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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Second periodic report of States parties due in 2003

Sudan*

[27 July 2012]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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Annexes*

* Annexes may be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.

I. Background

1. The Sudan is one of the largest countries in Africa in terms of its surface area, which was reduced after the secession by roughly one quarter, from 2.5 million to 1.881 million km². Its borders with Ethiopia also diminished in length from 1,605 to 725 kms and with the Central African Republic from 1,070 to 380 kms but remained the same with Chad at 1,300 kms, with Libya at 380 kms, with Egypt at 1,280 kms, and with Eritrea at 605 kms. The length of its borders with the south remains at 2,000 kms.

2. The Sudan has 2 million feddans of agricultural land. No boundary settlement has yet been reached in Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

3. The Sudan has borders with seven States: Egypt and Libya to the north; South Sudan to the south; Chad and the Central African Republic to the west; and Ethiopia and Eritrea to the east. It is separated from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the Red Sea.

4. Estimates of the population for the period 2006–2010 and of its distribution by state for both 2009 and 2010 are contained in annexes 1 to 4, which include tables and diagrams showing the precise details.

5. In its concluding observations on the Sudan's previous report, the Committee noted the lack of demographic and social indicators, details of which are now provided in annexes 5 and 6 to this report. A census being a key source of data on population size and demographics, five population censuses have thus far been conducted in the Sudan. The first was in 1956, the second in 1973, the third in 1983, the fourth in 1993 and the last in 2008, when the population stood at 39.2 million, with males accounting for 51.3 per cent and females for 48.7 per cent of the figure. The census of 2008 showed that the size of the population had increased by 53 per cent since the census of 1993.¹

6. The overall population density in the Sudan was estimated at about 16 persons per km² in 2008. The population is concentrated in the strip of land along the Nile and its tributaries and in the rich savannah areas from east to west. In essence, the population density is ultimately determined by physical, economic and administrative factors. The most populous states are those of Khartoum and Gezira (238 and 153 persons per km², respectively) because access to basic education, health and security services and jobs is better in those two states than elsewhere. Natural disasters and armed conflicts have also caused millions to migrate from the south, west and east to the capital and the central region, with the result that development policies and projects must be formulated to even out the population density among the different states.

7. According to the census of 2008, the under-15 age group accounts for 42.6 per cent of the population, meaning that the Sudan has a young society. The over-60s account for 5.2 per cent. These two age groups are unproductive and the consequently high dependency rates are something that the State has to take into consideration (see annex 7).

Water sources and rivers

8. The main physical feature in the Sudan is the River Nile and its tributaries. The river begins with the White Nile, with its source at Lake Victoria in Uganda, and continues through the State of South Sudan to Khartoum, where it meets the Blue Nile coming from

¹ Source of information: Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, National Population Council, *Population features and dynamics in the Sudan*, 2010.

Lake Tana in Ethiopia. Thereafter known as the River Nile, it meets Atbarah River at the town of Atbarah. The Nile network provides the country with large agricultural areas, creating highly fertile land between the White Nile and the Blue Nile and also between Atbarah River and the Blue Nile. The country's capital, Khartoum, is located at the confluence of the White Nile and the Blue Nile. Most towns are similarly located on river banks, where a high proportion of the population is found. The Sudan's groundwater sources are essentially as follows:

- (a) The Nubian groundwater basins, covering an area of 763,300 km², with an estimated water reserve of 12.6 billion m³;
- (b) The Umm Rawabah basins, covering an area of 628,800 km², with an estimated water reserve of 4.15 billion m³;
- (c) Modern and other sedimentary basins, with an estimated water reserve of 3.43 billion m³;
- (d) Essential aquifers.

The soil in the Sudan

9. There are three distinct types of soil in the Sudan: sandy soil in the northern and western regions; clay soil in the central region; and desert soil in the southern region. The Sudan has diverse climates, ranging from desert in the north to poor and rich savannah in the centre, while the Marrah mountains, the Arkawit region and the Nuba mountains have their own climates. This climatic diversity gives the Sudan the advantage of being able to produce different field and horticultural crops.

10. In most parts of the country, maximum average temperatures reach 100°F during almost all months of the year. Continental storms are sometimes frequent in the centre and north of the country, particularly in the summer months from March to July, heralding the approach of the rainy season from July to October. The Red Sea coast has a maritime climate, with heavy winter rains.

11. Arabic is the country's predominant language and English is also widely used. Both are official languages, in accordance with article 8 of the Interim National Constitution of the Sudan of 2005.

Currency

12. The basic unit is the Sudanese pound (SDG).

Measures and weights

13. The Sudan uses the universal metric system for measures and weights, which comprises the following:

- The kilogram as the unit of weight;
- The litre as the unit of capacity;
- The metre as the unit of length;
- Land measurement units including the feddan (4,200 m² = 1,038 acres = 0.42 hectares).

Tourist sites

14. There are a number of tourist sites, including:
- Arkawit tourist resort – eastern Sudan;
 - Sawakin town – eastern Sudan;
 - Arous Tourist Village – eastern Sudan;
 - Sanganab Marine National Park – eastern Sudan;
 - Dinder National Park – Blue Nile state (central Sudan);
 - Marrah mountains – western Sudan.

(See annex 8 on number of tourists and tourism revenue.)

Museums

15. There are numerous museums in the nation's capital, namely the:
- Sudan National Museum;
 - Natural History Museum;
 - Bayt al-Khalifah Museum;
 - Republican Palace Museum;
 - War Museum.

There are also several museums in the states.

II. Methodology for preparation of the report

16. The Sudanese Government accorded special attention to this report, it being among the reports that the State was very late in submitting. The Minister of Justice therefore directed the chairperson of the Advisory Council on Human Rights, its rapporteur and its membership, which comprises representatives of various ministries and institutions, to take part in providing information on the Council's policy for the promotion and protection of human rights. Given that this report conveys the Government's efforts to fulfil its human rights obligations and inasmuch as reports should not be exclusively prepared by the Government, consultations were also held with civil society organizations in several advisory sessions and workshops. The most recent of these took place on 19 March 2012 and was attended by a large number of stakeholders from government agencies and civil society organizations, in addition to academics. The report was thoroughly discussed and a number of views were taken into consideration. The following entities were present for the discussion of the first draft of the report: University of Khartoum Faculty of Law; the Organization for Adolescents; the Sudanese Human Rights Group; the Social Studies Centre; the General Union of Sudanese Women; the International Women's Union; and the Child Rights Observatory.

