



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

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention**

Seventh periodic report of States parties due in 2015

Paraguay**

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A. Introduction

1. Pursuant to article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it ratified in 1986, the Republic of Paraguay hereby submits its seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention. The report focuses on the main concerns and recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its fiftieth session in 2011. Paraguay presents the progress achieved in the area of women's rights in the period 2011-2015, and the related challenges addressed.

2. Firstly, with regard to the positive aspects praised by the Committee, the current Government has adopted the "Paraguay 2030" national development plan, which provides for equal opportunities for women and men as a cross-cutting issue and specific objective for the reduction of extreme poverty. The gender perspective has thus been mainstreamed into all priority activities of the Government.

3. In 2012, Act No. 4675 created the Ministry for Women's Affairs in accordance with general recommendation No. 6, paragraph 1(a), and the Committee's recommendations to Paraguay. The result has been a greater ability to influence the Executive and other State bodies, including the Social Affairs Office, through political dialogue; and mainstreaming of gender into the main plans of the Government. The new structure is conducive to more effective action for women's economic and political empowerment, over and above support for activities against gender-based violence and trafficking in women. Administratively, the Ministry for Women's Affairs cooperates directly with the Ministry of Finance in the preparation and execution of the budget. Although allocations have not increased, services are provided on a sustainable basis, as funding has shifted from external cooperation sources to the treasury's own resources. The new Ministry's central offices in the capital, two shelters and four regional centres in the interior of the country are fully operational. A directorate for gender affairs has been created in the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare. Gender mechanisms have been set up in other bodies, including the National Secretariat for Housing and Habitat, the Secretariat for Social Action, the National Secretariat for Sport, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs and the Armed Forces.

4. The Ministry for Women's Affairs implements the Paraguayan Standard Model of Internal Control (MECIP), currently at the stage where technical working groups are being strengthened through the development of human potential, the preparation of an institutional strategic plan for the period 2014-2018, ethical agreements and commitments, a good governance protocol, the implementation of a process-based management model, work on the organizational structure, and an assessment of the Ministry's internal oversight system. Along the same lines, and with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS), a training course on a participatory gender assessment methodology has been organized for decision-makers and other officials of the institution, with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security and the Public Prosecution Service. As part of a strategy for compiling, disseminating and supplying information to the general public, the Ministry for Women's Affairs has launched an official website and included computer tools such as social media (Facebook and Twitter).

5. In order to strengthen its new institutional role, the Ministry for Women's Affairs has drawn up a strategic institutional plan for 2014-2018, which provides

comprehensive guidance for activities that mainstream a gender perspective into public and private entities and promote actual and effective equality between women and men, women's empowerment and the prevention, prosecution and elimination of gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls.

6. Since the Government took office for the period 2013-2018 and launched a government plan with clear guidelines on equal opportunities and with a vision in which women play a central role through a new institutional hierarchy governing gender policies, major advances have been made in the sectors of health, education, the prevention of violence, access to credit, rural women's participation, access to housing, assistance for women through social and conditional transfer programmes aimed at poverty reduction, and women's participation in electoral processes. True to its mission, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has provided key support for public policy preparation, institution-building, inter-institutional linkages and cooperation with civil society, in addition to foreign cooperation bodies acting in accordance with their mandates on gender equality and women's advancement. In 2015, research was conducted, and material on gender equality and the main shortcomings in Paraguay was published, as well as an analysis of women's participation in electoral politics in Paraguay.

7. The drafting of the seventh national report was the responsibility of the Ministry for Women's Affairs, assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the human rights network of the Government, and the gender and human rights mechanisms of the legislature and the judiciary, as well as by public discussions undertaken through civil-society organizations for women, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 10. The framework used has consisted of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's concerns and recommendations, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the report and constructive dialogue on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 2015, and the recent update of the common core document.

8. This report is organized by articles of the Convention and the Committee's main concerns and recommendations.

9. Pursuant to the Committee's encouragement to transmit the concluding observations to all relevant ministries, to both chambers of parliament and to the judiciary, the following measures have been taken: distribution to the highest authorities of the three branches of government; publication in December 2013 of the recommendations addressed by the United Nations to Paraguay, through cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women and the Ministry for Women's Affairs; and ongoing updates to the national system for monitoring compliance with international recommendations (SIMORE), including those of the Committee.

Part I**Legal protection of women's rights.****Appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women****Articles 1-3**

10. In reference to the recommendations set out in paragraph 13 of the concluding observations and with a view to ongoing alignment of legislation with the constitutional precepts of gender equality, the National Congress announces the adoption and promulgation of the following legislation: Act No. 4313/11 on budget allocations to the programmes for reproductive health and childbirth kit distribution of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare; Act No. 4628/12 amending article 229 of Act No. 1160/1997 on the Criminal Code, as amended by Act No. 3440/08; Act No. 4686/12 regularizing the situation of undocumented foreign migrants; Act No. 4744/12 incorporating vaccination against the human papilloma virus into the immunization programme of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare; Act No. 4616/12 providing for special seating to be reserved for persons with a physical or motor disability; Act No. 4633/12 to combat harassment in public and private educational establishments; Act No. 4684/12 declaring 12 April as National Breast Cancer Day ; Act No. 4720/12 establishing the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Act No. 4788/12, the Comprehensive Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons; Act No. 4819/2012 ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers; Act No. 4933/2013 authorizing voluntary affiliation of self-employed workers, employers, homemakers and domestic workers with the social insurance, retirement and pension fund of the Social Security Institute; Act No. 5344/2014 establishing maternity leave for women in elected positions; Act No. 5378/2014 amending article 229 of Act No. 1160/97 on the Criminal Code, as amended by Act No. 4628/12, and stipulating deprivation of liberty for one to six years for taking advantage of family relations or cohabitation to exercise physical or mental violence against another person, whether cohabitant or not; Act No. 5415/15 establishing the Child Maintenance Arrears Register (REDAM); Act No. 5419/15 amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 on the Civil Code to raise the age of consent to marriage; Act No. 5407/15 on domestic labour; Act No. 5446/15 on public policies regarding rural women; and Act No. 5508 on the promotion and protection of motherhood and support for breastfeeding. (See annex 1)

11. The National Congress is currently examining bills on the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence; on sexual, reproductive, maternal and perinatal health; amending article 32(r) of Act No. 834/96 of the Paraguayan electoral code to increase women's political participation; a bill establishing incentives for Paraguayan women's participation in politics; a bill on support for women heads of household; and a bill establishing a national public safety system. In connection with a bill on comprehensive protection for women against all forms of violence, a set of meetings, inter-agency workshops and social and departmental forums has been launched to make up for delays, due to a lack of sufficient civil-society participation, in the consideration of another similar bill.

12. The Ministry of Justice adopted a protocol to facilitate access to justice for persons with psychosocial disabilities (Decision No. 224/15) and protocols for

treatment of persons with disabilities deprived of liberty (Decision No.731/15), trans persons deprived of liberty (Decision No. 744/15), aliens deprived of liberty (Decision No. 789/15) and older persons deprived of liberty (Decision No. 790/15).

