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Iceland

The present report is a compilation of the information contained in reports of the treaty bodies and special procedures, including observations and comments by the State concerned, in reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in other relevant official United Nations documents. It is presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints. For the full texts, please refer to the documents referenced. The report does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights other than those contained in public reports and statements issued by the Office. It follows the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council in its decision 17/119. Information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes. The report has been prepared taking into consideration the periodicity of the review, and developments during that period.

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Please recycle



I. Background and framework

A. Scope of international obligations¹

1. International human rights treaties²

	<i>Status during previous cycle</i>	<i>Action after review</i>	<i>Not ratified/not accepted</i>
<i>Ratification, accession or succession</i>	ICERD (1967)		OP-CAT (signature, 2003)
	ICESCR (1979)		ICRMW
	ICCPR (1979)		CRPD (signature, 2007)
	ICCPR-OP 2 (1991)		ICPPED (signature, 2008)
	CEDAW (1985)		
	CAT (1996)		
	OP-CAT (signature only, 2003)		
	CRC (1992)		
	OP-CRC-AC (2001)		
	OP-CRC-SC (2001)		
	CRPD (signature only, 2007)		
ICPPED (signature only, 2008)			
<i>Reservations and/or declarations</i>	ICCPR (reservations: arts. 10 (2) (b) and (3) (second sentence), 14 (7) and 20 (1), 1979; withdrawal of reservations: art. 8 (3) (a), 1993 and art. 13 (3), 2009)		
	ICCPR-OP 1 (reservation: art. 5 (2), 1979)		
	CRC (withdrawal of declarations: art. 9, 2009)	CRC (withdrawal of declarations: art. 37, 2015)	
<i>Complaints procedures, inquiries and urgent action³</i>	ICERD, art. 14 (1981)		OP-ICESCR
	ICCPR, art. 41 (1979)		OP-CRC-IC
	ICCPR-OP 1 (1979)		ICRMW
	OP-CEDAW, art. 8 (2001)		OP-CRPD (signature, 2007)
	CAT, arts. 20, 21 and 22 (1996)		ICPPED (signature, 2008)
	OP-CRPD (signature only, 2007)		
	ICPPED (signature only, 2008)		

2. Other main relevant international instruments

	<i>Status during previous cycle</i>	<i>Action after review</i>	<i>Not ratified</i>
<i>Ratification, accession or succession</i>	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide		
	Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court		
	Palermo Protocol ⁴		
	Convention on refugees and its protocol ⁵		Conventions on statelessness ⁶
	Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Additional Protocols I, II and III ⁷		
	ILO fundamental conventions ⁸		ILO Conventions Nos. 169 and 189 ⁹
			Convention against Discrimination in Education

1. The Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights reported that Iceland, during its universal periodic review in 2012, had undertaken several commitments, including considering the ratification of OP-ICESCR and OP-CAT.¹⁰ He noted that Iceland had not yet accepted that children and adults might bring complaints under CRC and ICESCR.¹¹ The Independent Expert reported that the Icelandic response to the banking collapse showed that the Government took its commitments to protect social and economic rights seriously; consequently, it seemed appropriate that Iceland should ensure that its population has access to those international complaints mechanisms.¹²

2. Five international human rights mechanisms¹³ invited Iceland to consider ratifying one or more treaties, including CRPD¹⁴ and its Optional Protocol,¹⁵ OP-ICESCR,¹⁶ OP-CAT,¹⁷ ICPPED,¹⁸ ICRMW¹⁹ and OP-CRC-IC.²⁰

3. Regarding the implementation of a first-cycle recommendation,²¹ the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recommended that Iceland accede to the conventions on statelessness.²²

4. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that Iceland ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.²³

5. In 2012, the Human Rights Committee invited Iceland to reassess the reasons for having entered reservations to articles 10 (2) (b) and (3), 14 (7) and 20 (1) of ICCPR, with a view to withdrawing them.²⁴

B. Constitutional and legislative framework

6. The Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice noted that the economic crisis had triggered a broad public debate that had led to an attempt to introduce constitutional changes. For that purpose, in 2011 Parliament had

appointed a Constitutional Council, composed of 25 delegates from the citizenry, which had delivered its proposal for a completely revised Constitution. The proposal emphasized the need for checks and balances between the three branches of Government, and principles of accountability. It stressed the need for transparency, fairness, protection of the environment; national ownership of natural resources, with rules for efficient and fair exploitation; and prioritizing the fight against corruption. It stated that men and women should enjoy equal rights in all respects and without discrimination. Additionally, the proposal set out an extensive programme on social rights. A national non-binding referendum, held in October 2012, resulted in a 49 per cent turnout, with approximately two thirds of the voters affirming the proposal of the Constitutional Council to be used as the basis of a legislative bill for a new Constitution. However, Parliament was unable to conclude its work on the bill before the April 2013 elections.²⁵

