapore. Following our fourth report, the Government raised the minimum medical insurance coverage for all foreign workers, including foreign domestic workers, from S\$ 5,000 to S\$ 15,000 a year with effect from January 2010. This amount will cover 98 per cent of hospital bills incurred by foreign workers. MOM recently reviewed the employment agency regulatory framework to weed out unlicensed players from the industry and raise the professional standards of employment agencies that place foreign domestic workers.

112. Officers in the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority and other law enforcement officials are trained in handling female suspects or victims of crime and where gender sensitive issues are involved, strict laws and guidelines must be adhered to. The officers are also trained to provide the necessary assistance to women in need to ensure their well-being, in particular women who are minors, pregnant, those with disabilities and those who require special medical attention. Such assistance is equally applicable to female refugees, asylum-seekers and migrant women.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 31 of the list of issues

113. The principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, regardless of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. All persons in Singapore are entitled to the equal protection of the law, and have equal access to basic resources such as education, housing and health care. Like heterosexuals, homosexuals are free to lead their lives and pursue their social activities. Gay groups have held public discussions and published websites, and there are films and plays on gay themes and gay bars and clubs in Singapore.

114. Singapore remains, by and large, a conservative society, and homosexuality does not represent mainstream society in Singapore. The Government strives to maintain a balance, to uphold a stable society with traditional, heterosexual family values, but with space for homosexuals to live their lives and contribute to society.

115. As regards employment, homosexuals work in all sectors, all across the economy, in the public sector as well. Besides the adoption of fair employment practices promoted by TAFEP, Singapore's employment legislation provides recourse for employees who feel they have been unfairly dismissed, including on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity and they have recourse to appeal to the Minister for Manpower for reinstatement to their former employment.

116. There have been public forums where Singaporeans have debated and discussed the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, there are multiple feedback channels, including the mass media and Internet platforms, for the public to make their voices heard and their concerns known to policymakers. These platforms allow for open exchanges and help create awareness of different viewpoints. The Singapore Government will continuously review its policies in order to maintain a balance between the different viewpoints and the needs of its people.

Optional Protocol

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 32 of the list of issues

117. The Singapore Government is pleased to inform the Committee that Singapore ratified the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on 20 August 2010.

118. The Singapore Government has given further consideration to the question of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Optional Protocol will not be ratified at this time. The Government notes that the Optional Protocol serves to strengthen the implementation of the Convention within the jurisdiction of each State Party by giving the Committee the competence to receive and consider communications submitted in accordance with article 2 of the Protocol. In Singapore, there are existing mechanisms to address individual complaints of gender discrimination. These mechanisms are not limited to legal action in court, but include mechanisms within Government agencies, Parliament and the media. The Government has set out detailed information about these mechanisms in response to the Committee's previous query (CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/3/Add.1, pp. 6-7, response to paragraph 5 of the list of issues). The Singapore Government assures the Committee that these mechanisms are kept under continual review to ensure maximum efficacy and compliance with the Convention.

Annex 1

Legislation protecting women in Singapore

Marriage and family life

(a) Women's Charter, which safeguards women's rights in matters relating to marriage and divorce. Parliament passed amendments to the Charter in January this year to enhance the enforcement of maintenance orders and introduce measures to mitigate the impact of divorces.^a

The Women's Charter also protects women against family violence. Section 64 defines "family violence" as the commission of any of the following acts:

- (i) Wilfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place a family member in fear of hurt;
- (ii) Causing hurt to a family member by such act which is known or ought to have been known would result in hurt;
- (iii) Wrongfully confining or restraining a family member against his will; and
- (iv) Causing continual harassment with intent to cause or knowing that it is likely to cause anguish to a family member.

(b) Administration of Muslim Law Act, which governs the rights and personal laws of Muslims in Singapore.

(c) Children and Young Persons Act, which protects girls and young women against abuse, neglect and exploitation. Parliament passed amendments to the Act in January 2011 to enhance the care of children placed in Children and Young Persons Homes and the management of child protection cases. Several penalties were enhanced to align with penalties against similar offences in the Women's Charter, hence ensuring that equal protection is accorded to both boys and girls. These amendments to the CYP Act are expected to come into force in the second half of 2011 and include the following:

- (i) The maximum penalty for sexual exploitation of a child or young person (section 7) will be raised from 2 to 5 years' imprisonment for the first conviction, and from 4 to 7 years' imprisonment for the second or subsequent conviction, and/or a maximum fine of S\$ 10,000 (previously S\$ 5,000) for the first conviction and S\$ 20,000 (previously S\$ 10,000) for the second or subsequent conviction;
- (ii) For the unlawful transfer of possession, custody or control of a child (section 12), the maximum penalty will be raised from imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or to both; and
- (iii) For the importation of the child or young person (section 13), the maximum penalty will be raised from 4 to 5 years' imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of S\$ 10,000.