13. The Ministry has also adopted a national programme for specific assistance to women deprived of liberty (Decision No. 168/15), which provides for an inter-agency workshop to formulate strategic public policies with a human rights perspective for such women, undertake activities designed to improve the conditions of incarceration of women, organize training for prison personnel and carry out relevant activities based on a gender and human rights approach.

14. The Ministry for Women's Affairs has promoted national and regional linkages to guide the activities of various cooperating institutions towards optimizing the provision of services and taking comprehensive action by means of the following legal tools: a regional protocol for gender-sensitive investigations into intra-family offences involving violence against women, a regional protocol for comprehensive care for victims of gender-based violence, and institutional coordination mechanisms on gender-based violence.

15. As regards the Committee's recommendation to broaden anti-discrimination legislation, a 2007 bill against all forms of discrimination, accepted by some commissions but rejected by others, was not adopted at the 13 November 2014 meeting and, according to the Senate's decision, the matter was closed. However, it prompted debates in the media and social media, where favourable opinions were countered by more traditional and conservative voices. Equality and non-discrimination have been promoted through the aforementioned enactments on policies for rural women, access of persons with disabilities to employment, and protection of maternity and breastfeeding (in the last case, despite the opinion of employers' representatives that such protection would not be viable and would negatively affect the hiring of women, especially those of reproductive age). As regards the protection of domestic workers, a new enactment reduces the wage gap, raising the minimum wage benchmark from 40 to 60 per cent, limits the working day to eight hours, as is the case for workers in general, and provides for retirement and health care benefits.

16. Under Decree No. 7839/11, the Civil Service Secretariat launched the first public sector equality and non-discrimination plan for 2011-2014, aimed at promoting equality, safeguarding non-discrimination in civil service accessibility, opportunities and careers, and ensuring that the State serves society without discrimination, in line with the country's constitutional mandates, international commitments and legislation.

17. Regarding the Committee's concern that women are not sufficiently aware of the Convention and the Optional Protocol relating to the promotion, protection and respect of their rights, and the recommendation to undertake awareness-raising campaigns targeted at women, the judiciary and legal professionals, it should be noted that the judiciary applies an institutional cross-cutting gender policy approved by the Supreme Court. The relevant institutional website features a justice and gender monitoring centre showing the situation of women in the administration of justice: positions assigned to women, women's participation in public affairs, violence against women based on gender imbalances, women's participation in the economy and access to basic services, the situation of persons deprived of liberty, studies, and user satisfaction reports.

18. The gender monitoring centre of the Supreme Court includes a section for gender-sensitive judicial decisions (interim appeals, decisions and judgements) handed down in the capital and the country's other judicial districts. The resulting corpus of case law contains rulings that confirm compliance with women's rights and will disseminate and share legal advances constituting the country's best practices. Along the same lines, awareness-raising and dissemination activities have included a workshop to validate a gender-sensitive case-law thesaurus; a play entitled "Autopsy", highlighting the negative implications of gender violence for society; a campaign entitled *Decí Igualdad* to promote equality and prevent discrimination against women in the justice system; and a photography contest entitled "For a Paraguay free of violence against women". Highlighting efforts to combat gender violence and femicide, the General Secretariat for Gender Issues of the Judiciary has reproduced the *Zapatos rojos* (red shoes) public art display. Based on a forensics and social assistance assessment, a workshop has been held on the gender perspective in legal forensics in order to promote the considerate treatment of women victims.

19. In connection with a bill on the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence, the National Congress has launched the *#Por Ellas* dissemination and awareness-raising campaign, a series of meetings, inter-agency workshops and social and departmental forums aimed at making up for delays in the consideration of another bill on the same subject, owing to a lack of sufficient civil-society participation. The "More women candidates, better democracy" campaign and the "We are one half, we want parity" campaign are both intended to increase women's participation in politics and positions of power.

20. In 2012, a training event on gender-sensitive planning and budgeting in the institutions of the administration of justice was organized for participants from Paraguay, Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador and Costa Rica. In 2014, the Judicial Secretariat for Gender Issues established a technical commission for supporting criminal justice of the Supreme Court as a replacement for the technical office for the implementation of criminal reform. At the administrative level, a gender perspective and the Guaraní language have been introduced into the judiciary's staff selection and promotion processes and into the handbook of responsibilities and the manual on the rules for leave, transfers and promotions.

21. Paraguay has presented reports on the implementation of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. The latest such report, submitted in May 2014, was an appraisal of the 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (held in 2000). Paraguay has actively participated in the Brasilia Consensus, the Montevideo Consensus, meetings of the presiding officers of sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Women's Affairs of Mercosur (RMAAM), meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (at the United Nations, New York), a forum on the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), and the international forum of the Group of 77 and China on women's proposals for a world order. In 2015, Paraguay participated in the consideration of its fourth periodic report on the implementation

of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the World Economic Forum on Latin America, the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and other regional and international events.

22. In 2000, together with 190 other countries, Paraguay, through the Millennium Declaration, committed itself to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and has submitted to the United Nations periodic progress reports, including an overview of the status of women. At the United Nations summit held in New York in September 2015, the results achieved in certain areas, such as poverty reduction, enhanced basic education coverage and higher immunization rates, were presented, while new challenges were identified in other areas. Paraguay contributed actively to the definition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including goals, targets, indicators and strategies for policies aimed at gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' rights worldwide.

23. In the framework of the third national plan on equal opportunities for men and women for 2008-2017 (PNIO), a series of national documents and plans adopting a gender perspective have been drawn up and implemented. They include a national education plan (2024), a national sexual and reproductive health plan (2009-2013 and 2014-2018), a strategic agrarian framework (2009-2018), a national public safety plan (2013-2018), a strategic economic and social plan (2008-2013) and a national plan of action for the human rights of persons with disabilities (2030).

Appropriate affirmative action measures to modify sociocultural patterns. Measures for the proper appreciation, in family education, of motherhood and women's and men's shared responsibility for the upbringing and development of children

Articles 4 and 5

24. With regard to the recommendation set out in paragraph 17 to take further steps to expand the acceptance of temporary special measures and their application, and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25/2004, it should be noted that the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SENADIS) is implementing a national plan of action on the human rights of persons with disabilities (2030), adopted and validated at the national level, that provides for temporary measures to enhance actual equality for women with disabilities in the areas of education, health care and employment in the face of persisting barriers; for the promotion of compliance with the decree regulating Act No. 4934/13 on the accessibility of the physical environment for persons with disabilities (2015), in cooperation with the private sector, including through a plan to upgrade the transport system, inter alia by ensuring the accessibility of public transport facilities; and for the transcription of the Act into Braille.