7. Concerned that it did not encompass all rights as contained in ICESCR, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that the draft Constitution be further revised.²⁶

8. While taking note of the State's aim to incorporate all human rights instruments to which it was a party into domestic law, the Human Rights Committee regretted that ICCPR had not yet been incorporated into the domestic legal order.²⁷

9. Concerned that, among other things, there was a lack of adjudicated cases by the courts containing references to CEDAW, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland fully incorporate CEDAW into, and make it an integral part of, national legislation without delay.²⁸

10. The Human Rights Committee recommended that Iceland introduce torture as a specific crime in its penal code, employing a definition in line with article 7 of ICCPR and carrying sanctions appropriate to the gravity of the crime.²⁹

C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy measures

11. The Independent Expert on foreign debt noted that, during its previous universal periodic review, Iceland had committed to actively examining the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).³⁰ He reported that in early 2013, the Ministry of the Interior had drafted a national action plan on human rights, which included the establishment of a human rights institution. However, the plan had not yet been submitted to Parliament. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe had recently highlighted the important role that national human rights institutions and other human rights protection bodies could play in the context of economic crises. Based on their current legal mandates, neither the Althing Ombudsman nor the Ombudsman for Children could fulfil the role of a national human rights institution. While the Icelandic Human Rights Centre carried out many activities similar to those of human rights institutions in other countries, it lacked the required legal status and adequate and stable funding.³¹

12. Five international human rights mechanisms³² called for the establishment of a national human rights institution with a broad mandate and adequate resources, in line with the Paris Principles,³³ including specific mandates on women's human rights³⁴ and social, economic and cultural rights.³⁵

13. Concerned that there was a complicated system of complaints mechanisms established under various government agencies, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Iceland consider giving the Ombudsman for Children the competence to handle individual complaints and ensure that the mechanism is accessible to all children.³⁶

The Committee recommended that Iceland establish an effective permanent mechanism for coordinating the implementation of child rights policies by all relevant bodies at all levels.³⁷ It encouraged Iceland to adopt a new national plan of action on children and adequate follow-up mechanisms for full implementation of the plan and ensure that it is equipped with an evaluation and monitoring mechanism.³⁸ The Committee recommended that Iceland introduce budget tracking from a child right's perspective with a view to monitoring and evaluating budget allocations for children.³⁹

14. The Working Group on discrimination against women commended the appointment of the Special Investigation Commission of the Althingi to discover the causes, including gender analysis, of the downfall of the Icelandic banks and related events.⁴⁰

15. The Independent Expert on foreign debt recommended that Iceland further improve the institutional design and regulatory framework of oversight of the banking industry so as to manage potentially destabilizing capital flows and strengthen parliamentary oversight of them.⁴¹

II. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

A. Cooperation with treaty bodies

1. Reporting status

<i>Treaty body</i>	<i>Concluding observations included in previous review</i>	<i>Latest report submitted since previous review</i>	<i>Latest concluding observations</i>	<i>Reporting status</i>
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	March 2010	-	-	Combined twenty-first to twenty-third reports overdue since 2013
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	May 2003	-	November 2012	Fifth report due in 2017
Human Rights Committee	March 2005	-	July 2012	Sixth report due in 2018
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	July 2008	2014	March 2016	Ninth report due in 2020
Committee against Torture	May 2008	-	-	Fourth report overdue since 2012
Committee on the Rights of the Child	January 2003 (on CRC)/ June 2006 (on OP-CRC-AC and OP-CRC-SC)	-	October 2011	Combined fifth and sixth reports due in 2018

2. Responses to specific follow-up requests by treaty bodies

Concluding observations

<i>Treaty body</i>	<i>Due in</i>	<i>Subject matter</i>	<i>Submitted in</i>
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	2011	National human rights institution; temporary work permits for foreign workers; dropout of students with immigrant background ⁴²	-
Human Rights Committee	2013	Wage gap and representation of women in decision-making positions; child sexual abuse ⁴³	2015 ⁴⁴
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	2018	National plan against sexual and domestic violence; temporary special measures to increase women's representation in the police force, on the Supreme Court and as ambassadors ⁴⁵	-

Views

<i>Treaty body</i>	<i>Number of views</i>	<i>Status</i>
Human Rights Committee	1 ⁴⁶	Follow-up dialogue closed, with a partly satisfactory implementation of the recommendation ⁴⁷

B. Cooperation with special procedures⁴⁸

	<i>Status during previous cycle</i>	<i>Current status</i>
<i>Standing invitation</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Visits undertaken</i>		Discrimination against women Foreign debt

Responses to letters of allegation and urgent appeals During the period under review, no communications were sent.

