

Universal Periodic Review

(51st Session)

Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information

Saint Kitts and Nevis

I. RATIFICATION OF UNESCO CONVENTIONS

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance, approval or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Acceptance on 10 July 1986			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	Ratification on 15 April 2016			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	Ratification on 26 April 2016			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	Not ratified	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education

II. REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Discrimination in education (UNESCO consultations)

1. [Saint Kitts and Nevis submitted a](#) report for the 10th consultation on the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, but did not submit a report for the 11th consultation.

Constitution and main education law(s)

2. The [Constitution of Saint Kitts and Nevis, adopted in 1983](#), does not guarantee the right to education but it prohibits discrimination (article 15).
3. The [Education Act of 2005, as amended in 2007](#), does not comprehensively enshrine the right to education as it only enshrines the entitlement to receive education (article 14). It contains a principle of non-discrimination (article 28). The same act provides for 11 years of compulsory primary and secondary education, starting at the age of 5 years (articles 2 and 26). It provides that education in public schools shall be without tuitions fees, which does not equal free education as other direct fees and charges are allowed (articles 2, 16 and 26).
4. No disposition guaranteeing free or compulsory pre-primary education has been identified.

Legal age of marriage

5. The minimum legal age for marriage in Saint Kitts and Nevis is age 18. However, under article 28 of the [Marriage Act \(Cap. 12.09\)](#), individuals aged 16 or 17 may marry with parental consent. In exceptional circumstances, a special license may permit marriage from the age of 15 with the approval of the Attorney-General. According to the [Joint CEDAW-CRC General Recommendation/Comment](#), child marriage, also referred to as early marriage, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age.

Corporal punishment

6. Corporal punishment remains lawful in educational settings, as the [Education Act of 2005](#) permits its use when deemed the only suitable or effective form of discipline (article 49).

Enrolment rates

7. Most recent UIS available data for the gross enrollment rates is as follows:

	Pre-primary education (net) (2023)	Primary education (gross) (2023)	Secondary education (gross) (2023)	Tertiary education (gross)
Girls	98.94%	117.03%	130.73%	No recent data available
Boys	100%	125.27%	144.94%	No recent data available
Total	99.47%	121.12%	137.51%	No recent data available

Investment in education

8. According to UIS data, in Saint Kitts and Nevis, in 2023, the government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 3.50%, and 9.08% of the total government expenditure. According to the latest data available, in 2025 the government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure was 11%.

Comprehensive sexuality education

9. During the last cycle, Saint Kitts and Nevis was recommended to enhance the integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into its national education system (130.128 and 130.129). A [2022 assessment of the Health and Family Life Education](#) (HFLE) curriculum confirmed alignment with the revised International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, and emphasized ongoing teacher training to ensure effective delivery across all levels of schooling. Furthermore, the [2022–2027 National Gender Equality Action Plan](#) and the [National Social Protection Strategy](#) outline commitments to expand inclusive sexuality education and implement social support programmes targeting out-of-school youth and adolescents.

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Constitutional and Legislative framework

10. Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 3 of the 1983 Constitution of Saint Kitts and Nevis.¹
11. Under the Libel and Slander Act (1876)², defamation and libel are considered criminal offences that can lead to a maximum of three years of imprisonment. Under the Sedition and Undesirable Publications Act (1938)³, defamation of officials can be considered a criminal offense.
12. While the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was passed in 2018⁴, it underwent significant amendments in 2023⁵ and 2024.⁶ The 2023 amendments clarified timeframes for access to information and streamlined reporting obligations, while the 2024 bill modified appointment eligibility for the Information Commissioner. The 2023 amendments repealed Part 7 of the FOIA, which had contained whistleblower protections, and a Whistleblowers Protection Act was introduced in 2023.⁷

¹ See the Saint Christopher and Nevis Constitution Order of 1983 at:

<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Kitts/kitts83.html>

² https://lawcommission.gov.kn/wp-content/documents/Act02and09TOC/Ch-04_18-Libel-and-Slander-Act.pdf

³ https://lawcommission.gov.kn/wp-content/documents/Act02and09TOC/Ch-04_34-Sedition-and-Undesirable-Publications-Act.pdf

⁴ See <https://www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Saint%20Kitts%20and%20Nevis/>.

