Fifth and sixth periodic reports

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

248. The Committee considered the fifth and sixth periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (CEDAW/C/UK/5 and Add.1
and 2, CEDAW/C/UK/6 and annex,[2] CEDAW/C/UK/5/Add.1 and annex[2] and CEDAW/C/UK/5/Add.2) at its 843rd and 844th meetings, on 10 July 2008 (see CEDAW/C/SR.843 and 844). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in document CEDAW/C/UK/Q/6 and the responses of the Government of the United Kingdom are contained in document CEDAW/C/UK/Q/6/Add.1.

Introduction

249. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its fifth and sixth periodic reports, which include information from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well from the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. While noting that the reports generally followed the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports, the Committee regrets the lack of uniformity in the format and content of the reports and the lack of reference to its previous concluding observations of 1999 and its general recommendations. The Committee also expresses its appreciation to the State party for its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-session working group. The Committee further expresses its appreciation to the State party for its oral presentation and the further clarifications given.

250. The Committee commends the State party for its large delegation which was headed by the Deputy Minister for Women and Equality and included representatives of various Government ministries, departments and offices, including of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Minister for Health and Human Services of the Turks and Caicos Islands, some of whom participated in the constructive dialogue via video-teleconference. The Committee appreciates the open and constructive dialogue that took place between the delegation and members of the Committee.

[2] The annex was made available to the members of the Committee in the language of submission.

251. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention in December 2004.

252. The Committee notes that the United Kingdom maintains reservations to the Convention, including in respect of its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, where reservations to articles 1, 2, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 16 are retained.

Positive aspects

253. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a number of legislative, judicial and administrative measures aimed at promoting gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women. Specific reference is made to the Equality Act (2006), which established the Equality and Human Rights Commission and introduced a Gender Equality Duty for all public authorities.

254. The Committee commends the setting up of a discrimination law review in 2005 to undertake a fundamental review of all equality legislation. It notes the proposed introduction of a new equality bill for England, Scotland and Wales to replace several different acts of Parliament. It also notes that the bill will apply to the public and private sectors and prohibit discrimination in such areas as employment and education. The Committee further notes the proposed introduction of a single equality legislation in Northern Ireland.

255. The Committee welcomes the introduction of gender equality public service agreements, which are aimed at producing improvements in such areas as women's economic participation and women's access to and experience of public service delivery.

256. The Committee also welcomes the State party's recognition of the important role played by NGOs and other civil society groups in the promotion of women's human rights and gender equality. The Committee notes the collaboration of non-governmental organizations with the State party, including through consultations and contribution to legislative processes and public policies. The Committee encourages the Government to develop such collaboration further.

257. The Committee welcomes the contributions of the State party to projects and programmes aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in the context of its international assistance and development cooperation programmes.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

258. **The Committee welcomes the State party's expressed intention to review regularly its remaining reservations to the Convention. It urges the State party to consider actively the withdrawal of its reservations, commencing with those that, in the opinion of the Committee, have the character of interpretive declarations or may no longer be necessary in the light of recent developments.**

259. **While recalling the obligation of the State party to implement all the provisions of the Convention systematically and continuously, the Committee views the concerns and recommendations identified in the present concluding observations as requiring the priority attention of the State party. Consequently, the Committee calls upon the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report. It also calls upon the State party to submit the present concluding observations to all relevant ministries, other government structures at all levels, including**

Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, to Parliament and the judiciary, in order to ensure their effective implementation.

Legal status of the Convention

260. Recalling its concluding observations of 1999 (A/54/38/Rev.1, part two, paras. 278–318), the Committee notes that no measures have been taken by the State party to fully incorporate the Convention into domestic law. The Committee also notes the absence of national legislation covering all aspects of the Convention. The Committee further notes, as expressed in its concluding observations of 1999, that while the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been incorporated into domestic law through the Human Rights Act (1998), the European Convention does not provide for the full range of women's human rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or for temporary special measures as set out in article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

261. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation and urges that, in the light of the proposed introduction of a new Equality Bill for England, Scotland and Wales, and single equality legislation covering all grounds of discrimination in Northern Ireland, the State party utilize this important opportunity to ensure the incorporation of all provisions of the Convention. It calls upon the State party to consult and collaborate with civil society organizations, in particular women's and human rights organizations, and other stakeholders in the formulation of the new equality legislation with a view to raising awareness and broadening understanding of the Convention and of the principles of equality and non-discrimination.**