17. Since ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1986, the Sudan has worked consistently hard to fulfil its obligations thereunder, believing in the importance of the Covenant and its role in the protection and promotion of human rights and convinced by the value of objective and constructive dialogue between the Committee and member States in order to serve the rights and freedoms of human beings and the peoples of the world.

18. On that basis, the Sudan submitted its initial report on the situation of economic, social and cultural rights, which was considered by the Committee at its 38th to 41st meetings, held in Geneva on 21 and 22 August 2000. The report and concluding observations were adopted at the 53rd meeting of the Committee, held on 30 August 2000.

19. The Sudan is submitting its second and third report under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, in 2012, which covers the reports it was due to submit by that date. The late submission of the report is due to a number of reasons, including the challenges confronting the Sudan, which are plainly clear to all and are mentioned later in this report.

20. In reviewing fundamental rights, we have followed the same order in which they are set forth in the articles of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, using a subject heading and mentioning the number of the article in the Convention.

21. We have used short paragraphs and numbered each new paragraph for ease of reference.

22. In order to reflect the implementation of rights in practice and given the difficulty of mentioning every single state, we provide examples of some of the implementation achievements attained in various states. These appear in the body of the report, to which are annexed tables indicating the actual situation in terms of giving effect to rights in the Sudan.

23. We have endeavoured to respond in the report to the concluding observations, issued on 1 September 2000, which were made by the Committee following its consideration of the Sudan's initial report.

24. Also accompanying the present report and annexes is a compact disc, produced by the Central Bureau of Statistics, which contains important data on the states for the information of the Committee and all those interested in human rights in the Sudan.

25. The Government of the Sudan affirms its sincere desire to defer to and cooperate with the Committee inasmuch as the latter is a tool for guaranteeing the promotion and protection of the rights set forth in the Covenant.

26. This report describes the situation of human rights in the north of the Sudan, for although South Sudan was not yet fully independent during part of the period covered in these reports, it is now difficult to obtain information. It is for this reason that the report deals only with the present-day State of the Sudan.

27. This report encapsulates the main aspects of progress attained in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights in the Sudan, exemplified in the efforts of the State to that end at the legislative, judicial and executive levels at a time when the country is faced with multiple challenges and difficulties. The fact that these continue to emerge does not diminish its will to pursue with determination its path towards the advancement of those rights and the development of cooperation with all active national, regional and international stakeholders through the enactment of legislation and the adoption of policies and measures.

28. After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nairobi, in January 2005, the Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan was proclaimed, on 9 January 2005.

29. The Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 2005 defines the nature of the State, identifying it as a democratic, decentralized, multicultural and multilingual country in which diverse groups, races and religions coexist. The Constitution also recognizes the principle of democracy and decentralization within a single republic, the Sudan, and further recognizes that the State has an obligation to respect and promote human

dignity, justice and equality and to advance human rights, fundamental freedoms and the multiparty system.

30. In accordance with the Constitution, the National Legislature is composed of the National Assembly and the Council of States. The National Assembly comprises members chosen in free and fair elections and its composition and the number of members are prescribed by law. The Council of States is composed of two representatives from each state who are elected by the state legislature. Each state also has a state legislature composed of members elected in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the state concerned and the law.

31. Part two of the Constitution, entitled “Bill of Rights”, makes provision for all fundamental rights and freedoms, including economic, social and cultural rights, which are therefore among the rights with respect to which legal recourse may be pursued. Article 27 stipulates that the Bill of Rights is a covenant among the Sudanese people and between them and their governments; a commitment on their part to respect and seek promotion of the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution; and the cornerstone of social justice, equality and democracy in the Sudan. It further stipulates that the State must protect, promote, guarantee and implement this Bill of Rights.

32. The Constitution provides that the rights and freedoms enshrined therein must be regulated by legislation, without detracting or derogating from either. It affirms those rights and freedoms by prohibiting their suspension, even in a state of emergency, and includes fair trial guarantees among the rights that cannot be suspended. It also treats those rights as laws with provisions that may be neither undermined nor amended by legislative institutions unless the people are consulted in a general referendum.

33. The Constitution makes no provision for an official State religion. It recognizes the Sudan as an all-embracing country, with different religions and cultures that are a source of strength, harmony and inspiration, and states that its cultural diversity is the basis of national cohesion and may not be exploited to cause division. It also states that all indigenous languages are national languages that must be developed.

34. There are several laws providing a framework for rights and the manner of their implementation. Instead of annexing those laws to the report, we have opted to indicate the website where they may be consulted, which is as follows: www.moj.gov.sd.

III. Human rights conventions ratified by the Sudan during the reporting period

35. During the reporting period, the Sudan ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The ratification of other conventions is currently under consideration.

36. In the concluding observations made following its consideration of the Sudan’s report, the Committee referred to the status of international conventions in the domestic legal order. We accordingly wish to state that these conventions are an integral part of the Bill of Rights set out in the Constitution, thereby settling any debate over this matter. Many of the provisions of such conventions are set out in the national legislation and the rights concerned are safeguarded, protected and applied in the State by the Constitutional Court and by other competent courts, in accordance with the Constitution. Article 27 (3) of the Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 2005 provides that all rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights treaties, covenants and instruments

ratified by the Republic of the Sudan are considered an integral part of the Bill of Rights. Numerous laws have been promulgated accordingly, such as the Armed Forces Act of 2007, the National Security Act, the Children's Code of 2010, the Elections Act of 2007, the Press Act of 2007, the Political Parties Act of 2007, the National Organizations Act of 2006 and the Trade Unions Act of 2009. All these laws and others may be consulted on the website of the Ministry of Justice: www.moj.gov.sd.

37. One of the issues raised by the Committee during its consideration of the previous report concerned information about the situation of refugees and displaced persons, which is set out below.

