



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org) – [cedaw@ohchr.org](mailto:cedaw@ohchr.org)

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Excellency,

In my capacity as Rapporteur on Follow-up on Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), I have the honor to refer to the examination of the combined second and third periodic report of Mauritania, at the Committee's fifty-eighth, held in July 2014. At the end of that session, the Committee's concluding observations (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3) were transmitted to your Permanent Mission. You may recall that in paragraph 53 on follow-up on the concluding observations, the Committee requested Mauritania to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 25 and 45 of the concluding observations.

The Committee welcomes the follow-up report received with a fifteen-month delay in October 2017 (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3Add.1) under the CEDAW follow-up procedure. At its sixty-ninth session, held in March 2018 in Geneva, the Committee examined this follow-up report and adopted the following assessment.

Regarding the recommendation made in **paragraph 25** of the concluding observations, urging the State party to “**expedite the adoption of legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation and to address its harmful consequences for the lives of women**”: The State party reported that in May 2017, it adopted a comprehensive children's code, which under article 70 criminalizes female genital mutilation and characterizes harmful scission and all similar practices performed on female children and qualifies them as a cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. It further indicated that data on obstetric fistulas is now collected by the National Health Information System and fistula repair, as well as reintegration of fistula patients into society through income-generating activities and the provision of material assistance was included in the national reproductive health programme.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on the adoption of a comprehensive children's code, which criminalizes harmful scission and similar practices performed on female children and qualifies them as cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. It further welcomes the support to fistula patients for their reintegration into society and the collection of data on obstetric fistula by the National Health Information System. It considers that the State party took substantial steps to implement the recommendation, and that the recommendation **has been implemented**.

Her Excellency  
Ms. Salka Mint Bilal Yamar  
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania  
to the United Nations Office at Geneva  
Avenue de France 23  
1202 Geneva

Email: [mission.mauritania.geneva@gmail.com](mailto:mission.mauritania.geneva@gmail.com)



The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is thorough and extensive, and relates directly to the recommendations. It thus considers that the information provided is **satisfactory**.

With regards to the recommendation urging the State party to “**raise the awareness of health practitioners regarding female genital mutilation and the remedies and assistance available to victims, including psychological counselling**”: The State party indicated that health professionals have been pioneers in the fight against female genital mutilation and have adopted a formal statement about the harmful impact of female genital mutilation on the health of women and girls.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on a formal statement adopted by health professionals about the harmful impact of female genital mutilation. It however regrets the absence of information on the efforts made by the State party in the reporting period to raise the awareness of health practitioners regarding female genital mutilation and the remedies and assistance available to victims, including psychological counselling. The Committee considers that the State party has taken some steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has been partially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is vague and incomplete. It thus considers that the information provided is **unsatisfactory**.

Regarding the recommendation urging the State party to “**amend its legislation on the judicial protection of children in order to prosecute practitioners whenever female genital mutilation occurs**”: The State party indicated that under the new child protection code, female genital mutilation is characterized as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and practitioners are subject to criminal prosecution.

The Committee welcomes information provided by the State party on the classification of female genital mutilation as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and regarding criminal prosecution that is applied to practitioners. The Committee considers that the State party has taken substantial steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has been implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party thorough and extensive, and responds to the recommendations. It thus considers that the information provided is **satisfactory**.