Overseas Territories, visibility of the Convention and Optional Protocol

262. While cognizant of the State party's structure of government, with devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and with separate governance structures in the State party's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, the Committee reiterates its concern, as expressed in its concluding observations of 1999, at the lack of a unified national strategy and policy for the implementation of all provisions of the Convention. The Committee is also concerned at the limited information provided by the State party on the implementation of the Convention in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and regrets that no response was provided to its questions on the extension of the Optional Protocol to all Territories. While noting the existence of gender equality machineries and regulations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and in the Overseas Territories, the Committee is concerned that there are inadequate structures and mechanisms to ensure the effective coordination and monitoring of the application of the Convention in all Territories of the State party. The Committee notes that the provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, as well as the recommendations of the Committee, are not sufficiently known among the general public or across all branches of Government. It also notes the State party's own acknowledgement that the communications and inquiry procedures provided by the Optional Protocol and the views of the Committee are not widely known, or sufficiently utilized by women.

263. **The Committee underlines that the principal responsibility for implementation of the Convention lies with the Government of the United Kingdom. Reiterating its recommendation of 1999, the Committee calls for the development and enactment of a unified, comprehensive and overarching national strategy and policy for the implementation of the**

Convention throughout the United Kingdom, including its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. It calls upon the State party to undertake all necessary measures to ensure the full implementation of this strategy in a consistent and coherent manner across its territory, including through the establishment of an effective coordination and monitoring mechanism on implementation, and to provide comprehensive information on steps and measures taken in this regard in its next periodic report. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party provide adequate technical and financial assistance to its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies for the implementation of the Convention. In line with article 24 of the Convention and article 13 of its Optional Protocol, the Committee calls upon the State party to take concrete measures to make these two human rights instruments widely known. In this respect, the Committee requests the State party to undertake public awareness and training programmes on the Convention and its Optional Protocol, as well as on the Committee's general recommendations. It also requests the State party to raise awareness among women of their rights under the Convention and the communications and inquiry procedures provided by its Optional Protocol. It further requests the State party to ensure that the Convention and its Optional Protocol, as well as the Committee's general recommendations, and the views adopted on individual communications, are made an integral part of educational curricula, including for legal education and the training of judicial officers, judges, lawyers and prosecutors.

Principle of equality

264. The Committee welcomes the introduction of a Gender Equality Duty in April 2007 (pursuant to the Equality Act (2006)), by which all public authorities are required to draw up and publish gender equality schemes (with identified objectives and steps to implement them), as well as to conduct gender impact assessments of all new policies and laws, including on employment and service delivery. The Committee notes with appreciation the existence of a similar statutory equality duty in Northern Ireland (section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act). It notes with concern, however, that varying levels of public understanding of the concept of substantive equality have resulted only in the promotion of equality of opportunity and of same treatment, as well as of gender-neutrality, in the interpretation and implementation of the Gender Equality Duty. The Committee also notes with concern that many public bodies, including Government ministries, have faced difficulties in developing results-based and action-oriented equality schemes and in mainstreaming gender equality into all policies and processes.

265. **The Committee encourages the State party to develop and implement awareness-raising and education campaigns, in particular in the public sector and across all branches of Government, to broaden understanding of the provisions of the Convention, and of the content and meaning of substantive equality that goes beyond equality of opportunity and same treatment. The Committee also encourages the State party to develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated and unified Gender Equality Duty throughout its territory and at all levels of government and in its own offices. The Gender Equality Duty should aim to ensure the practical realization of the principle of equality between women and men as required under article 2 of the Convention, and not solely towards the achievement of equality of opportunity. The Committee also recommends the development of appropriate mechanisms and capacity to monitor implementation, evaluate results achieved and ensure accountability.**

Women in prison

266. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to reduce the number of women in prison, including the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Group on Reducing Re-offending and a Criminal Justice Women's Unit within the Ministry of Justice, as well as other measures taken to implement many of the recommendations made in the 2007 Corston report on women in the criminal justice system with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. The Committee notes, however, that implementation of the Corston report is limited to England and Wales, and regrets the limited information provided on the situation and conditions of women in prison in Northern Ireland. Despite the various measures taken by the State party, the Committee expresses concern about the number of women in prison, which has increased since the consideration of the State party's third and fourth periodic reports in 1999, and the large proportion of women who have been imprisoned for committing minor such offences as theft and the non-payment of television licences. The Committee is also concerned about the situation of women in prison, in particular in Northern Ireland. It notes the absence of a comprehensive policy for the management of women in prison, including with respect to family visits and childcare arrangements. As previously expressed in its concluding observations of 1999, the Committee notes with concern the holding of young female offenders in adult prisons in Northern Ireland, the inadequate educational, rehabilitative and resettlement programmes for women prisoners, and the location of prisons far from the families of women prisoners. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of adequate health facilities and services for women, including for mental health needs.