Situation of refugees²

38. The matter of asylum in the Sudan continues to preoccupy the international community, having persisted for well over four decades during which the consequences of a long-term refugee presence have been felt. The Sudan continues, as ever, to be one of the countries with the longest track records for dealing with and hosting refugees with a conviction stemming from its religious values and deep-rooted customs, traditions and cultural legacies, which made it a forerunner of the international and regional instruments governing the situation of refugees, such as the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967, and the Organization of the African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of 1969. Indeed, the Sudan was the first African State to promulgate an asylum law, in 1974, and it has extensively engaged in and provided input to a number of spheres with a view to fine-tuning those conventions, protocols and laws in line with new developments in the area of asylum.

39. The Sudan is a major donor when it comes to asylum and refugees; despite the scarcity of its resources, it has made land available to refugees for housing, agriculture and pasturage, ensured their security and permitted them to share the services provided by the State to its citizens. The Commission on Refugees was also established as a governmental body involved in caring for, protecting and assisting refugees and in drawing up plans and programmes for that purpose, in cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders. In addition, an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in Khartoum and branches opened in a number of states.

40. The Sudan's refugee experience has centred on the following elements:

(a) Engaging in international and regional cooperation, particularly with refugee-sending countries, as regulated by conventions and laws, and treating the grant of asylum as a humanitarian and civilian issue;

(b) Managing migration emergencies in the event of disaster, conflict and instability in neighbouring States;

(c) Preparing and organizing reception centres for asylum seekers and establishing refugee camps offering sustenance, essential services, employment and self-sufficiency activities;

(d) Focusing on the transition of refugees from the stage of receiving aid to that of development by adopting a policy of self-sufficiency, in which context the Sudan, in cooperation with UNHCR and various States and organizations, set up several self-sufficiency projects, including projects in cooperation with the International Labour

² Information obtained from the Ministry of the Interior, Commission on Refugees.

Organization (ILO), a rotating credit scheme and projects in refugee-affected areas, although these projects foundered for reasons of external politics;

(e) Exploring with UNHCR durable solutions to the asylum and refugee problems, including voluntary repatriation, resettlement in a third country and local integration;

(f) Supervising the return of Sudanese refugees from neighbouring countries.

Current situation of refugees in the Sudan

Refugees in camps and towns

41. There are 15 refugee camps in the Sudan: 8 in Gedaref and Kassala states; 4 in the Gezira and Sennar states; and 3 in West Darfur state.

42. The number of refugees registered in camps amounts to 85,374, broken down as follows: 64,413 living in refugee camps in eastern Sudan (Gedaref and Kassala states); 2,298 in camps in the central states (Sennar and Gezira states); and 18,636 living in refugee camps in West Darfur state.

43. An estimated 150,000 refugees live outside the camps in towns and urban areas. They receive no assistance from the international community and rely on sharing with citizens the already minimal social services available in those areas.

Challenges facing the State

44. As a result of UNHCR action to implement the decision to suspend international assistance to Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, some refugee camps were closed and merged with other camps without sufficient consideration being given to how those refugees would live and without any fair alternative being found. The majority of refugees from the closed camps therefore migrated to the major towns in search of work and stability.

45. The flow of asylum seekers persisted on the country's eastern borders in Kassala, Gedaref and Red Sea states, as well as in the central states. UNHCR also continued the policy of starving refugee camps of basic services by deploying a bare minimum of financial resources, which were insufficient for delivering the intended assistance, leading to shortages and a deterioration in the humanitarian services available in the camps (water, health, education and food). The situation in the camps in Kassala state is now such as to discourage refugees from staying for a variety of reasons, above all the fact that most recent refugees are young educated people from urban backgrounds and with high ambitions, whereas the camps are in remote rural areas, have no urban facilities and are difficult to control and monitor effectively. The key services provided to refugees are also declining, both in the old camps and in the new Shagarab camp. Refugees are therefore being driven out of these camps and spilling into towns in search of better living conditions.

46. The challenges facing the State are as follows:

- As a result of illegal migration, the involvement of organized gangs in human smuggling and trafficking activities, which start from inside the countries of the Horn of Africa and continue in the Sudan;
- Environmental degradation in the refugee-affected areas and the failure of the international community to fulfil its obligations towards this programme;
- The socioeconomic, security and health consequences for refugees, particularly those in towns, who receive no assistance from the international community but share with citizens the already minimal services made available by the State;

- Lack of any real statistics on refugees in the Sudan, notwithstanding the hope that UNHCR would provide assistance for helping to conduct a true census of those refugees;
- The lack of success in developing any clear policy on the integration of refugees into local communities, despite the fact that several workshops have been held on the subject. With the international community exerting pressure to that end, it is now imperative for the Sudan to have a clear policy concerning the integration of refugees into local communities.

Efforts of the Commission on Refugees to resolve those problems

47. The efforts of the Commission on Refugees to resolve those problems are as follows:

1. Working with UNHCR and the international community to improve refugee services in the camps;
2. Working with UNHCR and the international community to combat human smuggling and trafficking activities through workshops to raise awareness of the dangers of illegal migration and through securing assistance for advancing the fight against gangs involved in those activities;
3. Working with UNHCR and the international community to implement self-sufficiency projects for refugees in the camps, covering:
 - (a) Rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, which entails supplying farming equipment, seeds and fertilizer and preparing the land;
 - (b) Animal husbandry;
 - (c) Small-scale and skills development activities, such as metalwork, plumbing, electrical work, car mechanics, building and construction, and computing;
 - (d) Women's activities, including knitting, sewing and palm-weaving;
4. Working with UNHCR to explore durable solutions to the asylum and refugee problems by resuming voluntary repatriation programmes for Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees wishing to return home, in addition to working with UNHCR and donors to increase opportunities for resettlement in a third country;
5. Seeking to ensure that the socioeconomic and security consequences of the refugee situation are fairly and equally shared between the Sudan and the international community through supporting health and education services and reviving projects in refugee-affected areas in all refugee-hosting States;
6. Capacity-building and further training for staff working at the Commission on Refugees through creating training opportunities at home and abroad in order to enhance their expertise.

Sudanese refugees in neighbouring States (eastern Chad)

48. As part of the Darfur peace strategy, a higher committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Interior to secure the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons and refugees to the states of Darfur.