25. In response to the Committee's concern, expressed in paragraph 18, over the lack of regulation of the media and the dissemination of stereotypical images of women, including in the country's educational system, the Ministry for Women's Affairs convened the representatives of community radio stations to discuss the role played in social development by their media, as a community education resource. This happened in the framework of a national forum entitled *Ñe' easãi* (word), where the situation of women, their rights and the legislation protecting them were analysed. In 2014, in order to stimulate collective consideration of communication issues, a forum was created for public sector communicators to share their

experience of the design and implementation of awareness-raising campaigns. They constructively reviewed the campaigns of public institutions, identifying the main obstacles and challenges encountered in promoting public communication respectful of human rights from a gender perspective. The role of enterprises in the promotion of a democratic culture and respect for human rights was discussed with entrepreneurs, members of the centre for communication regulation, standards and research (CERNECO); and a basis was established for producing information that highlights the priorities, needs and perspectives of men and women.

26. Through the State Communicators' Team (ECOFE), the Secretariat for Information and Communication (SICOM) carries out sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns concerning violence against women. All State media (the Paraguay TV HD channel, the national AM and FM radio station, the Paraguay news agency, and the San Pedro and Pilar national radio stations) broadcast the campaigns undertaken by public or international organizations in the country. Thus, after appropriate training, the State media and ECOFE are using gender-sensitive language and a non-sexist style. Training in, inter alia, human rights issues and the new policies on communication is provided through the communication directorates of all State institutions.

27. In the framework of the national programme on communication and indigenous peoples, SICOM, the language policy secretariat of the Office of the President and the Ministry for Women's Affairs jointly promote and mainstream the gender perspective through a community information and communication technology action plan with a gender approach, thereby furthering the communication policy for indigenous peoples, upgrading their leadership and enhancing their active participation through training in the use of communication tools.

28. As a strategy for reaching out to target groups, the Ministry for Women's Affairs has formed partnerships with the national media, including the State channel (Paraguay Digital TV HD), which, free of charge, under specific agreements, have supported campaigns and various sensitization, awareness-raising and information advertisements in core, news, daily and special broadcasts.

29. An agreement concluded in 2010 between the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Agricultural Loans Facility (Crédito Agrícola de Habilidadación) for the introduction of innovative loan services designed for women led to the creation of two borrowing facilities, one for "women entrepreneurs", exclusively for women, and one for "young entrepreneurs", for women and men (on a parity basis); and to an inter-agency arrangement, involving six ministries and secretariats of the Office of the President, for using credit transfers from abroad as counterpart funds to secure financing. The initial borrowing facility amounted to 4 billion guaraníes added to a village bank borrowing facility, and 86 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. That arrangement resulted in 27,458 loans (to 21,062 women and 6,396 men) totalling 74,318,637,500 guaraníes as of October 2015.

30. In Paraguay's formal education system, the recovery and preservation of women's identity is viewed as a historical necessity. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Culture has mainstreamed gender equality into the education reform plan and the approved textbooks for basic education (from first to ninth grades), highlighting the identities of men and women and women's role in private and public life, culture and education in various historical periods and the present.

Courses on education and human rights were organized for locally recruited teachers who received training in human rights and gender. Compensatory education and care services were promoted under a programme addressing how people end up on the street, and the street environment. Indigenous education mechanisms support and organize forums and meetings for young indigenous persons in order to promote adolescent participation.

31. In order to promote a culture of gender equality and combine audiovisual tools with non-sexist education, training workshops were organized for teachers and students of 13 secondary schools on “Cinema and gender: use of the cinema in the classroom”, with a view to stimulating school discussions on the illegitimacy of violence and discrimination and proposing alternative forms of behaviour and attitudes respectful of the human rights, equality and dignity of all.

32. As a way of highlighting and raising awareness of violence and discrimination against women, the fourth *Ta'anga Kyre'y* national short-film contest, dedicated to domestic violence and gender discrimination was held as part of the “Eighteenth International Festival of Film, Art and Culture” dedicated to “Women in the Cinema” (Spanish Cultural Centre — El Cabildo Cultural Centre).

Violence against women

33. In light of general recommendation No. 19, and with a view to raising awareness of women's rights and reducing discrimination, communication campaigns such as the following were carried out in the period 2011-2015. “Combating sexual harassment in the civil service” (2011), which was accompanied by five handbooks aimed at raising awareness of civil servants' rights and obligations: 1. Handling sexual and workplace harassment cases, 2. Equality and non-discrimination, 3. Joint family responsibilities, 4. Collective agreements on working conditions, and 5. Social dialogue; “Let's live a life free from violence” (2011; “Zero abuse in Paraguay”, in which the leaders were young people resolved to combat violence. It was designed to raise awareness of gender-based violence among young people in particular and society in general, and offered a common message for the region (2011); “Call 137, women's helpline”, which included some of the excuses that women give to rationalize violence and a description of the services provided by the Ministry for Women's Affairs (2011); “You have rights”, which aimed to increase public awareness of and respect for domestic workers' rights (2012); “False promises are a fact, human trafficking too”, which highlighted the use of hiring advertisements as a human trafficking ploy with a view to the sexual exploitation of women (2012); “Turn off violence against women”, which sent information on the services provided through the “Call 137, women's helpline” to women and men with their water bills (2012); *Ehechakuaáke* (be aware), “Open your eyes, report violence against women”, which aimed to change men's attitudes by encouraging them to reject and report violence against women (2012); “Ana” campaign, “Let's speak frankly about violence against adolescents and young people” (*Nãomgetàkena umimbae'vaieta ojejavova mitakuña'i ha mitãkuñarehe*) (2011); “Anita” campaign, which addressed the issue of gender-based violence (2013); “Teacher Ana's letters: Tell me your story and help me to change mine” (*Emombe'únachéve nerembihesakue ha chepytyvõtamoambue che rembihasa*); the last three campaigns targeted the education sector (nursery, primary and secondary education and all categories of teachers); “Not me, not you, not her” (2014); “A holiday period without violence against women” (2014); “Harassment in the street

is a form of violence against women” (2015); “Dating without violence”, which aimed to help young people form healthy relationships and to change patriarchal mentalities (2015). With European Union support, a survey on gender-based domestic violence was carried out in order to compile information on domestic violence that could be compared with findings in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The survey data was collected in November 2013 and the results were presented in 2014.

34. In 2015, the Ministry for Women’s Affairs, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), launched the *Ciudad Mujer* (women’s city) project to help to improve women’s quality of life by providing essential services in comprehensive care centres. The first *Ciudad Mujer* centre will be established in the city of Villa Elisa, Central department, and is expected to open and begin to operate in 2017. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of the Interior have all pledged their support. The 2015-2020 national plan for the prevention of, care in relation to, protection from and monitoring of violence against women is being implemented and strengthened and in that regard partnership agreements have been reached with various sectors to implement policies, plans and programmes for mainstreaming the subject in State institutions and civil society organizations.

35. In the framework of the regional programme to combat violence against women in Latin America (ComVoMujer), the Ministry for Women’s Affairs, in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation, is implementing a programme to confer the “safe enterprise, free of violence and discrimination against women” label upon businesses whose efforts to promote non-discrimination and non-violence against women have had results in the enterprise, in the local community or at the national or international levels. The initiative was institutionalized through Decision No. 241/15. A survey on the cost to business of violence against women in Paraguay has been carried out on the basis of a sample of 7,457 workers in 25 medium-sized and large manufacturing, commercial and service firms in four cities.