267. **The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to reduce the number of women in conflict with the law, including through targeted prevention programmes aimed at addressing the causes of women's criminality. Recalling its previous recommendation, the Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to develop alternative sentencing and custodial strategies, including community interventions and services, for women convicted of minor offences. It also urges the State party to address the situation of women in prison through the development of comprehensive gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programmes. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that young female offenders are not held in adult prisons, to take further measures to increase and enhance educational, rehabilitative and resettlement programmes for women in prison and to ensure the provision of adequate health facilities and services, including mental health services, for women in prison. It also calls upon the State party to take further steps towards the establishment of small custodial units and community establishments, as well as separate women's facilities, in particular in Northern Ireland.**

Temporary special measures

268. The Committee expresses concern that although temporary special measures are provided for in some legislation, they are not systematically employed as a method of accelerating the achievement of de facto or substantive equality between women and men in all areas of the Convention.

269. **The Committee encourages the State party to give consideration to the further implementation of temporary special measures, including through legislative and administrative measures, outreach and support programmes, the allocation of resources and the creation of incentives, targeted recruitment and the setting of time-bound goals and quotas, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, in order to accelerate the realization of women's de facto equality with men in all areas. It also recommends that the State party include in its equality legislation provisions to encourage the use of temporary special measures, in both the public and private sectors.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

270. The Committee notes the establishment of new institutional structures and mechanisms, such as the Government Equalities Office (to replace the Women and Equality Unit) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (to replace and integrate the activities of the former Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission), with the responsibility for promoting equality issues more generally and for addressing multiple grounds of discrimination. While recognizing the important functions and activities of these institutions and mechanisms, the Committee is concerned that the issue of gender equality and discrimination against women, which is of a structural nature, may lose some of its visibility and therefore receive less attention.

271. **The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary steps to ensure that national machinery for the promotion of equality continues to give priority attention to gender equality and discrimination against women. In this respect, sufficient resources, both human and financial resources, should be allocated in order to continue and strengthen gender-specific activities and programmes. The Committee also recommends the integration and mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes on broader equality and non-discrimination issues.**

Non-governmental organizations

272. The Committee notes that changes in the allocation of Government funding from needs-based to "commissioning" frameworks, and the gender neutral interpretation of the Gender Equality Duty, have had a negative impact on funding to women's organizations and the provision of "women-only" services, in particular domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centres. Despite the establishment by the Government of an interim short-term emergency fund, the Committee notes with concern the impending closure of a number of rape crisis centres, as well as of domestic violence shelters, women's health organizations and black, minority and ethnic women's organizations.

273. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that NGOs are able to effectively contribute to the continuing implementation of the Convention. It urges the State party to provide increased and sustained funding to NGOs and other civil society groups involved in the area of**

women's rights. It recommends that the State party ensure that the interpretation and application of the Gender Equality Duty does not have a negative impact on the provision of "women-only" services or restrict the activities of women's organizations. It also recommends that the State party conduct an impact assessment of its "commissioning" frameworks on the funding of women's organizations. The Committee requests the State party to include information on the funding of NGOs and women's organizations in its next periodic report.

Stereotypes and negative cultural practices

274. The Committee notes with concern the stereotyped media portrayals of women and of women's roles in the family and in society, which contribute to women's disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in access to decision-making positions, and affect women's choices in their studies and professions. The Committee also notes the lack of positive media portrayals of ethnic and minority women, elderly women and women with disabilities.