16. In 2014, the Working Group on discrimination against women thanked Iceland for agreeing to the country's first visit by a special procedure mechanism.⁴⁹ Both the Working Group and the Independent Expert on foreign debt referred to good practices in Iceland that should be shared with the international community.⁵⁰

C. Cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

17. Iceland contributed financially to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2012 and 2013.⁵¹

III. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

A. Equality and non-discrimination

18. In 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, covering all grounds, in line with European Union directives 2000/78/EU and 2000/43/EU.⁵² Related recommendations were made by three other human rights mechanisms,⁵³ including the Human Rights Committee, which recommended, *inter alia*, that enforcement of the Media Act, proscribing hate speech, be extended to social media.⁵⁴

19. In 2014, the Working Group on discrimination against women reported that, for some time, Iceland had been considered a world leader on gender equality and women's rights.⁵⁵ It commended the good practice of an equal pay certificate for companies meeting the equal pay standard.⁵⁶ It welcomed the reinforcement of men's role as agents of change in advancing equality⁵⁷ and noted with appreciation the extension of parental leave to 12 months whereby fathers, by 2016, would have non-transferable leave of 5 months.⁵⁸ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed the adoption of the Public Financing Act (No. 123/2015), incorporating gender-responsive budgeting, and the introduction of a new definition of direct and indirect discrimination.⁵⁹

20. The Working Group on discrimination against women noted that, despite achievements, unresolved gaps remained in the areas of discrimination in the labour market and gender-based violence.⁶⁰ Annual salaries of women remained, on average, one third lower than men. The job market remained sex-segregated.⁶¹ Only 2 of 12 Supreme Court justices and 14 of 38 District Court judges were women, while there were more female than male law graduates.⁶² Few gender pay-gap cases had been brought to courts.⁶³ Of the total complaints received by the Althing Ombudsman, only 25 per cent had emanated from women, a low percentage, given that women constituted 57 per cent of public service employees.⁶⁴

21. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland adopt without delay the new plan of action on gender equality and systematically implement gender-responsive budgeting in programming.⁶⁵

22. The same Committee recommended that Iceland continue its efforts to fully implement the Equal Pay Management Standard and further amend the legislation in order for the equal pay principle to apply, without the limitation to "the same employer"; and provide adequate funding to the Centre for Gender Equality to enable it to monitor compliance by companies with the provisions of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men.⁶⁶ The Working Group on discrimination against women recommended that the Government improve the Centre's geographical location and accessibility and made four recommendations on women's economic empowerment.⁶⁷ The Committee recommended that Iceland develop and implement a plan of action to diversify occupational choices by men and women consider applying gender quotas on the boards of companies with 49 or fewer employees and adopt targeted measures to facilitate access by single mothers to the labour market and support them in having a better balance between family and working life.⁶⁸

23. The same Committee was concerned about the difficulties encountered by migrant women in employment and health care and about their exposure to violence, and that the Multicultural and Information Centre was located outside the capital and not easily

accessible. The Committee recommended that Iceland develop targeted programmes and strategies to increase the awareness of migrant women of their rights, free legal aid and effective remedies if their rights have been violated.⁶⁹ The Working Group on discrimination against women recommended that the Government provide migrant women with opportunities to learn the Icelandic language.⁷⁰

24. The Working Group noted that a new law on the rights of transgender individuals had been adopted in 2012, improving their legal status.⁷¹

B. Right to life, liberty and security of person

25. The Human Rights Committee recommended that Iceland establish a system of regular and independent monitoring of places of detention, including psychiatric facilities.⁷²

26. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned about persisting attitudes and stereotypes leading to violence against women.⁷³ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern that the number of cases of violence against women was increasing.⁷⁴ While welcoming the establishment of a national prosecution authority in charge of sexual offence cases and of a committee tasked to consider proposals on improvements in the handling of rape cases, the latter Committee called on Iceland to address the causes of the high number of acquittals in sexual violence cases.⁷⁵