36. The Public Defence Service is a member of the Inter-Agency Board for Prevention, Care, Follow-up and Protection of Women Victims of Violence, within the framework of which the 2015-2020 national plan on combating violence against women was formulated. During the period 2011-2015, the Service organized seminars to promote access to justice for vulnerable persons and to mainstream the gender perspective throughout the civil service. In 2013, it issued Decision No. 987/13 instructing public defenders to require the application of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). In 2015, a seminar on the Bangkok Rules was organized to promote their use in the area of responsibility of the Service, which also contributed to the drafting of a regional manual of good practices regarding women deprived of liberty.

37. In September 2014, the National Congress, through the Commission on Social Equity and Gender, organized an international seminar on new and old forms of violence against women in Paraguay, during which the *#Por Ellas* campaign to promote the drafting of a law on comprehensive protection for women was

presented. The initiative is supported by the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Coalition to End Violence against Women and more than 50 civil society organizations. The campaign was officially launched in October 2014. In Declaration No. 186 of 27 November 2014, the Chamber of Deputies declared the campaign to be in the national interest and urged State institutions and media to publicize it.

38. With regard to the National Police, dedicated divisions receive complaints of violence against women, children and adolescents in 15 specialized police stations that have been set up in various departments of the country. Specialized care services for women experiencing violence are available in Asunción and four departments. In 2015, the National Police promoted the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime using the slogan "Report trafficking. Don't be an accomplice".

39. The Attorney General's Office issued General Instruction No. 9/2011, a binding instrument, on the procedures to be followed for investigating the offences of family violence and gender-based violence to guide all of the country's prosecutors and ensure effective and efficient criminal inquiries by assistant prosecutors, deputy prosecutors, and directors, chiefs, coordinators and officials of jurisdictional and administrative authorities. Instruction No. 9/2015 lays down procedures for requesting the Victim Support Centre of the Attorney General's Office to take action. The centre provides assistance during criminal proceedings, including public oral proceedings, and to date has assisted 796 persons affected by domestic violence. The Public Prosecution Service has forensic experts who carry out medical examinations necessary for the investigation.

40. The Public Prosecution Service has opened a Complaints Bureau in the Medical Emergency Centre so that victims of sexual abuse, sexual coercion and domestic violence can undergo medical examinations and lodge complaints in one and the same place.

41. The Supreme Court of Justice has opened an out-of-hours office that receives complaints relating to domestic violence. Once entered in the system, complaints are immediately referred to the duty magistrate's court, which rotates on a weekly basis according to a schedule established by the Supreme Court of Justice.

42. In 2015, new facilities were set up in the Ministry for Women's Affairs that offer greater privacy, integration of services and efficiency in the areas of statistics, admission, psychological support and legal advice, with the aim of establishing a special procedure characterized by confidentiality, privacy and speed. The Women's Support Service (SEDAMUR) provides comprehensive care, information and advice to women in situations of violence.

43. Two temporary shelters have been set up to provide protection and refuge to women victims of violence in extremely difficult situations and their children. The women receive free comprehensive care from a multidisciplinary team of social workers, psychologists and lawyers (in the period November 2010-July 2015, 229 women and 334 children were given accommodation). In 2015, the Asunción municipal authorities opened the first temporary shelter for women victims of domestic violence, which has capacity for 50 women and their children. Assistance

includes individualized care from professionals who provide support, guidance, legal advice and training.

44. Between its launch in November 2011 and July 2015, “Call 137, women’s helpline” received a total of 41,262 calls. It provides national coverage on a 24-hour basis, including weekends and public holidays, and offers clear and effective advice to women experiencing domestic or intra-family violence.

45. In response to the concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 20 over the need to train medical personnel further in order to provide appropriate care for women facing violence, and to create a coordinated system for collecting data on gender-based violence, the Ministry for Women’s Affairs is establishing a process for delivering ongoing training in gender and violence issues to professionals and students of the Andrés Barbero Institute at Asunción National University, with a view to building technical capacity and training trainers. The same process has been launched for the professional nursing course of the same faculty’s facilities in the San Estanislao district, San Pedro department. The Psychological Assistance Service (SAP), a unremunerated internship programme for psychology students in the Faculty of Philosophy at Asunción National University, has been implemented in the framework of the “Call 137, women’s helpline” initiative. Tools developed for comprehensive care and investigation include the regional protocol of comprehensive care for victims of gender-based violence and institutional coordination mechanisms regarding gender-based violence. Since 2011, approximately 2,200 officials of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare have received training.

46. In view of the Committee’s concern over the lack of a coordinated and coherent system for collecting data on gender-based violence, the Single Registry of Services Provided to Victims of Gender-based Violence (RUVIG) has been put into operation, within the framework of which the Ministry for Women’s Affairs is implementing the “SI SEDAMUR” programme. The system serves to ensure the exchange of information on services rendered between agencies and to validate the quality of institutional records so as to supply appropriate data for the calculation of relevant indicators already agreed upon with national and international organizations and for the creation of new indicators for formulating prevention policies and plans. The results of the second survey on victimization and public security from a gender perspective are being analysed. There is also the National Observatory on Security and Citizen Coexistence, a technical body of the Technical Sub-Unit according to Decision No. 122 of 3 April 2013. The Technical Sub-Unit for the regional system of standardized indicators on peaceful coexistence and citizen security, a cooperation project, functions within the Ministry for Women’s Affairs, which collaborates with the Ministry of the Interior (which is in charge of the Unit), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Works, the Technical Planning Secretariat, the National Police, the Public Prosecution Service, the judiciary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, the National Antidrug Secretariat and the Ministry of Justice.

Measures to eliminate trafficking in women

Article 6

47. Taking into consideration the Committee’s recommendations, in 2012 Paraguay adopted Act No. 4788/12, which aims at preventing and punishing human

trafficking in all its manifestations, whether perpetrated on national territory or abroad. A further aim is to protect and assist victims by strengthening government action against such criminal conduct. Within the framework of that Act, the 2010-2019 National Policy to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in the Republic of Paraguay was launched through Decree No. 8309/2012 and the 2014-2018 national plan to prevent and combat human trafficking was drawn up on a participatory basis in Asunción and the country's departments. These instruments and tools are the framework for action to prevent and punish human trafficking and include comprehensive care for the victims on the part of all relevant State institutions. A proposal to create, pursuant to the above Act, a national investment fund to prevent human trafficking and care for the victims has been presented and incorporated into the draft budget for 2016. The fund is intended to finance activities to prevent human trafficking and provide comprehensive care under the purview of the relevant inter-agency board.

48. In order to address the complexities of trafficking in women and girls, the Ministry for Women's Affairs, as a member of the Inter-Agency Board on Human Trafficking, is focusing on the implementation of a reintegration programme and a shelter for women, children and adolescents as ways to provide immediate support in terms of accommodation, food, health care, comprehensive assistance and access to available resources, with a view to facilitating the process of integration and social inclusion under equal and discrimination-free conditions. In addition, a multidisciplinary team of, inter alia, psychologists, lawyers and social workers at a referral centre works directly with victims to provide comprehensive support and, during the final stage, help them formulate a life plan.