In relation to the recommendation urging the State party to “**strengthen efforts to raise awareness of the negative impact of female genital mutilation on the lives of women and recognize it as a human rights violation**”: The State party reported on the establishment of institutional mechanisms regarding the fight against female genital mutilation, on the adoption of strategic instruments against violence against women and the elaboration of a strategy against female genital mutilation, and on the implementation of operational measures for combating violence against women. Regarding specific awareness raising, the State party reported on the training of 180 imams from mosques in high-prevalence regions on the prevention of female genital mutilation, the implementation of an action plan to encourage the voluntary discontinuation of female genital mutilation in high-prevalence wilayas and the dissemination in the public and private media of a fatwa prohibiting female genital mutilation. It further indicated that it observes a day of zero tolerance for female genital mutilation, and that it is in the preparation of educational materials (booklets, pamphlets, films and modules) on female genital mutilation. Finally, the State party also informed that the prevalence of female genital mutilation has fallen from 65.8 per cent in 2007 to 54.8 per cent in 2011 and 53.2 per cent in 2015.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on the training of 180 imams from mosques in high prevalence regions on the prevention of female genital mutilation, the implementation of an action plan to encourage the voluntary discontinuation of female genital mutilation in high-prevalence wilayas and the dissemination through public and private media of a fatwa prohibiting female genital mutilation. Taking note of the classification of female genital mutilation as a cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in the new child protection code, the Committee considers that the State party has taken substantial steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has been implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is thorough and extensive, and relates directly to the recommendations. It thus considers that the information provided is **satisfactory**.

With regards to the recommendation, urging the State party to “**provide alternative means of livelihood for practitioners of female genital mutilation as a source of alternative income**”: The State party indicated that through the fund to finance income-generating activities, which was established in 2015, financing was allocated to over 1,600 women’s cooperatives established in 202 communes in high-prevalence regions of the country for a total of UM 226 million. It added that an additional UM 60 million has been proposed for this year so that the fund can finance income-generating activities for girls graduating from training centres for the advancement of women and children in order to ensure their integration into the labour market.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on the allocation and planned increase of funds to finance income-generating activities of women’s cooperatives, including of those in high-prevalence regions of the country. It however regrets the lack of measures taken to provide alternative means of livelihood for practitioners of female genital mutilation as a source of alternative income. The Committee considers that the State party has not taken sufficient steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has not been implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is vague and has failed to address the recommendation. It thus considers that the information provided is **unsatisfactory**.

The Committee recommends that, in relation to **paragraph 25** of the concluding observations, the State party provide, **in its next periodic report**, information on further actions taken to:

- 1. Raise the awareness of health practitioners regarding female genital mutilation and the remedies and assistance available to victims, including psychological counselling.**
- 2. Provide alternative means of livelihood for practitioners of female genital mutilation as a source of alternative income.**

In relation to the recommendation made in **paragraph 45** of the concluding observations, that the State party “**carry out a process to monitor the condition of Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women in the State party and establish a procedure to identify those who remain subjected to slavery and release them from any relation with current or former masters**”: The State party indicated that it makes no distinction among its citizen, and that under its Constitution, they are all equal before the law. It further reported that on 6 March 2014, it adopted a road map for the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery, established an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Prime Minister and adopted an action plan for its implementation. It added that in this framework, on 10 September, 2015 Act No. 2015-031 which criminalizes slavery and punishes slavery-like practices was adopted. It added that this Act grants non-governmental organizations the right to intervene as a third party in court proceedings. The

State party further reported on the observance of 6 March each year of the national day to address the consequences of slavery, the organization of awareness-raising campaigns on the unacceptability of slavery, as well as on the approval of a plan of action to combat child labour.

The Committee takes note of the indication by the State party that under its Constitution, all citizen are equal before the law. Considering the situation of Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women in the State party, who are sometimes under slave-like conditions, face restrictions on access to land and live in impoverished areas of the State party with limited access to education, employment and health services, the Committee welcomes the adoption of a road map for the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery and action for its implementation, such as legislative measures allowing non-governmental organizations to intervene as third party in court proceedings. It however regrets that the State party has not taken measures to monitor the condition of Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women in the State party, and especially to identify those who remain subjected to slavery, and to release them from any relation with current or former masters. The Committee considers that the State party has not taken sufficient steps to implement the recommendation, and thus considers that the recommendation **has not been implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is vague and fails to address the recommendation. It thus considers that the information provided is **unsatisfactory**.