275. **The Committee recommends that policies be strengthened and programmes implemented, including awareness-raising and educational campaigns directed at women and men, and specifically at media and advertising agencies, to help ensure the elimination of stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in society and in the family, in accordance with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention. It also recommends that the media be encouraged to project a positive image of women, including ethnic and minority women, elderly women and women with disabilities, and to promote the value of gender equality for society as a whole. It calls upon the State party to review periodically the measures taken in order to assess their impact, to take appropriate action and to report thereon to the Committee in its next periodic report.**

276. The Committee notes the various measures taken by the Government to prohibit forced marriage, including the enactment of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007), the establishment of a Forced Marriage Unit and the issuance of guidelines on forced marriage for police, education, social service and health service personnel. It expresses concern, however, at the continuing practice of forced marriages, in particular in ethnic, minority and immigrant communities, the lack of targeted prevention strategies and programmes for women and girls at risk, and the lack of support services for victims. It also notes with concern that the minimum age at which an overseas spouse or fiancé can enter the State party's territory for family reunification was raised from 16 to 18 years, and that there are proposals to further increase the minimum age to 21 years.

277. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure the full implementation of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007) and to utilize existing criminal measures to address this phenomenon. It urges the full implementation and wider dissemination of the guidelines on forced marriage. It recommends the expansion of public awareness-raising campaigns targeted in particular at communities most at risk. The Committee also recommends the establishment of additional counselling and other support services for victims, including shelters, and requests the State party to enhance its cooperation with and support for non-governmental organizations working in this area. The Committee invites the State party to assess the impact of the minimum age limit for overseas spouses or fiancés on the prevention of forced marriage and to review its policy in this regard.**

278. While welcoming the enactment of the Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) and the Female Genital Mutilation Prohibition (Scotland) Act (2005), the Committee is concerned that there have been no prosecutions under this legislation. The Committee is also concerned that the number of women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of female genital mutilation is on the rise.

279. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure the full implementation of legislation to prohibit female genital mutilation, including prosecution of perpetrators, with a view to eliminating this harmful traditional practice. The Committee recommends the expansion of training activities and programmes for public officials, in particular law enforcement personnel and health-service providers, as well as the British Medical Association, so as to ensure that they are sensitized to the issue and can provide adequate support to victims. The Committee invites the State party to increase its efforts to design and implement targeted prevention strategies, as well as education and awareness-raising programmes involving community and religious leaders, women's organizations and the general public.**

Violence against women

280. The Committee is concerned about the continuing prevalence of violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence, and about the low prosecution and conviction rates of sexual violence cases. While welcoming the various measures undertaken by the State party to combat and eliminate violence against women, such as the adoption of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004), which includes a range of protection and support measures for victims, the introduction of action plans on domestic and sexual violence, and the establishment of specialist domestic violence courts, the Committee remains concerned about the absence of a comprehensive national strategy and programme to combat all forms of violence against women and girls. The Committee notes with concern the lack of adequate support and services for victims, including shelters, which is compounded by the funding crisis facing NGOs working in the area of violence against women and the forced closures of a number of such organizations. The Committee also notes with concern that corporal punishment is lawful in the home and constitutes a form of violence against children, including the girl child.

281. **The Committee urges the State party to accord priority attention to the adoption of comprehensive measures to address violence against women in accordance with its general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure the full implementation of legislation on violence against women, as well as the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators. In line with its previous concluding observations of 1999, the Committee also calls upon the State party to adopt and implement a unified and multifaceted national strategy to eliminate violence against women and girls, which would include legal, education, financial and social components. The Committee recommends the expansion of training activities and programmes for parliamentarians, the judiciary and public officials, in particular law enforcement personnel and health-service providers, so as to ensure that they are sensitized to all forms of violence against women and can provide adequate support to victims. It recommends the expansion of public awareness-raising campaigns on all forms of violence against women and girls. The Committee also recommends the establishment of additional counselling and other support services for victims of violence, including shelters, and**

requests the State party to enhance its cooperation with and support, in particular adequate and sustained funding support, for NGOs working in the area of violence against women. The Committee further recommends that the State party include in its legislation the prohibition of corporal punishment of children in the home.

Trafficking

282. The Committee welcomes the State party's stated intention to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the end of 2008. The Committee also welcomes the recent announcement of a 45-day period of recovery and reflection for victims of trafficking, as well as the granting of temporary one-year visas. While acknowledging the measures taken by the State party to combat trafficking in women and children, including the adoption of the Sexual Offences Act (2003) and the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act (2004), the adoption of the United Kingdom Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking, and the launching of national multi-agency police operations (Operation Pentameter I and II), the Committee is concerned by the continuing prevalence and extent of this problem.