27. In 2014, the Working Group on discrimination against women reported that it had received information regarding a recent Supreme Court case in Iceland that raised concern. While the perpetrators in that case had been charged with sexual assault, four of the five Supreme Court justices had ruled that the facts of the case had not met the criteria for a charge of sexual assault, as the assailants' intent had not been to achieve sexual gratification, but rather "only" to physically hurt the victim. The Working Group had also been informed of cases in which rape charges had been dismissed because the prosecution had decided that the injuries could have been sustained during "rough sex".⁷⁶

28. The Working Group concluded that access to justice for women victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence was alarmingly low and there were significant problems in the legal definition of, effective prevention, prosecution and conviction of and punishment for sexual violence; protection orders to remove perpetrators of domestic violence from the home were ineffective, and there was a lack of capacity-building for law enforcement agents, including the police, prosecutors and the judiciary.⁷⁷ There was a clear need to make efforts to increase the gender sensitivity of the judiciary.⁷⁸ The Working Group recommended that the Government base the definition of rape on lack of consent by the victim so that proof of physical violence by the perpetrator or physical resistance or mental incapacity of the victim are not required elements of the crime.⁷⁹

29. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted the intention of Iceland to amend the penal code, specifically to criminalize domestic violence, and to ratify and fully implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and made related recommendations.⁸⁰ It recommended that Iceland adopt, without delay, a national plan against sexual and domestic violence that takes into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrant women and women with disabilities and provides adequate human and financial support to expand to all police districts the cross-cutting approach of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police to combating domestic violence.⁸¹

30. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that immigrant women remained insufficiently aware of the amendments to the Act on Foreigners, which stated that a family reunification permit might still be extended when a

marriage/cohabitation ended due to domestic violence.⁸² The Human Rights Committee recommended that Iceland intensify measures to raise awareness of domestic violence, including through training for judges, prosecutors, police and health officers, and awareness-raising campaigns targeted at Icelandic and immigrant women on their rights and available remedies.⁸³

31. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was concerned that few reports of sexual abuse of children led to prosecution and even fewer to conviction.⁸⁴ The Human Rights Committee recommended, *inter alia*, that Iceland establish Government-coordinated measures aimed at prevention of sexual abuse of children and ensure that education about child sexual abuse and prevention become a formal part of the curriculum in faculties training teachers, other professionals working with children, health professionals, lawyers and police officers.⁸⁵

32. The Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed amendments to the penal code whereby the use of prostitution, in particular involving children, was criminally punishable. Nevertheless, it reiterated its previous recommendation that Iceland amend its legislation in order to abolish the requirement of double criminality for prosecution in Iceland of offences committed abroad.⁸⁶

33. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted the legislative changes prohibiting strip clubs, but remained concerned at the disproportionately high number of migrant women working in “champagne clubs”. It recommended that Iceland offer exit programmes to women wishing to leave prostitution, including to migrant women.⁸⁷

34. The same Committee welcomed the adoption of the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons (2013-2016) and of Act No. 72/2011, amending the penal code by increasing the maximum penalty for the crime of trafficking in persons.⁸⁸ It remained concerned at the lack of: funding for the implementation of the Plan, particularly for the police to investigate cases of trafficking in persons; disaggregated information on trafficking for forced labour; and prosecutions for trafficking-related crimes.⁸⁹

C. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

35. Concerned that article 198 of the Code of Criminal Procedure restricted the right of appeal for persons convicted of a minor criminal offence, except in certain circumstances and with the authorization of the Supreme Court, the Human Rights Committee recommended its revision.⁹⁰

36. Expressing concern that Iceland had not fully implemented the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland provide spaces in prison appropriate for women and family meetings.⁹¹

37. The Committee on the Rights of the Child reiterated the recommendation that Iceland guarantee by law the separation of detained children and adults, and urged Iceland to find a practical and reasonable solution to detain children and adults separately.⁹²

38. The same Committee recommended that Iceland ensure that all children victims and/or witnesses of crimes are provided with the protection required by CRC, and encouraged courts to make use of the Children’s House for obtaining testimonies from children.⁹³

39. The Independent Expert on foreign debt commended the efforts of the Special Prosecutor to combat impunity for economic crimes and ensure justice in relation to alleged

criminal conduct before and during the banking collapse.⁹⁴ He recommended that Iceland implement the outstanding legal reforms identified by the Parliamentary Committee established to consider the recommendations of the Special Investigative Commission; enhance laws relating to the accountability of government officials, thereby strengthening judicial independence; and impose employment restrictions in the private sector for former senior government officials, in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe.⁹⁵

40. The Independent Expert recommended that Iceland maintain the provision of resources to the Office of the Special Prosecutor so as to ensure that it could, inter alia, conduct investigations into past, current and future criminal economic activities and tax evasion.⁹⁶