49. Two action plans were elaborated to enable the subcommittee on refugees to discharge its functions, comprising the following:

- (a) A short-term plan, for January to June 2011, for the repatriation of Sudanese refugees stranded on the Sudanese-Chadian borders;

(b) A long-term plan, for 2011, for the repatriation of Sudanese refugees in the camp in eastern Chad.

50. Once the higher committee had secured some of the necessary resources, the short-term plan was put into operation, in cooperation and coordination with the local authorities in West Darfur state, civil administrations and the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees in Geneina, and 4,000 families stranded on the borders were repatriated to the areas of Noro, Tarbiba and Angamei in West Darfur state.

51. Following the success of the automatic return, a tripartite meeting of the Government of the Sudan, the Government of Chad and UNHCR was held in Khartoum, from 26 to 27 July 2011, to discuss means of implementing the voluntary return of Sudanese refugees in Chad within the framework of the Tripartite Agreement, which is the legal instrument for the organized return of refugees, the aim being to protect refugees, the host State and the mother State.

52. The final communiqué signed by the parties referred in its introduction to the development of cooperation between the Government of the Sudan and the Government of Chad, which led to the establishment of bilateral arrangements between the two countries for discussing the matter of the voluntary return of Sudanese refugees. The communiqué confirmed the improvement in the security situation on the borders, which culminated in the signing of a bilateral agreement between the Sudan and Chad for the automatic return of refugees stranded on the borders between the two countries.

53. Meetings between the Sudan, Chad and UNHCR continued on this subject; a tripartite meeting was held in Khartoum in July 2011, in addition to a further meeting of the three parties in November 2011, in N'Djamena, in order to pursue the talks on the organized voluntary return of Sudanese refugees from Chad under the Tripartite Agreement, which is the legal framework for voluntary return. Meetings of the three parties on this subject will continue.

Situation of displaced persons

54. Displaced persons are Sudanese citizens who enjoy all the rights and duties guaranteed to citizens under the Constitution. The provision of protection and assistance to these persons is primarily the responsibility of the State, with partners delivering national and international humanitarian aid.

55. In order to deal fully with the problems of displaced persons, a displacement and voluntary return unit was established, in 2003, as a body attached to the Humanitarian Aid Commission, with the aim of following up the voluntary return programmes for these persons. After the signing of the Policy Framework between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in July 2004, it was agreed to establish two units for displaced persons, one in Khartoum and one in Rumbek, that would plan, coordinate and follow up the voluntary return programmes. In the second half of 2005, the unit was upgraded to become the National Centre for Displacement and Voluntary Return.

Activities of the National Centre for Displacement and Voluntary Return

56. Typical examples of the Centre's activities are as follows:

- Active involvement, in July 2004, in preparing the State's unified policy with SPLM on voluntary return, which resulted in the signing of the Policy Framework;
- Active involvement in discussing the details of the memorandums of understanding signed with the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR on the voluntary return of displaced persons from Darfur to their homes;

- Full coordination with Khartoum state and organizations operating in the state in order to examine the best solutions for the integration of displaced persons in the state in line with their wishes;
- Opening of branches in Kosti and the eastern states;
- The establishment of a joint task force, composed of United Nations agencies and voluntary organizations and operating under the leadership of the Centre, to coordinate the process of voluntary return to Southern Sudan and the three regions;
- Counting as one of the most important activities, the conduct of two polls, in collaboration with partners in all northern states, to determine whether displaced persons wished to return voluntarily or to remain in the host communities;
- Participation in preparing the national policy on displaced persons, which was approved by the Cabinet.

Voluntary return

Voluntary return and sources of authority

57. The importance of voluntary return is substantiated by the sources of authority ensuring the right of displaced persons to return voluntarily to their places of origin. These are:

- The Comprehensive Peace Agreement;
- The Interim Constitution;
- The report of the Sudan Joint Assessment Mission (JAM).

58. Each of these sources of authority ensures the right of displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries to return voluntarily to their places of origin, with the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan (and international partners) sharing the responsibility.

59. In accordance with international instruments and the Sudanese Constitution, return means voluntary (optional) return. In order to base these policies on objective principles, identify the size of the problem and find out whether displaced persons wished to return voluntarily to their homes of origin, a random sample survey was conducted in 2005. The survey revealed that the number of displaced persons amounted to roughly 4 million, a figure that included all of the northern states, except Darfur. Concerning the wish to return voluntarily, the findings were as follows:

1. 66.7 per cent wished to return voluntarily;
2. 21.6 per cent wished to remain in the host communities;
3. 10.9 per cent were as yet undecided.

Second survey (2006)

1. 62.07 per cent wished to return voluntarily;
2. 25.3 per cent wished to remain in the host communities;
3. 12 per cent were as yet undecided.

60. An integrated study of a third survey is now under way. One of its main objectives is to calculate the remaining number of displaced persons and the size of the reverse flow of refugees, especially in Khartoum state.

Organized voluntary return

Commencement of organized return

Displaced persons from Dinka Bor

61. The return of 134,000 displaced persons and their livestock from Eastern and Western Equatoria to the area of Bor was organized by land to avoid conflict between the Equatoria and Dinka Bor communities. Some 4,000 women and children were also returned by river from Juba to Bor.

62. Implementation of the voluntary return programmes began with a media campaign designed to inform displaced persons about the return areas, the security situation, the level of essential services and the presence or otherwise of mines, in addition to making them aware of the optional and voluntary nature of the return process. The campaign is run jointly by the National Centre for Displacement and Voluntary Return, the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) and the United Nations, in cooperation with leaders of displaced persons. Thirty-five permanent centres and five mobile teams are involved in the voluntary return arrangements and registration is supervised by five teams composed of representatives of the National Centre for Displacement and Voluntary Return, SSRRC and the United Nations. As at April 2008, 137,627 families, amounting to 568,225 individuals, had been registered.

Preparation for departure

63. Three departure centres were established in Khartoum (Ombada al-Salam), Jabal Awliya' and Mayo for the purpose of assembling returnees to prepare them for the journey, carrying out medical checks and distributing humanitarian assistance during the journey. Way stations were also established along the return route as rest stops offering basic assistance, including medical and food services. The Central Police Reserve Forces are on hand to ensure the safety of convoys transiting the states, while local community police forces ensure the safety of departure and the way stations. All available means are used for transfer purposes, i.e., land, air and the Nile corridor.

