

**UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**92nd Session of the CEDAW Committee
2 -20 February 2026**

**INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF
JURISTS' SUBMISSION TO THE CEDAW
COMMITTEE IN VIEW OF THE
ELABORATION OF AN ADDENDUM TO
CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATION
No. 24**

Statement by Patricia Schulz, Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists

Side Event on the Elaboration of an Addendum to CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24 (Women and Health) during the 92nd session of the CEDAW Committee

Composed of 60 eminent jurists and lawyers from all regions of the world, the International Commission of Jurists promotes and protects human rights through the Rule of Law, by using its unique legal expertise to develop and strengthen national and international justice systems. Established in 1952 and active on five continents, the International Commission of Jurists aims to ensure the progressive development and effective implementation of international human rights and international humanitarian law; secure the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; safeguard the separation of powers; and guarantee the independence of the judiciary and legal profession.

Statement by Patricia Schulz, Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists, at a side event on the elaboration of an addendum to CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24 (Women and Health) during the 92nd session of the Committee on 17 February 2026

Committee members, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I deliver this statement as Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

We welcome the updating of GR 24 and urge the Committee to address the harmful impact of certain criminal laws on women's health, equality and other human rights.

The backlash against human rights targets especially women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and those of LBT women, sex workers, women who use drugs and women experiencing homelessness or poverty. Continued use and a proliferation of arbitrary and unjustified criminal laws lead to egregious human rights violations, stigma, harmful gender stereotypes, discrimination and social and economic exclusion. Unjustified and arbitrary criminalization increases risks of lack of access to health services, of ill treatment and, therefore, of ill health.

The need to address the proliferation of unjustified and arbitrary criminalization is urgent. The removal of such laws is a first critical step to protect women's human rights, including their right to health, and to improve public health.

I thus commend to you [The 8 March Principles](#) issued by the ICJ in 2023;¹ they offer a clear, accessible and operational legal framework and practical legal guidance, based on general principles of criminal law and international human rights law. They promote the decriminalization of, among others, conduct associated with sexual and reproductive health and rights, including abortion, as well as other conducts whose criminalization also detrimentally impacts women's health, such as consensual sexual activities, including sex work; HIV non-disclosure, exposure or transmission; drug use and the possession of drugs for personal use; and homelessness and poverty.

Thank you

¹ ICJ, The 8 March Principles for a Human Rights-Based Approach to Criminal Law Proscribing Conduct Associated with Sex, Reproduction, Drug Use, HIV, Homelessness and Poverty, March 2023, available at https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Principles-Report_English.pdf.