Regarding the recommendation that the State party “**establish specific programmes aimed at providing income for Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women who are former slaves and a special social security scheme with non-contributory benefits for Haratine and Afro - Mauritanian women in the form of a temporary special measure**”: The State party indicated that to better target potential beneficiaries of social protection services, a national poverty register is being prepared. It further informed on the implementation of several projects and initiatives under social safety net programmes for the most vulnerable social groups, including income-generating projects for persons affected by the consequences of slavery and a cash transfer programme to help finance enrolment for their school-age children. It moreover indicated the construction of 22 schools, of 48 additional classrooms in 15 existing schools, the setting up of 20 local clinics, the drilling of 39 boreholes, the installation of 18 drinking water systems, the construction of 6 dams and the completion of 6 agricultural development projects.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on the development of measures to better target potential beneficiaries of social protection services, and on the implementation of projects and initiatives under social safety net programmes for the most vulnerable social groups, which include income-generating projects for persons affected by the consequences of slavery and financial support to guarantee the enrolment of their children. Regretting the absence of information on the creation of a special social security scheme with non-contributory benefits for Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women, the Committee considers that the State party has taken some steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has been partially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is thorough and extensive, but fails to respond fully to the recommendations. It thus considers that the information provided is **partially satisfactory**.

With regards to the recommendation urging the State party to “**accelerate the process of adopting and implementing a national plan of action against racial discrimination, bearing in mind the importance of such a plan to preventing ethnic conflicts in the State party**”: The State party reported that its Constitution prohibits any racial or ethnic discrimination, and that a bill criminalizing discrimination has been submitted to its government for approval. It further informed that its Criminal Code addresses discrimination in section II on crimes and offences against individuals. The State party also described its legislation prohibiting

incitement to acts of racial discrimination, especially in access to public services and employment, banning publications or discourse that incite hatred or ethnic and regional prejudice, prohibiting political parties from incitement to intolerance or violence and criminalizing slavery and torture.

The Committee takes note of the information provided by the State party on existing legal provisions regarding discrimination, as well as on the state of adoption of a specific legislation regarding discrimination. Bearing in mind the importance of a national plan of action against racial discrimination to preventing ethnic conflicts in the State party, the Committee however regrets the lack of information on measures taken to accelerate adoption and implementation of such a plan. It considers that the State party has taken insufficient steps to implement the recommendation. The Committee thus considers that the recommendation **has not been implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party fails to address the recommendation. It thus considers that the information provided is **unsatisfactory**.

Regarding the recommendation that the State party “**monitor the situation of refugee women, in partnership with relevant international organizations, with a view to identifying their protection needs and promoting their participation in society**”: The State party reported that the Malian refugee populations are housed in the M’berra camp, which is managed jointly by the Government of Mauritania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It further informed that the populations there receive assistance in all areas (health, education, water and sanitation, food, security etc.) and that the State party and its partners make every effort to ensure that women and their rights are protected.

The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party on the provision of assistance in the areas of health, education, water and sanitation and food security to the Malian refugee populations in the M’berra camp. It however regrets the absence of information on efforts made to monitor the specific situation of refugee women in the State party, with a view to identifying their protection needs and promoting their participation in society. The Committee considers that the State party took some steps to implement the recommendation. It considers that the recommendation **has been partially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party fails to address the recommendation. It thus considers that the information provided is **unsatisfactory**.

The Committee recommends that, in relation to **paragraph 13** of the concluding observations, the State party provide, **in its next periodic report**, information on further actions taken to:

1. **Carry out a process to monitor the condition of Haratine and Afro - Mauritanian women in the State party and establish a procedure to identify those who remain subjected to slavery and release them from any relation with current or former masters.**
2. **Establish specific programmes aimed at providing income for Haratine and Afro-Mauritanian women who are former slaves and a special social security scheme with non-contributory benefits for Haratine and Afro - Mauritanian women in the form of a temporary special measure.**
3. **Expedite the adoption and implementation of a national plan of action against racial discrimination, bearing in mind the importance of such a plan to preventing ethnic conflicts in the State party.**



**4. Monitor the situation of refugee women, in partnership with relevant international organizations, with a view to identifying their protection needs and promoting their participation in society.**

Accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hilary Gbedemah'.

Hilary Gbedemah  
Rapporteur on follow-up  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women