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Ruth Maguire
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

11th October 2019

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your letter of 12 July 2019 to the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs regarding the evidence you have gathered around Engender's shadow report to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. I am responding as these matters sit within my responsibilities and I would like to first of all apologise for the delay in replying.

The Scottish Government's progress on the realisation of human rights, and our contribution to reporting on that progress, are crucial areas of work. The reporting process enables us to set out clearly what we have achieved and also to focus on areas where we still have work to do. I therefore welcome the Committee's attention in this area and have set out below specific responses to the questions raised in your letter.

Data and its use in progressing equality for women

A large majority of Scotland's official data collections allow data to be broken down in relation to men and to women. The Scottish Government's **Equality Evidence Finder** website presents summaries of this data and directs users, including those in Public Authorities, to more detail available through the source publications. Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy is aimed at further improving the equality evidence base by identifying and filling data gaps.

To supplement that, we are currently working closely with stakeholders to develop a **Gender Equality Index** – making use of existing data and also identifying additional data that can be analysed by gender. It is expected that a baseline index will be published in Summer 2020. After that Scottish Government will be in position to think more broadly about continuing data gaps. At that point it might be helpful for stakeholders, such as Engender, to help identify specific areas where data isn't available for women and then we can use this to prioritise and take forward action.

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We are also working to ensure that data is available to support specific policies that predominantly affect women and girls. For example:

- Following the publication of the **gender pay gap action plan**, *A Fairer Scotland for Women*, officials are working with the Ministerial working group to develop a suite of indicators to monitor progress on the range of inequalities that drive the gender pay gap.
- The Delivery Plan for **Equally Safe**, Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, includes a full set of national indicators to measure progress towards the outcomes, drawing on a range of national data sources. The Social Attitudes Survey module on attitudes towards violence against women is currently being run across Scotland and findings will be available in 2020.

In addition the Committee will be aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People announced on 20 June that we would establish a working group on sex and gender in data, led by Scotland's Chief Statistician, and comprised of data professionals from Scottish Government and key public sector bodies.

The aim of the working group is to consider issues relating to the collection and reporting of data on sex and gender, and to develop and produce guidance for public bodies to use when deciding on data collection and disaggregation in different circumstances, to ensure that the methods used are appropriate. It will also contain guidance on how to report and publish statistics about a person's sex and gender.

Support for the UN treaty body system

In response to Scottish Government questions concerning UK payments to the CEDAW Committee, UK Government officials have stated that the UK has paid its contribution in full. However, in order to align with the UK financial year, the payment is made in two instalments and the second had not been processed before the UN compiled its list of states that had not contributed.

Nevertheless, it is concerning that so many UN member states and signatories to CEDAW have not met their commitment to adequately fund the essential work undertaken by the Committee. I will therefore write to the UK Minister for Women and Equalities to highlight the wider funding problem and urge the UK Government to encourage other countries to fulfil their obligations in this regard.

More broadly the Scottish Government welcomes scrutiny of our record and actively engages with UN and other international human rights monitoring mechanisms across the seven core UN human rights treaties ratified by the UK, as well as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Council of Europe treaties.

This enables us to ensure that, while we contribute to UK Government reporting on implementation of human rights treaty obligations, we highlight Scotland's distinctive approach. To support this the Scottish Government publishes its own separate position statements ahead of treaty body examinations, and is normally represented by an SG official in UK delegations at the UPR and during reviews by treaty monitoring bodies. I have regularly informed the Committee about past and forthcoming treaty reporting activity, and will do so again shortly.

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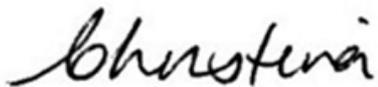
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The Committee may also be aware that the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership met for the first time last week. I am a member of that group, which is co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People and Professor Alan Miller. The work of this group will clearly be crucial, as it considers the recommendations of the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership and develops a new statutory framework to improve human rights protection for everyone in Scotland.

I hope that this assures you of the Scottish Government's active commitment to the realisation of human rights, and associated reporting mechanisms, both at a domestic and a global level.

Yours sincerely,



CHRISTINA McKELVIE

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