283. **The Committee urges the State party to continue to take all appropriate measures to combat all forms of trafficking in women and children in line with article 6 of the Convention. In this respect, the Committee also urges the State party not only to address criminal justice measures and the prosecution of traffickers but also the protection and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking victims. The Committee further urges the State party to ensure the provision of adequate support services to victims, including those who do not cooperate with the authorities, and invites the State party to give consideration to granting victims of trafficking indefinite leave to remain. The Committee calls upon the State party to increase its efforts at international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination in order to prevent trafficking, to bring perpetrators to justice and to improve reintegration programmes to prevent victimization.**

Political participation and participation in public life

284. While noting the efforts made to increase the number of women in both elective and appointed positions in public office, the diplomatic service and international organizations, the Committee is concerned that women continue to be underrepresented in political and public life, especially in leadership and decision-making positions. The Committee notes that women's representation currently stands at 19.3 per cent in the House of Commons and 19.7 per cent in the House of Lords. It notes that the figures are higher, however, in Scotland (34.1 per cent) and Wales (46.7 per cent). The Committee is also concerned at the low representation of women in the judiciary in Northern Ireland. In view of its particular relevance to Northern Ireland, the Committee notes with regret the lack of information provided on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. It also notes the underrepresentation of women in public office, standing at 16.7 per cent in the Assembly, and in key institutions established directly as a result of the peace process.

285. **The Committee calls upon the State party to take measures, with benchmarks and concrete timetables, to increase the number of women in political and public life, at all levels and in all areas, in the light of its general recommendation No. 23 on women in political and public life. It also recommends that the State party introduce temporary special**

measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25, to strengthen its efforts to promote women to positions of leadership. To that end, the Committee urges the State party to increase the availability of training and capacity-building programmes for women wishing to enter or already in public office and to enhance its awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of women's participation in political and public life. The Committee also calls for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Northern Ireland.

Employment

286. The Committee notes the various measures taken by the State party to support the participation of women in the labour market and facilitate the reconciliation of family and work life, including the adoption of the Work and Families Act (2006), which, inter alia, provides for flexible working arrangements, and extending the statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance from 26 to 39 weeks. It also notes the measures taken by the State party to narrow the gender pay gap, including the conduct of equal pay reviews by various Government department and agencies. The Committee continues to be concerned, however, about the persistence of occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market and the continuing pay gap, one of the highest in Europe, where current figures show that the average hourly earnings of full-time women employees amount to approximately 83 per cent of men's earnings. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of available and affordable childcare.

287. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt appropriate measures to guarantee the implementation of all the provisions of article 11 of the Convention. The Committee urges the State party to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, including through the use of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to take proactive and concrete measures to eliminate occupational segregation and to close the pay gap between women and men, including through the introduction of mandatory pay audits. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue its efforts to assist women and men to reconcile family and professional responsibilities and for its promotion of equal sharing of domestic and family tasks by providing, inter alia, more and improved childcare facilities. The Committee further recommends that the State party encourage men to share responsibility for childcare, including through awareness-raising activities and by taking parental leave.**

Health

288. Recalling its concluding observations of 1999, the Committee continues to be concerned at the high rate of teenage pregnancies, which is among the highest in Europe. The Committee notes that the Abortion Act (1967) does not extend to Northern Ireland, where, with limited exceptions, abortion continues to be illegal, with detrimental consequences for women's health.

289. **The Committee urges the State party to continue its efforts to lower the rate of teenage pregnancies, including through improvements in the availability and affordability of sexual and reproductive health services, as well as family planning information and services. It recommends the adoption of measures to increase knowledge of, and access to, affordable contraceptive methods, and recommends that sex education be widely**

promoted and targeted at adolescent girls and boys. In line with its previous recommendation, the Committee reiterates its call to the State party to initiate a process of public consultation in Northern Ireland on the abortion law. In line with its general recommendation No. 24 on women and health and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Committee urges the State party to give consideration to amending the abortion law so as to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion. The Committee encourages the State party to monitor carefully the delivery of health services in order that it may respond in a gender-sensitive manner to all health concerns of women and in this regard invites the State party to utilize the Committee's general recommendation No. 24 as a framework for action to ensure that all health policies and programmes integrate a gender perspective.

Economic consequences of divorce

290. The Committee expresses concern about the economic situation of women as a result of divorce and about the lack of specific regulations safeguarding the property rights of women in de facto unions.