^a More information may be found at the website at <http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/IssuesTopics/WomenCelebratingWomen/TheWomensCharter.aspx>.

(d) Maintenance of Parents Act, which provides recourse for the elderly who are unable to maintain themselves financially to obtain financial maintenance from their children. Parliament passed amendments to the Act in November 2010 to improve on measures to encourage and enhance effectiveness of conciliation, improve payment and enforcement of maintenance orders, and streamline processes.^b

(e) Adoption of Children Act, which stipulates the conditions under which a person may adopt an infant.

(f) Guardianship of Infants Act, which gives both the mother and father equal rights to apply to the court on any matter affecting an infant.

(g) Income Tax Act, which allows working women to claim reliefs (including Working Mother's Child Relief, Grandparent Caregiver Relief and Foreign Maid Levy Relief) to encourage them to remain in the workforce. With effect from Year of Assessment 2010, tax-paying wives who are breadwinners will be allowed to claim a tax relief of \$2,000, similar to the scheme for husbands. Accordingly, "wife relief" has been renamed as "spouse relief".^c

(h) Central Provident Fund (CPF) Act, which facilitates the smooth and equitable distribution of CPF monies arising from the division of matrimonial assets by enhancing the powers of the Court, under certain circumstances, to order the immediate transfer of CPF monies to the CPF account of the ex-spouse, provide for the immediate transfer of property to the ex-spouse, and provide for the immediate transfer of CPF investments to the ex-spouse.

(i) Children Development Co-Savings Act, which assists parents in the development of their children through the establishment of a Child Development Co-Savings Scheme ("the Scheme"). The Scheme facilitates the making of financial provision by or on behalf of parents who wish to save for their children's childcare, preschool and medical needs through Child Development Accounts (CDAs), where the Government will match dollar-to-dollar savings made by the parents subject to a cap. With effect from the second quarter of 2011, the Scheme will also allow for the matrimonial assets divided between parents who have divorced, separated or had their marriages annulled, to be transferred into the child's CDA, and enable the provision of cash grants made by the Government from time to time for the development of children to be deposited into the CDAs. To further enhance family-friendly initiatives, amendments to the Act were made with effect from 31 October 2008 to augment the various leave schemes, including extending maternity leave from 12 to 16 weeks.

General

(j) Penal Code, which covers criminal offences in Singapore, including sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking and prostitution;

Chapter XVI of the Penal Code also criminalizes acts affecting the human body i.e. those that cause death and physical harm, including grievous hurt, assault,

^b More information may be found on the website at <http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/MCYSNews/AmendmentstoMPAPassed.aspx>.

^c More information may be found at the website at <http://www.guidemesingapore.com/taxation/reports/singapore-tax-amendments>.

sexual offences and wrongful confinement. Although the majority of the Penal Code offences are not gender-specific, they supplement the provisions in the Women's Charter to cover a range of acts that constitute violence against women, be they committed in a familial setting by perpetrators known to the victims, or committed with fraudulent and criminal intent.

(k) Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act, which prohibits behaviour likely to cause harassment.

(l) Evidence Act and Criminal Procedure Code 2010 (CPC), which, with the court's leave allow witnesses below the age of 16 years, to give evidence through a live video or live television link in civil and criminal cases respectively, thereby making it less intimidating for young girls to testify.

The CPC provides the regulatory framework for criminal investigations, trials and appeals, and other ancillary matters. The CPC was amended in January 2011 to enhance the ability of the SPF to identify, investigate and secure evidence to prosecute traffickers. The amendments, which came into effect on 2 January 2011, included:

(i) Expanding the powers of police officers to enter and search for wrongfully confined persons (previously only police officers of rank inspector and above could do so); and

(ii) The power to seize and prohibit disposal of evidence which is believed will be removed or disposed (previously police could only seize items believed to be stolen).

(m) Parliamentary Elections Act, which supports the rights of men and women to vote at the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. Similarly, the qualifications of a candidate to be elected are applicable to both genders.