49. Departmental and district inter-agency coordination boards have been formed in nine of the country's departments. The Public Prosecution Service has put in place measures to protect witnesses, victims, justice officials and others participating in criminal proceedings and is creating a directorate with three technical departments to provide comprehensive and multidisciplinary support to victims from a victimological perspective and facilitate investigations. It has also issued instructions on how to approach the victims for prosecutors and technical departments of the specialized unit on combating human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Procedures for investigating cases of domestic or gender-based violence are also being established.

50. In October 2015, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents inaugurated the Rosa Virginia shelter, which deals specifically with girl and female adolescent victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation. The Secretariat implements and finances the "Dignity for girl and adolescent victims of human trafficking" project, which aims to facilitate the social and family reintegration of victims at a temporary, trusted and safe shelter facility through the provision of comprehensive support consisting in victim defence and emotional recovery and in the promotion of their rights in a respectful, effective and credible manner. An arrangement, supplementary to an existing agreement, was reached with the Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Buen Pastor congregation to strengthen the national system for comprehensive protection and policies on childhood and adolescence and assist in the running of the shelter so as to ensure appropriate suitable provisions throughout their stay.

51. When the status of the Secretariat for Women of the Office of the President of the Republic was raised to ministerial level and it became the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the body managing its programme to combat human trafficking became a Directorate General. It has organized awareness-raising days for the staff of the prosecution, education, police and tourism services, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the armed forces and the social action authorities in Asunción and in the rest of the country, including the Chaco region. International seminars have taken place, which have been attended by representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. Partnerships have been formed with the Organization of American States, the International Organization for Migration, ILO, IDB, and the Andean Development Corporation. The "False promises are a fact, human trafficking too" and "MERCOSUR free of trafficking in women" awareness-raising campaigns were launched and implemented and a documentary entitled "New Girls 24 Hours" was produced. The National Post Office Service issued stamps visually highlighting the scourge in question. A manual of care for human trafficking victims has been drawn up, offering improved models for the relevant activities. The information gathered by the Gender Observatory of the Directorate General of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses has been analysed, and a regional diagnostic study on trafficking women for sexual exploitation has been carried out.

52. In the border commissions coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gender committees have been set up and an approach to the trafficking of women and girls has been introduced, with a view in particular to encouraging migration control, the identification of victims and the establishment of bilateral networks with other countries to provide care and take action.

Part II. Measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the country's political and public life

Article 7

53. With regard to, and in fulfilment of, the observation in paragraph 24, in which the Committee expresses concern over women's limited presence and participation in the political and public life of the country, the Ministry for Women's Affairs has established an office responsible for women's promotion and participation. The office aims to enhance women's political involvement in decision-making, including social participation and the participation of indigenous women. Currently, in coordination with the Superior Court of Electoral Justice and in cooperation with UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, political dialogue and public campaigns are being promoted with a view to drawing up a programme of work to boost women's participation in elected office and positions of power. In collaboration with women's civil society organizations, awareness-raising activities and public consultations are being organized on the draft bill on political parity, and the "We are one half, we want parity" and "More women, better democracy" campaigns are being run in the context of the 2015 municipal elections and, in particular, the 2018 general elections. An agenda for women's political equality was presented to the media on 27 October 2015, while the submission of the draft bill on parity to the National Congress has been planned for 8 March 2016.

54. In response to the above observation and the recommendation in paragraph 35 (a) concerning “Disadvantaged groups of women” to adopt temporary special measures to accelerate the realization of the rights of indigenous women, round tables have been organized between indigenous women, the central Government, local government, civil society and indigenous and cooperating organizations in order to promote political participation and empowerment, and thematic round tables and discussions have been held in order to compile a list of proposals on which to work.

55. The Decision declaring the campaigns “More women, better democracy” and “We are one half, we want parity” to be of national and social interest is aimed at disseminating and raising awareness of the extremely important efforts of the participating entities to promote women’s political participation. The goal of the campaigns is to strengthen women’s involvement in public life and to ensure that they occupy half of elected offices and government and decision-making positions.

56. Article 32 (r) of the Electoral Code, adopted under Act No. 834/96, establishes a minimum 20 per cent quota for women on national electoral lists, without imposing any order of precedence in the list. However, in the period under consideration, some political parties established a minimum percentage higher than the above norm and, in some cases, parity. Parity has been stipulated by the following parties: Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos (UNACE), Partido Revolucionario Febrerista (PRF), Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo (PMAS), Partido Independiente en Acción (PIA), Partido Frente Amplio (PFA) and Partido de la Participación Ciudadana (PPC).

57. As a result of the general elections for the period 2013-2018, women account for 15 and 20 per cent, respectively, in the Chamber of Deputies (with 12 deputies out of 80) and the Senate (with 9 senators out of 45). This compares with, for both Chambers, 8 per cent in 1993-1998, 10 per cent in 1998-2003 and 13.6 per cent in 2003-2008. Thus, women’s participation in Government has increased slowly, at an average rate of 4 per cent during the above periods.

58. In the current administration (2013-2018), women are in charge of 3 out of 12 ministries (the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for Women’s Affairs) and 5 out of the 19 executive secretariats of ministerial rank attached to the Office of the President of the Republic (the National Secretariat for Housing and Habitat, the National Secretariat for Culture, the National Secretariat for Language Policy, the National Secretariat for Tourism and the Institute of Arts and Crafts). Of the nine Supreme Court members, three are women, a level never before attained, although still some way below parity.

59. In 2013, the Ministry for Women’s Affairs, in cooperation with UN-Women, presented an assessment of the situation of the country’s care policies and/or activities and the strategy for developing a single national policy in that area. As a result, the authorities committed themselves to pursuing a policy aimed at creating a national care system.

60. Despite a slight increase in women’s presence in the National Congress, the percentage of women candidates in departmental multi-member districts is declining. Of the 6,272 candidates vying for 228 departmental board seats for the period 2013-2018, 14 per cent were women. As regards the office of governor, to which a single individual is named, it is clear that the smaller the district and the fewer the seats, the greater women’s exclusion is, since competition within parties is

fiercer to the detriment of women. In this case, of the 222 candidates vying for 17 posts, only 6 per cent were women. At the municipal level, the percentage of women increased slightly for the period 2010-2015: in 238 municipalities, 8 per cent of the candidates elected were women, and throughout the country women were elected to 18.3 per cent of the country's 2,529 municipal council seats, while men were elected to 81.7 per cent. Lastly, 52 per cent of women vote (see annex 2).

61. In relation to mayoral elections for the period 2015-2020, there are 80 women candidates for 250 municipalities and, given the current situation of women, the results are expected to be disappointing. In relation to municipal council members, 10,469 women were chosen to stand as candidates on 15 November 2015. There is therefore a need for an inter-agency process to increase the number of women in elected office and positions of power.