291. **The Committee requests the State party to study the effect of the application of the Family Law Act (1996) on the economic situation of women upon divorce and to assess the effectiveness of current regulations in protecting the property rights of women upon the break-up of marriage or of de facto unions. The Committee also requests the State party to include information on the research undertaken in this regard, as well as the results, in its next periodic report.**

Vulnerable groups of women

292. The Committee is concerned that women of different ethnic and minority communities, including Traveller communities, continue to suffer from multiple discrimination, particularly in access to education, employment and health care. The Committee notes that ethnic and minority women are underrepresented in all areas of the labour market, in particular in senior or decision-making positions, have higher rates of unemployment and face a greater pay gap in their hourly earnings compared to men. Women of different ethnic and minority communities are also greatly underrepresented in political and public life. The Committee notes that women of Traveller communities experience high numbers of miscarriages and stillbirths, and have the highest maternal mortality rate among all ethnic groups.

293. It also notes that women of minority and ethnic communities suffer higher rates of depression and mental illness, while women of Asian descent have higher suicide and self-harm rates.

294. **The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to prevent and eliminate discrimination against ethnic and minority women. It encourages the State party to be proactive in its measures and to raise women's awareness of the availability of social services and legal remedies. The Committee urges the State party to take effective measures to increase the participation of ethnic and minority women in the labour market, as well as in political and public life, including through the use of temporary special measures in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25. The Committee recommends that the State party take concrete measures to address the high maternal mortality rate in Traveller communities, including the allocation of adequate resources to increase access to affordable health services, in particular prenatal, post-natal and obstetric**

services, as well as other medical and emergency assistance. The Committee also recommends the adoption of targeted and culturally appropriate strategies and programmes, including preventive and interventional programmes, to address mental health issues faced by women of different ethnic and minority communities. It calls upon the State party to monitor the impact of measures taken and results achieved in both the public and private sectors and to report thereon in its next periodic report. In addition, the Committee calls upon the State party to conduct regular and comprehensive studies on intersectional discrimination against ethnic minority women, to collect statistics on their situation in employment, education, health and public life and to submit such information in its next periodic report.

295. The Committee is concerned at the situation of immigrant women and women asylum-seekers, who may be subject to multiple forms of discrimination with respect to education, health, employment and social and political participation. It notes that asylum on the grounds of gender-related persecution, including violence against women, is not frequently granted. It also notes that women in insecure immigration status are not allowed to access public funds, particularly health care services, public housing and social security benefits, with particularly negative consequences for victims of violence. The Committee is concerned that proposals to introduce pre-entry English-language tests for people applying for spouse visas may discriminate against certain groups of vulnerable refugees, in particular women.

296. **The Committee calls upon the State party to keep under review and carefully monitor the impact of its laws and policies on women migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers with a view to taking remedial measures that effectively respond to the needs of those women. In this respect, the Committee urges the State party to review its "no recourse to public funds" policy to ensure the protection of and provision of support to victims of violence. The Committee also urges the State party to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against immigrant and refugee women, both in society at large and within their communities. It calls upon the State party to pay specific attention to the vulnerability of women asylum-seekers while their claims are under examination and to ensure the full implementation of the Asylum Gender Guidelines.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

297. **The Committee urges the State party to utilize fully, in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.**

Millennium Development Goals

298. **The Committee emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.**

Ratification of other treaties

299. **The Committee notes that States' adherence to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] enhances the enjoyment by**

women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Government of the United Kingdom to ratify the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Dissemination of concluding observations

300. **The Committee requests the wide dissemination in the United Kingdom, including in its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, of the present concluding observations in order to make the people, including government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the measures that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in this regard. It also requests the State party to continue to strengthen the dissemination, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, of the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".**

Parliament

301. While reaffirming that the Government has the primary responsibility and is particularly accountable for the full implementation of the State party's obligations under the Convention, the Committee stresses that the Convention is binding on all branches of Government and it invites the State party to encourage its national parliament, in line with its procedures, where appropriate, to take the necessary steps with regard to the implementation of the present concluding observations and the Government's next reporting process under the Convention.

Follow-up to concluding observations

302. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within one year, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 261 and 263. The Committee also requests the State party to consider seeking technical cooperation and assistance, including advisory services, if necessary and when appropriate for implementation of the above recommendations.**

Date of the next report

303. **The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its seventh periodic report, as scheduled, in May 2011.**