Employment

(n) Employment Act, Employment of Foreign Manpower Act and Employment Agencies Act, which stipulate terms and conditions of employment, and regulate and stipulate the requirements of employment agencies, which include educating employers on their obligations for the welfare of foreign domestic workers; to raise the standard of recruitment practices in Singapore and minimize abuses and malpractices, a new employment agency regulatory framework under the Employment Agencies Act was put in place in April 2011. Any person who performs employment agency work in any licensed employment agency will need to be registered with MOM for higher accountability and oversight of their actions. Errant agencies will face deterrent penalties for abuses and malpractices.

(o) Work Injury Compensation Act (previously called the Workmen's Compensation Act), which enables an employee to claim for compensation in a work-related accident regardless of their level of earnings. Unlike the Workmen's Compensation Act which covers all manual workers and non-manual workers with monthly earnings of S\$ 1,600 and below, the Work Injury Compensation Act covers all employees in general, whether they are manual or non-manual workers and regardless of their level of earnings.

(p) Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, which allows executives who are not employed in senior management positions and who are not performing such

roles to be represented by recognized trade unions on an individual basis on specific issues relating to retrenchment benefits, dismissal and breach of contracts of employment. With effect from 1 February 2011, the monthly basic salary cap for professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) to have access to MOM's adjudication process through the Labour Court to settle salary disputes has been increased from S\$ 2,500 to S\$ 4,500. This will potentially cover about half (or about 500,000) of the PMEs in the workforce.

(q) Retirement Age Act, which encourages workers to continue working beyond the age of 62. The Retirement and Re-employment Act has been enacted to take effect from 1 January 2012 to enable more people to continue working beyond the current statutory retirement age of 62, up to 65 in the first instance and, later, up to 67. This Act will provide opportunities for workers who are willing and able to continue working to do so beyond retirement. It will also provide flexibility to facilitate employers to retain their older workers beyond retirement.

Health

(r) Mental Capacity Act, which protects vulnerable adults from family violence. It criminalizes the ill treatment and wilful neglect of individuals who are mentally incapacitated. It also empowers those who may, in the future, lose the capacity to make decisions in the best of interests for himself or herself.

Education

(s) Compulsory Education Act, which ensures that every child has an equal opportunity in education in order to develop his/her potential to the fullest.

Media

(t) Undesirable Publications Act, which prohibits the importation, distribution or reproduction of undesirable publications including lewd, obscene, immoral and undesirable publications.

Annex 2

Statistics on rape and outrage of modesty offences

<i>Offence</i>	<i>Year</i>							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rape	128	110	103	124	118	129	167	202
– Rape cases involving culprits known to the victims	122	102	96	123	113	121	154	195
Outrage of modesty	1 099	1 082	1 096	1 308	1 280	1 339	1 236	1 273

Annex 3

Median Monthly Basic and Gross Wages of Full-Time Locals by Selected Occupation and Gender in All Industries, as at June 2009^d

Occupation	Male			Female		
	Number Covered	Basic Median	Gross Median	Number Covered	Basic Median	Gross Median
1 Managers	24 121	6 330	6 720	15 177	5 650	5 800
2 Professionals	22 459	4 207	4 509	11 485	4 000	4 105
3 Associate Professionals and Technicians	28 427	2 559	3 000	28 585	2 749	2 870
4 Clerical Workers	7 745	1 770	1 980	22 101	1 800	1 900
5 Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	11 180	1 371	1 790	11 628	1 320	1 783
6 Agricultural and Fishery Workers	108	1 550	1 665	11	1 600	1 825
7 Production Craftsmen and Related Workers	8 426	1 863	2 209	767	1 150	1 500
8 Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	9 852	1 600	2 095	4 262	952	1 266
9 Cleaners, Labourers and Related Workers	7 894	1 006	1 154	7 168	800	850

Source: Occupational Wage Survey, MOM.

^d Note:

1. Data pertain to a sample of private sector establishments each with at least 25 employees.
2. Monthly Basic Wage refers to the basic pay before deductions of the employee's CPF contributions and personal income tax. It excludes employer's CPF contributions, bonuses, overtime payments, commissions, allowances (on shift, food, housing, transport, etc.), service points (for employees in the hotel and catering business), other monetary payments and payments-in-kind.
3. Monthly Gross Wage refers to remuneration received by an employee before deductions of the employee's CPF contributions and personal income tax. It includes overtime payments, commissions, allowances (e.g. shift, food, housing and transport), service points and other regular cash payments; but excludes employer's CPF contributions, bonuses, productivity or incentive bonuses, other lump sum payments and payments-in-kind.
4. Median Wage refers to the wage at which one half of the employees earn below that amount.