Equality in political and public life at the international level and participation in international organizations

Article 8

62. In reference to the recommendation in paragraph 25 on increasing women's representation in political and public life, at the national level women have been making gradual inroads in the military since the first class of female officers graduated from the Mariscal Francisco Solano López military academy in 2006. However, their presence continues to be mainly visible in the health, administrative and services sectors. Within the National Police, 3,567 women are on active duty and engaged in conflict prevention, management and resolution activities, including in decision-making positions as heads of departments, offices, divisions, sections, and police stations and sub-stations.

63. At the international level, 92 women recruited by the Army, who have taken military observer and team training courses and have joined the Joint Peacekeeping Training Centre (CECOPAZ). A total of 22 women officers and non-commissioned officers have been deployed in mission areas. In the period 2011-2015, 26 women participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations, namely the women of the Paraguayan Multi-Role Engineering Company, deployed to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and those forming part of the fifth Paraguayan Engineering Company, which is currently deployed to Haiti and Cyprus. Women's participation in such activities is increasing and is continuously encouraged by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the United Nations. No female personnel have been assigned by the National Police to peacekeeping operations, to humanitarian assistance or to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

64. The Ministry for Women's Affairs participates in an inter-agency board composed of six ministries, two State secretariats, military and police bodies and training institutions, civil society organizations and international cooperation agencies. The board's activities consist in assessments and training in respect of the scope of the relevant provisions in force, preparation of a national plan of action and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Currently, the board coordinates and advises on activities organized by bodies that have signed an inter-agency agreement for specific cooperation on

implementing the resolution. The material relating to the national plan of action is reproduced with the assistance of UN-Women.

Part III. Equality in education

Article 10

65. In relation to the concerns expressed by the Committee in paragraph 26 and to article 10 (a) and (b) of the Convention, free compulsory nursery, primary and secondary education is guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution and by Act No. 4088/11. The implementation of the National Education Plan 2024 through a strategic institutional agenda aims to provide good-quality education in order to improve conditions for the population as a whole. To that end, resources have been transferred to the educational establishments concerned and their operation has been supported. The provision of sets of school supplies to public sector institutions and the promulgation of Act No. 5210/14 on school feeding and health control constitute progress towards universal education. The *Namyendy Tata* 2011-2024 gender-sensitive public policy on young persons and adults seeks to ensure access, acceptance, cultural suitability, efficiency and equity in education for young people and adults, particularly historically disadvantaged groups, as a public good and a human right. The Ministry for Women's Affairs has prepared gender-sensitive manuals on entrepreneurship and business planning for vulnerable women and distributed them to the National Professional Advancement Service (SNPP) and the National Labour Training System (SINAFOCAL) for nationwide implementation.

66. The Ministry for Women's Affairs has worked with the Higher Teacher Training Institute (ISE) on the review and analysis of training programmes from a gender perspective for initial, and degree and postgraduate teacher training and on the organization of thematic workshops to train and support university teachers implementing the revised curriculum.

67. Under a plan for equality in higher education (IGES), developed in cooperation with the Directorate for Postgraduate Studies of Asunción National University, 39 civil servants employed in State institutions have received certificates in the specialized management of public gender policies.

68. As regards article 10 (c) and (e), public, private and subsidized private educational establishments have been coeducational for over 10 years. Primary and secondary education curricula, study programmes and training modules for young persons and adults have been revised from a gender perspective. In that framework, proposals have been implemented to ensure that vulnerable women complete primary education, such as literacy programmes for young persons and adults aimed at women who are paid domestic workers or sex workers. Training in literacy methodology has been provided to reference or relay persons and facilitators to enable the delivery of formal and informal programmes.

69. The main goal of a programme entitled "Strengthening action for equality and against gender violence in education, 2011-2012" consists in capacity-building at all managerial and operational levels of the Ministry of Education and Science to promote human-rights-based gender equality in public policy management.

70. With respect to article 10 (d), 52 per cent of the 5,518 secondary education scholarships awarded by the National Scholarship Council for 2015 went to girls

while 69.88 per cent of the 4,128 higher education scholarships went to women and were distributed among the administrative departments according to a geographic prioritization index (GPI). Of the 90 applicants admitted through the first of two competitions held by the National Postgraduate (master's and doctoral degrees) Scholarships Programme under the "Don Carlos Antonio López" Paraguay 2030 initiative for research, innovation and education abroad, 47 are women.

71. As regards the concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 26 of the concluding observations and article 10 (f) of the Convention on female student drop-out rates, the general average rate reflects parity in gross school attendance. In 2013, just as many girls as boys participated in primary and secondary education. Despite overall gender parity, which helps to reduce the gap between women and men at all educational levels, challenges persist, especially in secondary education and in rural areas. In addition, statistics are lacking on the reasons for dropping out of school. In Paraguay, 20 per cent of pregnancies occur between the ages of 10 and 19, and they increased by 4 per cent in the period 2009-2013. As an effective tool to prevent violence and pregnancy, raise awareness and provide information that underscores children and adolescents' rights, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare has launched audiovisual educational material on adolescent pregnancy in Paraguay (annex 3).

72. The National Secretariat for Childhood and Adolescence has broadened the coverage of the *Abrazo* (hug) programme and provides care to 3,217 heads of household (2,961 or 92 per cent of whom are women), children and adolescents, including 1,283 adolescent girls aged 14-17 years and 4,247 younger girls. The Secretariat focuses on girls because of their greater vulnerability to abuse. Through the Community Development Plan, the Secretariat provides care to 109 girls and 16 female adolescents from indigenous groups.

73. In the area of formal education, the primary and secondary curricula include sexual and reproductive health, addressed through the disciplines of, inter alia, health, personal and social development and the natural sciences, in connection with the right to responsible sexuality, which is discussed in greater depth than at the primary level. In secondary education, the *Jaikuaa* (pay attention) project, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ), has been run since 2012 in departments selected on the basis of an assessment of young persons' perceptions, and provides information through inter-generational networks consisting of teachers, parents and pupils and students.

74. As regards article 10 (g) on offering women the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education, there has been gradual but inadequate progress towards women's participation in individual and collective sports, an area traditionally considered as masculine. According to information from the National Secretariat for Sport, teams representing Paraguay at the national and international level included 16 women in 2011, 52 in 2012, 47 in 2013, 48 in 2014 and 24 in 2015.

Women's equal rights in the areas of employment and labour and social and economic security

Articles 11 and 13

75. In accordance with recommendation in paragraph 29 to take all necessary steps to ensure the implementation of labour legislation, address pay gaps, encourage women to take up employment in non-traditional fields and amend legislation in order to improve the conditions of work for domestic workers, Act No. 5115/13 creating the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security was adopted in order to protect workers' rights in those areas. The main provisions on gender equality are contained in article 4(14) of the Act, which refers to the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment for men and women in terms of access to employment and protection of motherhood. The Act also established the General Directorate for the Promotion of Women Workers. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed in the measurement instruments used to calculate the index of personnel management in State bodies and organizations, in particular those relating to remuneration, training and competition (for equal and non-discriminatory entry to and promotion in public sector bodies).