D. Right to family life

41. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was concerned that the best interests principle might not be fully taken into account, especially in ensuring parents' access to the child, and recommended that Iceland ensure that in such cases the principle always be given priority.⁹⁷ Regarding family disputes, it recommended that Iceland revise its social benefits programmes for assisting vulnerable families and increase its funding to mediation services for parents.⁹⁸

E. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly, and the right to participate in public and political life

42. The Human Rights Committee was concerned that Iceland levied a church tax from citizens, regardless of whether they were members of a religious organization. It recommended that Iceland amend the Act on Religious Organizations to ensure that all life stance organizations have access to State funding.⁹⁹

43. UNESCO recommended that Iceland decriminalize defamation within a civil code that is in accordance with international standards.¹⁰⁰

44. The Independent Expert on foreign debt noted that Iceland, with a population of about 320,000, had an active civil society, well-rooted democratic traditions, a high degree of trade union organization, a long tradition of collective bargaining and conflict resolution through dialogue and compromise, and a public administration that was overwhelmingly willing and competent to respond to its citizens' needs.¹⁰¹

45. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women commended Iceland on the high percentage of women in Parliament and welcomed measures to increase the representation of women in the police.¹⁰² One or more treaty bodies remained concerned about the low number of women police officers and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, including in the judiciary, the Supreme Court, the foreign service (ambassadors), academia and local government.¹⁰³ The Committee recommended that Iceland take temporary special measures.¹⁰⁴

F. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

46. The Independent Expert on foreign debt noted that many long-term unemployed were expected to have to rely on the minimum social security net offered by municipalities, which were not well prepared, either administratively or financially, to support the increasing number of people seeking assistance. He recommended that Iceland address

unemployment through a comprehensive employment policy, with special focus on groups at risk of long-term unemployment, such as young people and immigrants.¹⁰⁵

47. Related recommendations were made by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including that Iceland take legislative and other measures to introduce a national minimum wage and ensure that the minimum wage is periodically reviewed and set at a level sufficient to provide all workers and their families with a decent standard of living.¹⁰⁶

48. The same Committee recommended that temporary work permits be issued for a specific type of work/remunerated activity and specific time, and that appeals against decisions by the Directorate of Labour on applications for temporary permits or revocations of such permits could be brought by employees alone, rather than needing the additional approval of the employer.¹⁰⁷

49. Concerned about the process for determining the terms and conditions of the employment of fishermen, the Committee recommended that Iceland improve the existing procedures for collective bargaining, with the aim to promote free and voluntary collective bargaining and to ensure that compulsory arbitration is avoided.¹⁰⁸

G. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

50. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that, despite measures taken, the national financial and economic crisis had had a negative impact on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It recommended that any proposed policy change or adjustment by Iceland in reaction to the economic crisis be of a temporary nature; be necessary and proportionate; not be discriminatory and comprise all possible measures, including tax measures, to support social transfers to mitigate inequalities and to ensure that the rights of the disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups were not disproportionately affected; and identify a social protection floor and the minimum core content of rights.¹⁰⁹

51. The Independent Expert on foreign debt concluded that Iceland had managed the financial crisis better than many other countries and must continue its efforts to ensure that nobody is left behind. Household debt relief measures had successfully protected the majority of homeowners — but not all — from poverty and social exclusion.¹¹⁰ He reported on the reintroduction of a progressive income tax system, which had helped to shelter the most vulnerable groups from the effects of the crisis, and noted that social transfers and taxation policies had reduced inequality.¹¹¹ It was not only the smart and more targeted use of funds that had ensured that core social and economic rights had remained protected, but also the willingness of society — in particular the overwhelmingly female workforce in the health and education sectors — to work overtime, accept a salary freeze and use resources more efficiently. As the Working Group on discrimination against women had stressed, such gender imbalances caused by the financial crisis in Iceland needed to be corrected.¹¹²

52. The Independent Expert referred to the establishment of Welfare Watch as an innovative response to the financial crisis, observing that it monitored the social impact of the crisis, provided advice to State institutions and coordinated targeted interventions on the ground.¹¹³ In 2010, the Government had established the Office of the Debtor's Ombudsman. Initially, most requests for debt mitigation had come from homeowners; however, that trend had shifted in 2014. Currently, more than half of all debt mitigation applicants lived in rented homes.¹¹⁴