64. River transfer is along two basic corridors:

- (a) Kosti – Renk – Malakal – Shambi – Bor;
- (b) Juba – Terekeka – Bor.

65. In the case of air transfer, 15 flights were made from Khartoum airport to Juba and 1,529 returnees were transferred to Juba, Yambio, Tambura, Maridi, Yei and Mundri.

Achievements of the National Centre for Displaced Persons and Returnees for 2011

66. An overview of the main projects and programmes run by the National Centre for Displaced Persons and Returnees is provided below.

1. Details of the project for voluntary return to the State of South Sudan from April 2011 to date are as follows:

No.	Type of journey	Number of individuals	Number of families	Number of journeys
1	Total return journeys by river	22 700	5 747	16
2	Total return journeys by air	21 132	4 065	13

<i>No.</i>	<i>Type of journey</i>	<i>Number of individuals</i>	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Number of journeys</i>
3	Total return journeys by rail	7 036	1 507	6
Total		50 868	11 319	35

2. Details of the voluntary return project for displaced persons in Blue Nile state are as follows:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Journey number</i>	<i>Journey date</i>	<i>Number of buses</i>	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Number of individuals</i>	<i>Participating entities</i>
1	I	16 September 2011	5	62	311	National Centre for Displaced Persons and Returnees, the Women's League, and the Rihab organization
2	II	21 September 2011	1	15	75	National Centre for Displaced Persons and Returnees, and a benefactor
3	III	24 September 2011	10	142	712	National Centre for Displaced Persons and Returnees, the Birr and Tawasul organization, and the Welfare and Reform Organization
4	IV	5 October 2011	6	31	283	Cabinet Commissioning Committee
Total			22	250	1 381	

67. Surveys were conducted in order to calculate the number of displaced persons in Red Sea, Gedaref and Kassala states and find out whether they wished to return or to integrate. The State also approved the national policy for displaced persons for 2011 (as amended from 2009), which sets out the basic principles pertaining to the rights of displaced persons at every stage of displacement and the principles governing work among partners. It also sets out details of activities and the modus operandi.

68. A voluntary return programme for the Darfur states was also elaborated in accordance with the Doha Agreement.

Challenges

69. The challenges are exemplified in the following:

1. Continuation of the offensive by rebel movements;
2. Provision of security in the return locations and the conduct of local reconciliation initiatives;
3. Supply of minimum services in the return locations;
4. The international community's commitment to its obligations and announced financial pledges;
5. Mine clearance;

6. The spread of epidemics, such as enteritis and meningitis, in some of the southern states, which has caused delays in schedule;
7. The brevity of the dry season (December–May), which means that land transport cannot be used to the utmost advantage;
8. The need for additional efforts to prepare the return destination areas so that the number of returnees in each convoy can be increased, especially in the cases of South Kordofan state and Darfur;
9. The cramped conditions in river barges and rail carriages.

IV. Achieving economic development

70. The first priorities of the State include the delivery of essential services, the provision of legal services, a review of state laws and the development of a strategic vision with involvement at the grass-roots level by civil society organizations and community sectors. The national Government therefore stepped up its efforts, increased its diligence and adopted a systematic policy designed to create the right social and environmental conditions for promoting further development, making the most of the capacities in society and strengthening the available potential for achieving economic and social prosperity.

71. The findings of the largest and most recent survey of poverty in northern Sudan, conducted in 2009 on the basis of income and consumption, showed a poverty rate of 46.5 per cent, with sharp differences among states. The poverty gap was estimated at 16 per cent, with 8 per cent of the total population suffering extreme poverty.

72. The State formulated a quarter-century growth-oriented strategic plan (2007–2031) designed to provide services and support economic growth, in addition to increasing spending to 9 per cent of gross domestic product in 2009. Monetary policies addressed poverty issues through the allocation of 12 per cent of commercial bank ceilings to funding microfinance projects.

73. The State also undertook numerous efforts to combat poverty through attention to, among others, the education and health service sectors (annexes 9 to 14), the industrial sector (annex 15) and the petroleum and mineral production sector (annexes 16 to 18). Details of some of these efforts will be provided later in this report. We believed it appropriate, however, to reflect some of the successful experiments in this field, various policies and programmes for persons with limited incomes having been implemented in all states countrywide on the basis of the resources available in those states. Projects implemented included a cattle ownership project in Red Sea state, for which 1,000 head of dairy cattle were purchased during the period 2008–2009 at a total cost of SDG 2 million, with 200 households benefiting. Each household received five head of cattle through the Zakat Office, the Agricultural Bank, the Savings Bank and the Industrial Development Bank. Several microfinance projects were also implemented, such as fishing-boat ownership projects, a cooperative taxi project and a project for replacing traditional animal-drawn carts with motor-driven three-wheelers for use in transporting goods, water and so on.

74. In order to promote sustainable development at the state level and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the Government adopted a balanced strategy for the development of all sectors and worked to increase spending to that end. It therefore strived to put in place structural, regulatory and income-generating measures in the State. Red Sea state can be cited as an example of a state that adopted measures leading to a growth in its own revenues, which reflected positively on the increase in development spending. The

following table shows the example of revenue growth in Red Sea state during the period 2007–2010.

<i>Item/year</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
State financial revenues (SDG millions)	232	280	331.5	338
Revenue growth percentage	-	20.7	42.9	41.2

75. Development spending trends by sector in the same state for the period 2007–2010 are shown in the following table³:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Public sector</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
1	Water	35.2	14.8	2.9	17.5
2	Electricity	7.7	6.1	3.8	2.2
3	Roads	32.2	42.2	49.2	57.7
4	Health	26.2	16.9	4.9	12.9
5	Education	16.2	29.9	13.2	31.1
6	Agricultural	10.7	17.4	0.4	0.4
7	Economic	11.4	27.7	20.1	27.6
8	Sociocultural	6.8	7.6	1.9	9.6
9	Sovereign	5.9	9.2	7.1	4.7
10	Reserve	5.7	7.0	1.6	21.1
11	Total	158.5	178.8	105.1	166.8

76. The following table shows another example, which is development projects in South Darfur state.

Cost of projects implemented during 2007

<i>No.</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Approved budget</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Annual performance ratio</i>
1	Sovereign sector	600 000	26 750	4.5%
2	Engineering sector	15 247 400	7 593 684	50%
3	Health sector	5 040 000	3 187 167	63%
4	Education sector	5 877 778	1 809 154	31%
5	Agricultural sector	15 925 000	687 564	4%
	Total	42 690 178	13 300 319	31%

77. In order to compare the same sectors for projects implemented during 2008, the following table shows the rate of increase in the allocated budget and the annual performance ratio.