76. Act No. 5407/15 on domestic work seeks to reduce the legal gap and ensure that working conditions are comparable to those of other workers, namely an eight-hour day, access to health care and retirement benefits, and a minimum age of employment of 18 years. A key demand, namely raising the domestic workers' minimum wage from 40 to 60 per cent of the general minimum wage, is still pending (article 11, paragraphs (d), (b) and (a)) (see annex 4).

77. Regarding unpaid domestic child labour (*criadazgo*) and underage domestic workers, in addition to the above increase in the minimum age of employment to 18 years, the National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents has been taking action in places where minors work outside the provisions of the Act, such as brick factories and the lime industry. The creation in the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of a service centre for paid female domestic workers which assists both the workers and the employers has been a key advance (paragraph (c) of the recommendation).

78. Pursuant to the Committee's recommendations, training is under way to strengthen labour inspection mechanisms. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has launched an information campaign addressing all enterprises employing more than 50 workers. In addition, the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security have formed a working group to formulate a new way of regulating nurseries or day-care centres for children under 2 years of age.

79. Pursuant to Act No. 4819/2012 ratifying the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), various seminars on and training in entrepreneurial culture have been delivered, and the vocational training curriculum for domestic workers has been revised to meet the current needs of the sector.

80. Through the Microsol Foundation and the Health for All Mutual Aid Centre (CAMSAT), the Ministry for Women's Affairs has established significant public-private linkages for the promotion of loans to poor women excluded from the

financial system. Through the National Commission for Financial Inclusion and the Inter-Agency Board for Vulnerable Population Groups, the Ministry seeks to mainstream the gender perspective in public policies so that women in extreme poverty may be viewed as a group in need of specific support. The strengthening of decentralized public policies focused on equal access to economic resources, employment and education as a priority for the implementation of its institutional strategic plan and the third national plan on equal opportunities for men and women (PNIO).

81. With regard to loans, an institutional policy for gender-sensitive financial inclusion has been developed in cooperation with the Agricultural Loans Facility. The policy increases rural women's access to credit, offering financial products adapted to local needs. Such products include "Women entrepreneurs", "Young entrepreneurs" and the village bank borrowing facility.

82. Women's significant participation in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises has led to adoption of Act No. 4457/12, which envisages the creation of an office of the deputy minister for such enterprises within the Ministry of Trade and Industry and for affirmative action to extend loans to single mothers and female heads of household.

83. The adoption of Act No. 5508/15 on the promotion and protection of motherhood and support for breastfeeding has been crucial. In addition to increasing maternity leave from 12 to 18 weeks in the public and private sectors, it provides for a two-week paternity leave, promotes responsible parenthood, and prohibits dismissing a worker who has announced she is pregnant or who is exercising her right to time off for breastfeeding, characterizing any such notice and dismissal as null and void. Under the Act, maternity leave is extended to 24 weeks if the child is born prematurely or weighs less than 1 kg, and, in the event of a multiple birth, increases by one month for each child, beginning with the second infant.

Equal access to health care for women

Article 12

84. In reference to the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 31(c) to strengthen health-care capacity and the implementation of programmes and policies aimed at providing effective access for women to health-care information and services, Paraguayan legislation, policies and programmes guarantee the right to health information and to access to contraceptive services and methods. In that framework, where family planning is viewed as a means of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and encouraging the population to make use of health services, Presidential Decree No. 773/13, on the initiative of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, declared 29 November national family-planning day, with the slogan "Plan your life, plan your family". Decision No. 1173/13 implementing Act No. 3803/09 grants workers paid workday leave for the purpose of Pap smears and mammographies.

85. In the period from 2012 to 2014, significant progress was made under inter-institutional cooperation agreements between the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare for the promotion and protection of women's rights to health and to a life without violence. Through joint efforts, processes for mainstreaming a gender perspective were developed, a gender and

health mechanism was created, an inter-agency gender and health technical board was established for the design, formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects to be implemented, gender indicators were built into the budget of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, and the strategic directions of national health policy were reviewed and validated within the framework of the national health system.

86. Initiatives aimed at mainstreaming a gender perspective include a plan to reduce maternal mortality; a national mobilization for a campaign to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality; a national gender and health strategy for 2011-2013 under a comprehensive health programme for women and men; a sexual and reproductive health” programme of the Social Security Institute; a sexual and reproductive health plan for 2013 with a gender, human rights and intercultural relations approach; and a first national strategic plan to combat HIV and sexually transmitted infections for 2014-2018. The document covers the main areas of action for the five years from 2013 to 2017.

87. Standards of post-abortion care with a human face were introduced in 2012 through Decision No. 146 of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, which requires access to quality health services and care without any discrimination, with full confidentiality and medical secrecy for women who have had an abortion, with the involvement of health workers bound by the obligation of confidentiality.

88. The national sexual and reproductive health plan for 2014-2018 provides for equitable and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, based on a gender, human rights and intercultural relations approach that meets the population’s basic needs and, especially, is respectful of sexual and reproductive rights. The plan addresses seven strategic high-priority areas under the current health policy for more accessible, fair and effective care, including family planning. The aim is to ensure that all persons of reproductive age may exercise their right to voluntary family planning through timely access to full and accurate information, quality services, and free and effective contraceptives, on the basis of a multicultural approach, freedom of choice and differentiated strategies for specific groups, such as adolescents, indigenous peoples, disabled persons, persons living with HIV, and socially and economically disadvantaged persons. Sexual and reproductive health products, including medicines for safe pregnancy and neonatal health, contraceptives, equipment, instruments and other essential supplies, are to be made available thanks to, inter alia, the budgets of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare and the Social Security Institute, and by the police and military health services.

89. Paragraph 31(a) of the concluding observations calls for action without delay and effective measures to deal with the high maternal mortality rate. The Ministry for Social Action implements the *Tekoporã* conditional allowances programme aimed at improving the quality of life of poor families, promoting the protection of pregnant women through the *Kunu* (tenderness) project, and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality under a national “zero deaths, they are avoidable” campaign led by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare with the support of UNICEF. In order to strengthen the childhood components of the above programme, pregnant participants receive kits for their future newborns.

90. The Ombudsman's Office, through the women's rights department, has launched health establishment inspections to identify obstacles to the proper functioning of gynaecology and obstetrics services.

91. The national strategic plan against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, drawn up under a national programme to control acquired immune deficiency syndrome, includes, for the period 2013-2017, guidelines on prevention, promotion, education and communication. The programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission has been successfully implemented.

Equality for rural women

Article 14

92. An important advance in relation to the Committee's concern, expressed in paragraph 32, on the disadvantaged position of rural women in relation to access to health and social services and access to land is the promulgation of Act No. 5446/15 on public policies for rural women, whose goal is to promote and safeguard rural women's economic, social, political and cultural rights, which are key to their empowerment and development. Seeking to promote activities aimed at enhancing institutional services for rural women, the Ministry for Women's Affairs redesigned its strategy for action through departmental and local governments so as to provide gender-related technical assistance, sensitization and training and introduce a gender perspective into the State budget. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into the gender mechanisms of the 17 departmental governments. There are currently women's bureaux in the country's 17 departmental governor's offices and in 93 municipal women's bureaux in the country's 247 municipalities.