53. The Independent Expert recommended that Iceland: provide further targeted debt relief for poor and highly indebted households; ensure that everyone has access, on an equal and fair footing, to social security benefits of last resort that provide a minimum essential

level of benefits that are monitored and adjusted regularly according to the cost of living; continue its efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, in particular of young families with children, single-parent families, persons with disabilities, immigrants and individuals who are dependent on the rental market; improve access to affordable housing for people who are dependent on the rental market; improve rental market regulations; and strengthen the legal protection of tenants.¹¹⁵ Three treaty bodies made related comments and recommendations.¹¹⁶

54. The Independent Expert commended Iceland for reducing poverty, particularly among elderly women, by increasing the government-guaranteed minimum pension.¹¹⁷

H. Right to health

55. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that the extensive cuts to the health sector budget since 2008 had reduced the quality and availability of public health-care services. It also expressed concern about the financial constraints for families with children with disabilities in accessing required health-care services. The Committee recommended that Iceland increase its public health-care budget.¹¹⁸ The Independent Expert on foreign debt reported that most of the cuts in the health sector had focused on decreasing hospital costs, postponing investments in hospital infrastructure and the acquisition of new equipment and reducing pharmaceutical costs.¹¹⁹

56. The Committee on the Rights of the Child made several recommendations in relation to the right to health, including that Iceland: integrate children of immigrants into its health system; continue to educate the public about healthy nutrition;¹²⁰ raise awareness among adolescents about reproductive health and negative impacts of early pregnancies and abortions; and provide access to contraceptives and counselling services on reproductive health, including psychological counselling.¹²¹

57. The same Committee was concerned that the waiting lists for mental health diagnosis and treatment were long.¹²²

58. The Committee recommended that Iceland continue to take all appropriate measures, in particular life-skills education, to protect children from illicit use of narcotic drugs and alcohol, and provide recovery programmes designed for child victims of drug and substance abuse.¹²³

I. Right to education

59. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that the extensive budget cuts to the educational sector since 2008 had led to a reduction in staffing, merging of class groups and cancellation of courses.¹²⁴ The Independent Expert on foreign debt reported that in the education field, primary schools were hardest hit by cuts, while pre-primary and tertiary education institutions suffered less.¹²⁵ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that Iceland increase the budget for the public education system and continue to improve school facilities for children with special needs, particularly at the upper secondary level.¹²⁶

60. The Independent Expert on foreign debt noted that Iceland had one of the highest rates of early school leaving in Europe, with boys and immigrant children being at particular risk of dropping out of upper secondary school before attaining the minimum qualifications. The Government had identified tackling secondary school dropout as one of its priorities.¹²⁷ The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Iceland monitor the situation and detect children working at too early an age and motivate them to

finish secondary education.¹²⁸ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland take measures to support migrant girls' integration into the school system, including by providing language classes, if needed.¹²⁹

61. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Iceland enhance measures to combat all forms of bullying and harassment by improving school regulations on misbehaving and improving the capacity of teachers, all those working at schools and students to accept diversity and improve their conflict resolution skills.¹³⁰

J. Cultural rights

62. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was concerned that funding for female artists in the film and music industry remained low, and made related recommendations.¹³¹

63. The Committee recommended that Iceland make sports education more attractive and culturally appropriate for girls and promote women's and girls' participation in sports clubs.¹³²

K. Persons with disabilities

64. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that Iceland combat and prevent discrimination, especially against persons with disabilities, particularly with respect to the rights to education, housing and social assistance.¹³³ It recommended that Iceland take steps to ensure access to cultural events for persons with disabilities through sufficient and timely availability of their transport facilities.¹³⁴ The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that data collected on persons with disabilities be disaggregated also by the nature of the disability, age and gender.¹³⁵

L. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

65. The Working Group on discrimination against women reported that immigrants represented 8.3 per cent of the total population in 2009 and approximately 16 per cent in 2013, confirming that Iceland was undergoing an unprecedented demographic change, with a steady increase of persons of foreign origin, including immigrants, migrant workers and their families, refugees and asylum seekers.¹³⁶

66. Regarding the implementation of a previous recommendation on statelessness,¹³⁷ UNHCR reported that Iceland had taken concrete steps towards accession to the conventions on statelessness by funding the mapping of statelessness and developing a national action plan, and by incorporating provisions pertaining to the protection of stateless persons in the bill proposing amendments to the Act on Foreigners.¹³⁸ UNHCR commended other initiatives in the bill, including those that would immediately grant permanent residence permits to individuals granted international protection; it also raised some concerns.¹³⁹ The Human Rights Committee recommended that Iceland review its legislation on refugees to ensure that it fully complies with ICCPR and international standards on refugees and asylum seekers.¹⁴⁰