³ The source of the information appearing in these two tables is the State Development Administration in Red Sea state.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Approved budget</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Annual performance ratio</i>
1	Engineering sector	26 335 300	9 125 499	35%
2	Health sector	4 969 000	4 041 164	81%
3	Education sector	3 863 482	4 958 426	128%
4	Agricultural sector	14 060 000	965 238	7%
Total		49 227 782	19 090 327	39%

78. The causes of poverty in the Sudan are several and varied and exemplified in the impact of economic liberalization on poor and vulnerable population groups, the economic sanctions impeding access to international initiatives, the protracted civil wars and the mounting external debt.⁴ Despite all these major challenges that have confronted the Sudan, some of which will also be covered later in this report, it has successfully implemented a number of sophisticated development projects in various fields that we believe it appropriate to mention in this section because their influence extends to all of the economic, social and cultural rights provided for in the Covenant. Some examples are therefore set out below.

Electricity supply and rural electrification⁵

79. A number of electricity projects have been implemented in major towns, with a particular focus on rural electrification. Examples of these efforts are as follows:

(a) A project to supply Khartoum Bahri thermal power station with two 200-MW steam units was implemented at a cost of \$8.75 million for the local component and \$167 million for the foreign component, which was completed by the China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC);

(b) The Garri Phase 4 project to build a 110-MW two-boiler power plant fuelled by petroleum coke from the Khartoum refinery was implemented by CMEC, at a cost of \$149,405,000, and the service station entered into operation at the end of last year;

(c) A project to generate power by installing 30-MW hydromatrix turbines at Jabal Awliya reservoir was implemented by Austrian company VA Tech, at a cost of SDG 1 billion and 26 million euros;

(d) Work began on the Fulah project being implemented in South Kordofan by CMEC for the construction of a 405-MW three-unit power plant fuelled by natural gas, at a cost of \$680 million;

(e) Work began on a 500-KW four-unit thermal power station project being implemented at Kosti, in White Nile state, by the Indian company Anjika, at a cost of \$457.5 million.

Electricity generation in states outside the national grid

80. Electricity-generating sources have been increased in various state towns, including Fasher in North Darfur state, Nyala and Geneina in Darfur, Nuhud, Kadogli in South Kordofan, Daein, and Kassala. The rest of the towns in other states, i.e., Port Sudan,

⁴ Information derived from the Sudan's report on progress achieved in attaining the Millennium Development Goals, 2010, issued by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, General Secretariat of the National Population Council.

⁵ See annexes 19 to 20.

Karimah, Baddah, Dongola (in Northern state), Gedaref (in Gedaref state), Abyadh and Umm Rawabah (in North Kordofan state), have been connected to the national grid.

81. A number of integrated grids have been established since 2006 with the completion of 175 squares. The number of end users has risen to 930,000 and work is under way to improve the dilapidated low-pressure grids.

82. Several electrical power distribution plants⁶ have been established, with a total capacity of 900 kVA.

83. Traditional meters have been replaced with prepayment meters in order to improve service, eliminate arrears and minimize breakdowns and the proportion of low-loss lines.

Merowe dam

84. This is a Sudanese hydroelectric dam located on the River Nile at Merowe Island, from which it takes its name, in the Northern state. Its construction was completed on 3 March 2009 and is 9.2 kms in length and 67 m in height. Representing the country's largest development project with positive benefits for the national economy, Merowe dam is a multipurpose water energy project essentially designed to produce the electrical energy to meet the increasing demand for such energy to fuel socioeconomic development and provide a relatively cheap source of energy for improving irrigated agriculture and industry countrywide. The project was implemented in conjunction with a number of accompanying projects; 10,000 families, for instance, were resettled to alternative locations at a cost amounting to 40 per cent of the total project cost, a proportion indicative of the State's concern for this part of the project. Those affected by the erection of the dam were compensated in that, with the agreement of their representatives, new villages were constructed and supplied with outstanding facilities, including schools, electricity services, health centres, religious amenities and so forth. An international airport with connections to the Arab Gulf States, Africa and Europe was also constructed and the aircraft supplied with fuel. Similarly completed was the construction of a hospital and a regional network of roads and bridges.

85. The main purpose of building the dam was to generate electrical power. Generating an output of 1,250 MW, the dam plays a part in the irrigation of some 300,000 hectares of agricultural projects in the Northern state and protects them from the risk of Nile flooding. The dam will also feed a 186 km-long reservoir.

86. The construction of the dam and the relocation of citizens gave rise to a number of difficulties concerning the relocation areas and the Government engaged in talks with those concerned in order to find solutions. A migrant group of the Manasir people is still in discussion with the Presidencies of the Republic and Nile River state with a view to resolving various problems. Following the last sit-in by Manasir protestors in Damir, the President of the Republic promised to settle their problems, which serves as a commitment from him to do so.

Right to water and clean water

87. The Government of the Sudan has devoted increasing attention to supplying water to the population in all states across the country. To that end, it has implemented several projects of which the following are examples:

⁶ In Red Sea state, six 9.1-MW plants were completed and 2,500 street lamps were installed (2,000 in Port Sudan and 500 in local communities). Also implemented were a number of projects to establish the following plants: Sinkat and Gebeit power plant; Sawakin power plant; Port Sudan power plant; Haya power plant; and Osif power plant.