⁵ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2023/12/08/freedom-of-information-amendment-act-no-4-of-2023/>

⁶ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2024/02/29/freedom-of-information-amendment-bill-2024/>

⁷ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2023/12/08/st-kitts-and-nevis-whistleblowers-protection-act-2023/>

Implementation of legislation

13. The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) established under the Telecommunications Act 2 of 2000, is responsible for the regulation of the broadcasting sector.⁸ Commissioners of the NTRC are appointed by the Minister responsible for communications.⁹

Safety of Journalists

14. Since 2006, when systematic monitoring began, UNESCO recorded no killing of journalists in Saint Kitts and Nevis, on its Observatory of Killed Journalists.¹⁰

C. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

15. The Constitution of Saint Kitts and Nevis does not mention the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or any other science-related rights.
16. Saint Kitts and Nevis has not ratified the ICESCR or its Optional Protocol.
17. Saint Kitts and Nevis did not include in its Third Cycle National Report (2020) an explicit reference to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, or inherent rights such as scientific freedom and made no reference to science-related rights. Recommendations were made that Saint Kitts and Nevis undertake specific science-related initiatives aimed at climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience, such as addressing the threats posed to ecosystems and food sources by ocean acidification and salt intrusion, which are consequences of carbon emissions and rising sea levels (A/HRC/47/7/Add.1, [130.75-79]). No Recommendations were made in respect of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or its inherent rights such as scientific freedom. Saint Kitts and Nevis did not submit its national report on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers for the first consultation covering the period from 2017 to 2021, nor has it yet done so for the second consultation from 2021 to 2025.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

⁸ <http://www.ntrc.kn/home-generic-v1-2/>

⁹ <http://www.ntrc.kn/telecommunications-act-2-of-2000/>

¹⁰ Accessed on 15 May 2025.

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

18. Saint Kitts and Nevis should be encouraged to:
- i. Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
 - ii. Consider enshrining the right to education within the Constitution.
 - iii. Enshrine the right to education within the legislation.
 - iv. Guarantee in the legislation at least twelve years of free primary and secondary education.
 - v. Introduce legislation to make pre-primary education compulsory and free for at least one year.
 - vi. Amend the legislation to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is 18 years old without exception.
 - vii. Legally proscribe corporal punishment in education settings.
 - viii. Increase efforts to finance education, by allocating at least 4%-6% of GDP to education; and/or at least 15%-20% of public expenditure to education, in accordance with international benchmarks.
 - ix. Continue to ensure regular reporting to UIS on education data, especially on tertiary education.
 - x. Regularly submit comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.
 - xi. Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's [Observatory on the Right to Education](#) and [HerAtlas](#).

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

19. The Government is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within civil defamation legislation that is in accordance with international standards.
20. The Government is recommended to ensure that the access to information legal framework is consistent and in accordance with international standards.
21. The Government may also consider strengthening the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act by raising public awareness of access rights and training public authorities in the processing of information requests.

C. RIGHT TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY (CULTURAL RIGHTS)

22. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and

Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), Saint Kitts and Nevis is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Saint Kitts and Nevis is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, migrants, refugees, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

D. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

23. Saint Kitts and Nevis is invited to continue its efforts to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation and monitoring of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in accordance with the relevant Decisions of UNESCO's Executive Board (216 EX/Decision 45 of May 2023). In that context, Saint Kitts and Nevis is invited to engage with UNESCO's Program on the promotion of scientific freedom and the safety of scientists and support the related Call to Action in line with the Recommendation and decisions of UNESCO's General Conference (42 C/Resolution 26 of November 2023) and Executive Board (219 EX/Decision 30 of March 2024). The Call to Action underlines the need to protect science and scientific researchers, and to allow for a free and safe science ecosystem where there is trust in science and where scientific evidence informs decision making. UNESCO stands ready to support Saint Kitts and Nevis in developing and nurturing its science ecosystem, and protecting its scientific researchers, including through the incorporation of appropriate legal and administrative measures in line with international law. Saint Kitts and Nevis is invited to collaborate directly with UNESCO, through its Secretariat and specialised Sectors, for that purpose.
24. Against this background, Saint Kitts and Nevis is invited to consider the following:
 - i. Submit a national report to the 2nd consultation on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in line with the Circular Letter by UNESCO's Director-General (CL/4448 of 28 November 2024) and the guidelines contained therein.
 - ii. Explore ways to strengthen the status of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits in its legal system, including in its Constitution and any other appropriate legal and policy frameworks.
 - iii. When implementing measures to guarantee the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to information, and the right to education, include within those measures the freedoms indispensable for scientific research, and access to scientific education at all levels.
 - iv. Expand input on issues covered by UNESCO's Recommendation in its national report to the UPR – particularly providing information about the implementation of the right to science and scientific freedom, including the latter in its report addressing more broadly freedom of opinion and expression.

This will allow further discussions thereon at the Human Rights Council and the formulation of specific recommendations.

- v. Ratify the ICESCR and its Optional Protocol.