67. Commending the willingness of Iceland to improve its asylum procedure, UNHCR recommended that Iceland address deficiencies identified in relation to the efficiency and quality of the procedure.¹⁴¹

68. Noting some key integration challenges, such as the lack of housing, interpreters and psychological counselling, UNHCR recommended that Iceland develop a comprehensive national integration strategy and programme.¹⁴²

M. Right to development, and environmental issues

69. The Working Group on discrimination against women stated that unlike several other countries in the world that had faced financial crisis, Iceland had chosen not to offer immediate repayment to creditors of the country's banks, thus alleviating the economic burden on society. Instead, the International Monetary Fund had consented to a recovery programme, which was conditional on Iceland reimbursing its creditors for their losses over a prolonged period.¹⁴³

70. Welcoming the strong efforts by Iceland to contribute to international cooperation, the Committee on the Rights of the Child encouraged the State to meet its target of reaching 0.7 per cent of gross national product by 2015.¹⁴⁴

71. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Iceland continue to strengthen the role of women in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in related climate change issues.¹⁴⁵

Notes

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, the status of ratification of instruments listed in the table may be found on the official website of the United Nations Treaty Collection database, Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, <http://treaties.un.org/>. Please also refer to the United Nations compilation on Iceland from the previous cycle (A/HRC/WG.6/12/ISL/2).

² The following abbreviations have been used in the present document:

ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
OP-ICESCR	Optional Protocol to ICESCR
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR-OP 1	Optional Protocol to ICCPR
ICCPR-OP 2	Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
OP-CEDAW	Optional Protocol to CEDAW
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
OP-CAT	Optional Protocol to CAT
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
OP-CRC-AC	Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict
OP-CRC-SC	Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
OP-CRC-IC	Optional Protocol to CRC on a communications procedure
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
OP-CRPD	Optional Protocol to CRPD
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

³ Individual complaints: ICCPR-OP 1, art. 1; OP-CEDAW, art. 1; OP-CRPD, art. 1; OP-ICESCR, art. 1; OP-CRC-IC, art. 5; ICERD, art. 14; CAT, art. 22; ICRMW, art. 77; and ICPPED, art. 31. Inquiry procedure: OP-CEDAW, art. 8; CAT, art. 20; ICPPED, art. 33; OP-CRPD, art. 6; OP-ICESCR, art. 11; and OP-CRC-IC, art. 13. Inter-State complaints: ICCPR, art. 41; ICRMW, art. 76; ICPPED, art. 32; CAT, art. 21; OP-ICESCR, art. 10; and OP-CRC-IC, art. 12. Urgent action: ICPPED, art. 30.

⁴ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

⁵ 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

⁶ 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

⁷ Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (First Convention); Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (Second Convention); Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Third Convention); Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Convention); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III). For the official status of ratifications,

- see International Committee of the Red Cross, www.icrc.org/ihl.
- ⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
- ⁹ ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).
- ¹⁰ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 18.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 6.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, para. 83 (p).
- ¹³ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights.
- ¹⁴ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 54, E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 21, CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 59, A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (e) and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (p).
- ¹⁵ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 35 (d).
- ¹⁶ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 20, CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 59, A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (e) and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (p).
- ¹⁷ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 59.
- ¹⁸ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 54, E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 21, CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 59 and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (p).
- ¹⁹ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 54, E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 21, CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 59 and A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (e).
- ²⁰ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (p).
- ²¹ For full text, see A/HRC/19/13, para. 63.4 (Slovakia); see also A/HRC/19/13/Add.1.
- ²² UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Iceland, p. 6.
- ²³ See UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Iceland, para. 39 (i).
- ²⁴ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 4.
- ²⁵ See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 38.
- ²⁶ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 4.
- ²⁷ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 4.
- ²⁸ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 7 and 10.
- ²⁹ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 8.
- ³⁰ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 18.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, para. 19.
- ³² The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights
- ³³ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 7, CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 14 and CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 5.
- ³⁴ See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (a) (ii) and CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 14.
- ³⁵ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 7 and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (o).
- ³⁶ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 16 and 17.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 13.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 15.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 19.
- ⁴⁰ See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 91. See also A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 30-32 and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 70.
- ⁴¹ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (k).
- ⁴² See CERD/C/ISL/CO/19-20, para. 26.
- ⁴³ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 17.