93. Decision No. 749/15, a result of considerable inter-institutional efforts by the Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), approved the use of training materials to mainstream the gender perspective into the plans, programmes, projects and departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and of the autonomous and self-governed bodies concerned (through a basic conceptual framework for mainstreaming a gender perspective into public policies, methodological strategies for mainstreaming a gender perspective into public policies and a methodological approach to public policies with a gender perspective for rural youth).

94. To boost those efforts, comprehensive programmes have been adopted on enterprise development, practical training and microfinancing as poverty reduction tools, agricultural and technical education programmes, school enhancement programmes and a programme on the promotion of food production in family farming (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock) for the benefit of rural and indigenous producers engaged in family farming in urban, urban-fringe and rural areas. They are supported by activities conducive to the adoption of organic materials and advantageous production methods.

95. The *Jaku'eke* comprehensive action programme for women's social and economic empowerment is coordinated by the Ministry for Women's Affairs. It is intended to establish management mechanisms so that specific inter-institutional activities and coordinated public services can serve as a model for field action in urban and urban-fringe settlements where the Ministry of Social Action's *Tekoha*

programme is being implemented. The activities and results were comprehensive training processes for families benefiting from the project and received empowerment courses in the form of gender-related experiential workshops on self-esteem, gender roles, empowerment, the implementation of projects involving family vegetable gardens, reforestation, soil management, organic pesticide production and recycling (for Asunción National University seniors in agrarian sciences, environmental engineering and agricultural management), Caranday art and craft promotion (Paraguayan Institute of Arts and Crafts), food preparation, handling and marketing (the Ministry of Social Action and the Faculty of Agrarian Sciences); microenterprise creation, basic economics, business plans for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and masonry (National Career Development Service). An important achievement has been active citizenship training for women through training, initial vocational training, entrepreneurship and community participation to create synergies between State bodies at the central and local levels (see annex 5).

96. A project to encourage women's participation in the labour market, carried out in cooperation with the European Union, includes a component on women entrepreneurs in family farming, involving the provision of support for the entrepreneurial initiatives of rural women so that they can gain an income and contribute to food security and manage their economic resources themselves. The project is being implemented in seven departments (San Pedro, Caazapá, Canindeyú, Misiones, Paraguari, Alto Paraguay and Ñeembucú). The activities and results involve providing advice, support and follow-up for women producers' committees, selecting the committees that will receive revolving funds for project development, supporting the establishment of micro-enterprises (for poultry production and cattle husbandry, breadmaking, confectionery and pastry production, agricultural production, food fairs, production and marketing of cleaning items, apparel marketing, improvement of dairy farms, consumer goods stores, goat's milk production, beef production, balanced produce production, sewing workshops, the production of biodegradable items, *chipa* production, sausage-making, arts and crafts, and the sale of giblets) (annex 5).

97. The *Tekoporã* conditional financial transfer programme (Ministry of Social Action) promotes children's basic rights through food, health care and education, and the effective exercise of the rights of women, including indigenous women (76 per cent of the direct beneficiaries are women). It also promotes women's participation and empowerment through the organization of women producers' committees and the "Women Leaders" programme that supports other families participating in the programme. Of the 111,896 families currently assisted by the programme in 168 districts in 17 departments, 75 per cent are headed by women. Pursuant to a protocol on services for indigenous communities, (Decision No. 046/15 of the Ministry of Social Action) and to the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), 7,760 indigenous families have joined the programme in 264 communities representing 27 per cent of the country's indigenous communities, and 52 per cent of the beneficiaries are indigenous women.

98. The *Tekoha* programme (Ministry of Social Action) aims to provide housing solutions to poor and extremely poor urban and suburban families throughout the country. It provides for land ownership and regularization of buildings with a view to improving access to basic services (water, power, housing, education and health care) and improving the standard of living of the people concerned in the medium

and long term. Currently, the programme assists 19,078 families located in 55 districts in 13 departments.

99. The Fonavis programme (Ministry of Housing and Habitat) promotes social housing construction projects for poor and extremely poor groups, giving priority to single mothers and women heads of household in the allocation of housing.

100. The Ministry for Women's Affairs, with the support of FAO, is implementing a project for the period 2014-2017 to promote the empowerment of the country's rural women so as to ensure food security. The goal is to assist rural women's organizations and help with the establishment, operation, coordination and training of new ones in order to establish an institutional system that can improve and coordinate their communication at the central, regional and local levels and ensure that they receive up-to-date information conducive to their development and empowerment.

101. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, with the support of Plan Paraguay, is implementing a project on the right to education and decent work for rural adolescents and young persons, training of community leaders, technical training for at least 60 per cent of women heads of household, life and leadership skills development, and teamwork on how to secure a first job (in mechanized agriculture, fruit, horticultural and agricultural and agro-industrial production and marketing, cattle, pig and poultry raising, bee-keeping, artificial insemination, animal health, and vehicle, motorcycle or machinery mechanics).

102. In response to the Committee's comments in paragraphs 34 and 35 on disadvantaged groups of women, expressing deep concern about the high levels of vulnerability in relation to the right to adequate food and to safe drinking water, especially in the Chaco region, the national environmental sanitation service, with the support of IDB and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, and within the framework of the national programme for the reduction of extreme poverty, has implemented a programme on drinking water and sanitation in rural and indigenous communities, which is intended to improve access to drinking water and sanitation in the country's rural and indigenous communities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, and will benefit approximately 315,450 persons. The Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, through the national agricultural technology institute and with FAO support, implemented a project in 2014 on raising goats and marketing the related products, which benefited women from the Ayoreo Totobiegosode indigenous community, Alto Paraguay, through training in leading food security processes. The trainees replicated the training exercise in their communities, received goats and carried out the project while also developing an indigenous plan on food security with the participation of all State bodies dealing with indigenous affairs.

103. Subparagraph (a) of the same recommendation on disadvantaged groups of women calls for temporary special measures to accelerate the realization of the rights of indigenous women. In that connection, work has been done to mainstream a gender perspective with an intercultural and human rights-based approach into the curricula of work skills development programmes of the national training and work skills development system of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, establishing an inter-institutional board on work skills development programmes for indigenous people.

Part IV Recognition of the equal rights of men and women before the law**Articles 15 and 16**

104. The concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 36 over the minimum legal age of marriage has been met in part with the promulgation of Act No. 5419/15 amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 on the partial reform of the Civil Code to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, although minors may marry from the age of 16 with the consent of their parents, their guardians or a judge. With reference to the rights and responsibilities related to marriage and divorce, Act No. 5422/15 has amended articles 4, 5, 6, 7 and 13 of Act No. 45/91 on divorce, eliminating the three-year period required before a couple may apply for separation.
