

The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)

The All-China Women's Federation, founded in April 1949, is the largest national women's organization in the country, consisting of national, local and grassroots organizations, as well as group members. It aims to represent and safeguard the rights and interests of women and promote equality between men and women. ACWF enjoys consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, actively participating in women related activities in UN and across the world. It has established friendly ties with many organizations for women and children in the world, and plays a positive role in the exchanges among women home and abroad.

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1. ACWF follows closely the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review Cuba by the UN Human Rights Council. We believe that the Cuban government has made great efforts and achieved remarkable results in the promotion and protection of human rights, especially in safeguarding women's rights and interests. The status of Cuban women has improved significantly since the last review.

2. ACWF noted that Cuba has improved the legal framework that protects human rights of all citizens and has further guaranteed the principle of equality in law. The Constitution revised in 2019 guarantees that Cuban citizens enjoy and exercise their rights in accordance with the principles of progress, equality and non-discrimination, and that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities in the economic, political, cultural, labour, social, family and other fields. The Family Code, promulgated in 2022, strengthens equality within the family, protects the rights and interests of vulnerable family members and promotes the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. Both laws were adopted by referendum, a process of mass consultation that fully expresses the will of citizens and develops their political rights.

3. Cuba has incorporated the concept and measures for the protection and promotion of human rights into national economic and social development and into programmes for the development of women and children. The National Plan for Economic and Social Development until 2030 (PNDES 2030) gives priority to women, children, the elderly, rural populations, young people, people with disabilities and low-income groups. The Program for the Advancement of Women (PAM), adopted in 2021, establishes specific objectives, actions and implementation units in seven areas: women's economic empowerment, media and education, participation in

decision-making, legislation and oversight, sexual and reproductive health, and statistics and research, contributing to the effective institutionalisation of gender equality in Cuba. In recent years, the Cuban government has also enacted and implemented comprehensive policy measures aimed at raising social gender awareness and protecting women's rights and interests, including *The Comprehensive Strategy for the Prevention of Gender Violence and Violence in the Family for the Period 2021-2030*, *National Sex Education Program*, and *Decree-Law No. 56 On Working Mothers and Family Responsibility*.

4. Cuban women enjoy full and equal rights to participate in the national economy, politics, society and other areas. Women's participation in decision-making is increasing and is now among the highest in the world. In 2021, 52.3% of the members of the Cuban Council of State were women. Eight of the 34 members of the Council of Ministers are women. 53.3% of elected governors and vice-governors are women. Women hold 53% of the seats in the Cuban Parliament. About 80% of notaries, civil registrars and land registrars in the judicial system are women. Women account for 80% of judges and prosecutors. The Attorney General and one Deputy Attorney General are women. 63% of trade union leaders are women, an increase of 14% since 2012. Cuban women fully exercise their right to participation and decision-making in public affairs, representing and defending women's rights and interests.

5. Cuba is committed to promoting women's economic empowerment, decent work and equal pay for equal work. The employment rate of Cuban women is high, with 45.5% of the workforce being women. The unemployment rate is only 1.6%, the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Cuban government has taken positive measures to improve care infrastructure and reduce the burden of care on women,

thereby supporting their participation in the labour market. 1078 childcare centers, 157 nursing homes and 300 grandparents' homes have been built throughout the country. Working women are entitled to up to one year of maternity leave and other maternity benefits.

6. Cuba provides free education for all citizens and ensures equal access to education for all, including women. Cuba's universal education system covers the entire educational process, from pre-school to higher education, and encourages all individuals to obtain the highest level of education possible according to their own conditions. The average length of schooling for women is 10.2 years. Women account for 65.2% of university graduates and 66.7% of workers with advanced technical or vocational training.

7. Cuba protects women's right to health and has established an equitable, accessible and universal health system that provides free public health care services for all, including women. Free universal health care has raised per capita life expectancy in Cuba to the level of the most developed countries. Cuban women's life expectancy has reached 80.45 years and the maternal mortality rate is 21.4 per 100,000 live births. The Cuban government has taken active measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The government has worked to promote nutrition for the most vulnerable groups and has implemented all types of maternal and child health programmes, including the promotion of breastfeeding, the prevention and control of anaemia and maternal health care. Cuba was the first country in the world recognised by the World Health Organization as having eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis, and the only country that has eliminated child malnutrition in Latin America

and the Caribbean, as recognised by the United Nations specialised agencies.

8. We note that in the face of COVID-19, Cuba has made it a priority to protect people's right to life and health and has developed 5 types of vaccines independently. Cuba has sent 58 international medical teams to 42 countries and regions to help fight the pandemic. Cuban women's rights have been taken into consideration and been well-protected in the COVID-19 response and post-pandemic recovery measures. Besides, women have played a leading role in vaccine development and medical assistance.

9. Cuba has maintained extensive cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms, and has signed 44 international human rights instruments. In October 2020, Cuba returned to the UN Human Rights Council. Cuba has actively participated in the work of all types of UN human rights treaty bodies and strengthened international cooperation in the field of human rights, demonstrating a firm political will to promote and protect human rights. In the process of formulating and implementing laws and regulations, Cuba has actively fulfilled its obligations under various conventions and international commitments.

10. Overall, Cuba has made remarkable progress in protecting and promoting human rights and advancing gender equality through effective social programmes and public policies. Cuba has long been subject to economic sanctions and embargoes imposed by the United States. There are difficulties in obtaining agricultural products and educational materials. Cuban citizens are not yet able to buy all the food and everyday goods they need from the market. Successive years of natural disasters and energy sanctions have strained Cuba's electricity supply. All of this has hindered

improvements in the quality of life for all, including women, and undermined the Cuban people's right to survival and development. We call on the US to immediately and fully lift its economic, trade and financial embargo against Cuba.

11. ACWF suggests that the Cuban government overcome the difficulties and take further effective measures to promote women's development in tandem with economic and social development, in accordance with Cuba's national conditions, while preserving the gains already made. We suggest that the social norms and prejudices that restrict women be eliminated and that the full participation of women in social activities be further promoted; that the principle of gender equality be implemented in laws and policies in all social practices to achieve de facto equality between men and women; that women's rights and interests be actively safeguarded and their livelihoods effectively improved to create an environment favourable to the livelihood and development of women and their families; and that Cuban women and the entire population be entitled with equal rights in all areas to achieve sustainable development.