- 44 CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5/Add.1.
- 45 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 55.
- 46 CCPR/C/91/D/1306/2004.
- 47 A/67/40 (Vol. I), pp. 114-115.
- 48 For the titles of special procedure mandate holders, see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx.
- 49 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 3.
- 50 Ibid., paras. 91-98 and A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, paras. 67-78.
- 51 *OHCHR Report 2013*, p. 177 and *OHCHR Report 2012*, p. 161.
- 52 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 10.
- 53 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 6, E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 5 and A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 25-26.
- 54 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 6.
- 55 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 99.
- 56 Ibid., paras. 94-97.
- 57 Ibid., para. 16. See also CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5/Add.1, p. 1 and A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 98.
- 58 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 20.
- 59 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 4 (a) and (b) and 11.
- 60 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 61.
- 61 Ibid., para. 63.
- 62 Ibid., para. 70.
- 63 Ibid., para. 65.
- 64 Ibid., para. 59.
- 65 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 12.
- 66 Ibid., para. 30 (a) and (c).
- 67 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (a) (iii) and (c).
- 68 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 30 (d) and (e) and 34.
- 69 Ibid., paras. 43-44.
- 70 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (d) (ii).
- 71 Ibid., para. 24.
- 72 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 11.
- 73 See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 15.
- 74 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 19.
- 75 Ibid., paras. 19-20.
- 76 See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 71.
- 77 Ibid., para. 99; see also paras. 66-83.
- 78 Ibid., para. 70.
- 79 Ibid., para. 100 (b) (ii); see also para. 100 (b) (i) and (iii)-(viii).
- 80 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 19.
- 81 Ibid., para. 20.
- 82 See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 15. See also A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 87 and 100 (b) (vii).
- 83 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 9. See also E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 15.
- 84 See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 52.
- 85 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 15.
- 86 See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 54-55.
- 87 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 23 and 24 (e). See also A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 100 (b) (viii).
- 88 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 4 (c) and (g).
- 89 Ibid., para. 23.
- 90 See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 12.
- 91 See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 45 (c) and 46 (c).
- 92 See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 10 and 57. See also CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 11 and, further, para. 4.
- 93 See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 58.
- 94 See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 43.
- 95 Ibid., para. 83 (l).
- 96 Ibid., para. 83 (m).
- 97 See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 26 and 27.
- 98 Ibid., paras. 30 and 31.

- ⁹⁹ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 13.
- ¹⁰⁰ UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Iceland, para. 41.
- ¹⁰¹ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 76.
- ¹⁰² See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 25.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., paras. 25 and 26, E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 8 and CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 7.
- ¹⁰⁴ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 15 (a), 16 (a) and 28 (c).
- ¹⁰⁵ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, paras. 52 and 83 (a).
- ¹⁰⁶ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 11; see also para. 9.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., para. 10.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., para. 12.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., para. 6.
- ¹¹⁰ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 79.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., para. 35.
- ¹¹² Ibid. para. 33. See also A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (f) and A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 29-32, 62-65, 99 and 100 (c).
- ¹¹³ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, paras. 34 and 69. See also A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 33-40.
- ¹¹⁴ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 64. See also A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, paras. 12-14, 63, 65-66.
- ¹¹⁵ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 83 (b)-(e).
- ¹¹⁶ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, paras. 13 and 16, and see also para. 6; CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 18-19, and see also para. 6; and CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 33-34 and 43-46.
- ¹¹⁷ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 68.
- ¹¹⁸ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 17.
- ¹¹⁹ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 29.
- ¹²⁰ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 37. See also E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 17.
- ¹²¹ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 43. See also CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 36.
- ¹²² See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 38.
- ¹²³ Ibid., para. 45.
- ¹²⁴ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 18. See also CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 46-47.
- ¹²⁵ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 29.
- ¹²⁶ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 18. See also CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 46-47.
- ¹²⁷ See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 61. See also E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 18 and CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 46 (c) and 47 (c) and CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 27-28.
- ¹²⁸ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para 51 (b).
- ¹²⁹ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 28 (f).
- ¹³⁰ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 47 (b).
- ¹³¹ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 39-40.
- ¹³² Ibid., para. 28 (e).
- ¹³³ See E/C.12/ISL/CO/4, para. 5.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., para. 19.
- ¹³⁵ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 35 (c).
- ¹³⁶ See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 85.
- ¹³⁷ For full text, see A/HRC/19/13, para. 63.4 (Slovakia); see also A/HRC/19/13/Add.1.
- ¹³⁸ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Iceland, pp. 4 and 6.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 4 and 8-9.
- ¹⁴⁰ See CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5, para. 10.
- ¹⁴¹ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Iceland, pp. 6-7.
- ¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁴³ See A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, para. 28.
- ¹⁴⁴ See CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, paras. 24-25.
- ¹⁴⁵ See CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, paras. 42 and 52. See also A/HRC/26/39/Add.1, paras. 92-93.