- Work has started on the Beryash reservoir, located in the Beryash region south-east of the town of Nuhud in North Kordofan state, which has a storage capacity of around 45,000 m³, the aim being to supply the water needed to irrigate farming land and livestock pastures;
- Work has begun on a project to increase the storage capacity of the Sawdare local reservoir by five or six times so that it stores enough water to last two years, even if there is little autumn rainwater;
- As part of the water-harvesting projects in North Darfur state, contracts were signed for digging four local reservoirs and overhauling four others in the villages of Adwah and Kabir in order to provide water for irrigating agricultural land and raising livestock, which has contributed substantially to the stability of the population;
- Eight dams and eight wells were constructed in Kassala state, representing an immense leap forward for the state in terms of supplying year-round water for its animal resources, ending the tremendous suffering experienced by some of the region's pastoral tribes and also providing water for farming in a number of areas. More importantly, the project supplies drinking water, making it one of the most important projects ever launched for ending the problem of water scarcity in eastern Sudan;⁷
- A Chinese company known as HUKN began work on Roseires dam in Blue Nile state and on the Kadugli plant in South Kordofan state as part of designing and constructing 10 dams in the states of Darfur and Kordofan to supply water for agriculture and irrigation;
- A contract was signed with Sun Hydro for the design and construction of 30 dams in the country's various states;
- In the context of water-harvesting projects, the Sudanese Government has implemented and is planning to implement still more development projects consisting in the construction of reservoirs, dams and wells in a number of states in order to ensure an adequate supply of water for agricultural, grazing and drinking purposes. The National Water Authority is the main source of statistics on urban and rural domestic water.

Transport and communications (annexes 21 to 24)

88. The Sudan has devoted particular attention to Internet and communication services, believing that these media greatly assist freedom of expression and freedom of access to and circulation of information as fundamental human rights. In that context, it has developed this field substantially, providing high-speed broadband Internet services via submarine cables instead of satellite by constructing and linking two such cables to global submarine cables. In 2010, the figure for Internet users in the Sudan stood at 4.2 million, making it the fifty-seventh country in the world and fifth in Africa in terms of number of users.

⁷ In Red Sea state, the water networks extend over a distance of 970 kms and there are 30 hydro stations, 315 artesian and surface wells, and 27 dams. During the period 2006–2007, the percentage of those receiving water services rose from 17 to 60 per cent.

Government efforts to fight corruption

89. Prosperity and economic development are unattainable without fighting corruption, to which end the Government enacted a number of laws, including the:

- Prevention of Unlawful and Suspicious Enrichment Act of 1989;
- Prevention of Money-Laundering Act of 2004;
- Prevention of Corruption Act of 2000;
- General Auditing Act;
- Internal Auditing Act;
- Financial and Accounting Procedures Act;
- Other laws.

90. The Prevention of Unlawful and Suspicious Enrichment Act of 1989 has been put into practice by requesting financial disclosures from all State employees and high-level officials and the support of the Office of the Auditor General in reviewing the State accounts and ensuring that they are properly administered.

91. The Auditor General is an independent person, vested with legal and administrative powers to audit public spending, who reports annually to the National Legislature. He is also empowered to refer offenders to the Department of Public Prosecutions for investigation and subsequently to the judiciary. The National Assembly too plays an important role in ensuring accountability.

92. In January 2012, the President of the Republic also set up an anti-corruption committee to work independently in fighting corruption in the State.

V. Rights set forth in the Covenant**Article 1****Right of self-determination****Legal framework**

93. As is well known, the right of self-determination in international law is for former colonies in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolutions. Otherwise, it is a constitutional right subject to national law in States where it is exercised unilaterally. In a unique experiment that was a lesson for the international community, the people of Southern Sudan exercised that right through a referendum to determine their future status in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Interim Constitution of 2005 and the Southern Sudan Referendum Act of 2009, which provided for the conduct of a referendum in Southern Sudan and elsewhere on 9 January 2011. The referendum was organized by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and monitored by international and local observers. The choice was between uniting with or seceding from the Sudan. Votes in the referendum were cast across all regions of the Sudan and in the countries of the diaspora on the appointed date of 9 January 2011, monitored by international and local observers.

Practical application of the provision

94. Voting took place in a prevailing atmosphere of freedom and security, witnessed by international and regional observers, and no incidents of violence were detected. The South

Sudan Referendum Commission announced the final result of the referendum, which was for southerners to establish their own independent State after 9 July 2011. In the south, over 99 per cent voted for secession, while 0.43 per cent voted for unity. In the north, 57.65 per cent voted for secession and 42.35 per cent for unity. In the eight countries of the diaspora, 98.55 per cent voted for secession and 1.45 per cent for unity. The total proportion amounted to 98.83 per cent in favour of secession and 1.17 per cent in favour of unity. The Government accepted the result of the referendum and the Sudan was the first country to recognize the State of South Sudan.

Articles 2 and 3

Right to equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of rights

Legal framework

95. Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 2005 provides that: “The State is committed to respecting and promoting human dignity, is founded on justice, equality and the advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assures multipartism.” This affirms the State’s commitment to justice and equality, with no form of discrimination, whether on grounds of race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or any other element.

96. Article 7 (1) of the Interim Constitution of 2005 also guarantees the right of equality, without discrimination on any basis, and in fact makes citizenship the sole criterion for the enjoyment of rights and freedoms.

97. As to non-Sudanese nationals and their rights, freedoms and duties, they enjoy most of the same rights, with the exception of political rights, which are customarily linked worldwide to citizenship. These rights include the right to life and liberty, protection from slavery and torture (art. 30 of the Constitution), equality before the law (art. 31), freedom of belief and worship (art. 38), the right to privacy (art. 37), the right not to be subjected to detention (art. 29), the right to personal liberty (art. 29), the right of legal recourse (art. 35) and the right to be presumed innocent and to have a fair trial (art. 34 (1)).

Women’s rights

98. Under the Constitution, women have full and equal rights with men. Article 32 provides as follows:

“1. The State shall guarantee to men and women the equal right to the enjoyment of all civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to equal pay for equal work and other employment benefits;

2. The State shall promote women’s rights through positive discrimination;

3. The State shall combat harmful customs and traditions that undermine women’s dignity and status;

4. The State shall provide health care for mothers, children and pregnant women;

5. The State shall protect the rights of the child, as set out in the international and regional conventions ratified by the Sudan.”

99. Pursuant to article 28 to 47 of the Constitution, women enjoy fundamental rights, such as the right to life and liberty, nationality, freedom of movement, work, expression, worship, political, social and trade union association, ownership of property, communication, privacy, fair trial, legal recourse, education and health care.

100. Under the Constitution, women are entitled to hold high political office in that no distinction is made between women and men. Women in the Sudan may therefore hold office as President of the Republic or as a governor, minister or member of parliament.

Practical application of the provision

101. In line with this enlightened understanding of the role of women in practice, Sudanese women have held the office of governor and, at both the federal and state levels, numerous women are currently holding ministerial office and hundreds of seats in the legislative institutions. According to statistics for 2010, there are 57 women judges at the different levels.

102. Since the Sudan's independence in 1956, Sudanese women acquired the right to participate in elections as voters and candidates. Women representing various constituencies won parliamentary seats in 1964 and they continue to hold a substantial number of seats in the National Assembly and the Council of States, presiding in addition over some of the committees in the National Assembly, such as the Family and Child Protection Committee and the Legislation and Justice Committee. There are also appreciable numbers of women in the state legislatures.

103. Concerning the right of women to work, the Public Service Act of 2007 recognizes the principle of equal pay for equal work, as detailed in paragraphs 185, 186 and 187 of the previous report.

104. Under the Public Service Pensions Act of 1993, the family of a deceased pension-holder is entitled to a pension, to be divided among male minors and unmarried females of any age.

105. The Sudan has ratified various conventions relating to women's employment, including the ILO Convention No. 100 (1951) concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value; No. 111 (1958) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation; and No. 118 (1962) concerning Equality of Treatment of Nationals and Non-Nationals in Social Security. These conventions are aimed at preventing discrimination against women.

Article 4 Limitations on rights

106. There are fundamental rights that cannot be suspended, even in a state of emergency, in accordance with the provisions of article 211 (a) of the Constitution, which provides as follows: "The President of the Republic, with the approval of the First Vice-President and pursuant to the law or an exceptional order, may take any measure that does not restrict, partially abolish or limit the effects of the provisions of the Constitution or the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, excluding measures that derogate from the right to life, protection from slavery and protection from torture, the right not to be subjected to discrimination on grounds of race, sex, religious belief, the right of legal recourse and the right to a fair trial." The right not to be subjected to discrimination is therefore among the rights that cannot be undermined during a state of emergency. The Constitution therefore goes beyond the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in that it explicitly provides that the right to a fair trial may not be suspended.

Articles 5 and 6

Right to work

Legal framework

107. The Sudan has devoted attention to and made provision for the right to work in all successive constitutions. In the Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 2005, however, a linkage was made for the first time between two principles that are inseparable from the right to work, namely economic rights and the equality of men and women, providing in article 32 (1) that: “The State shall guarantee to men and women the equal right to the enjoyment of all civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to equal pay for equal work and other employment benefits.”

108. The Sudan is also a member of ILO and has ratified several of its conventions, including in particular Convention No. 100 (1951) concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, with the aim of ensuring that there is no discrimination against women.

109. The Constitution also guarantees the eligibility of all citizens to employment and public office on an equal footing and without discrimination (art. 1).

110. Under the Public Service Act of 2007, selection for public office is made on the basis of objective and established criteria and through fair and equitable competition. The same conditions apply to promotion to higher positions (arts. 22 and 38 of the Act).

111. The Labour Code of 1997 regulates labour affairs in the non-governmental sector, including recruitment offices, vocational training, conditions for the employment of women and young persons, employment contracts, wages, number of working hours for men, women and children, leave periods, dispute settlement, post-service benefits, disciplinary measures and industrial safety.

Practical application of the provision

112. The judiciary set up special employment tribunals with the aim of delivering justice and ensuring that employment disputes are swiftly settled. Three employment tribunals were thus set up in Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri, with the recent addition of a further tribunal in Port Sudan (eastern Sudan).

113. In order to achieve full and productive employment and ensure appropriate work placements for all, including women and young persons, the State has made substantial efforts to provide work opportunities for graduates through the Federal Selection Committee (annex 25) and state committees attached to the Ministry of Labour. In 2011, graduates from universities and higher institutions were thus able to register at the Selection Committee’s premises in Khartoum and Gezira states for a national scheme for placement in government institutions at the state level. All arrangements were completed for launching the public service placement scheme for graduates, which is consistent with the government policy of building state capacities, ensuring that states have the personnel needed for the delegation of powers and providing them with additional resources.

114. The scheme is open to those holding undergraduate degrees and diplomas in all priority areas of specialization in the fields of health, education, agriculture and engineering, depending on the actual requirement, with an emphasis on development and essential services. A number of challenges still remain, however, such as insufficient job opportunities compared with the number of graduates, which signals the need for more projects.

Article 8

Right to form trade unions

Legal framework

115. The Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to establish trade unions and professional, social and economic associations, the exercise of which is to be regulated by law (art. 40 (1) of the Constitution).

116. In accordance with the Labour Unions Act of 2001, workers have the right to form and join trade union organizations with a view to defending their rights and interests and improving their cultural, economic and social standing. These organizations are entitled to join the membership of any regional or global federation (art. 9 of the Act). Pursuant to article 16 of the Act, it is prohibited to deny membership of such an organization to any worker. The cases in which a worker may be expelled from an organization are also restricted and the right of appeal to the general assembly is guaranteed (art. 22). The task of supervising trade union elections is entrusted to impartial legal committees (art. 28).

117. The Voluntary and Humanitarian Work (Regulation) Act of 2006 distinctly prohibits registered organizations from practising any discrimination on grounds of colour, sex, origin, religion or belief in the performance of their activities. It also grants specific concessions to voluntary associations and civil society organizations, such as customs and tax exemptions.

118. Voluntary organizations and associations can be easily formed and registered in accordance with straightforward procedural requirements, which include depositing their constitution, regulations and membership list with the registry of associations and going through the formalities recognized in the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work (Regulation) Act of 2006.

Practical application of the provision (annex 26)

119. Statistics published by the Public Registry of Labour Organizations show that there are 22 general trade unions in the Sudan, 905 trade union organizations, 4,000 trade union branches, 42,000 trade unionists and some 2 million trade union members among workers in the public, private, self-employed and informal sectors.

Article 9

Right to social security

National Pensions Fund

120. The State set up a fund offering services to pensioners through a strategy for improving their living and social conditions, which is centred on the areas described below.

121. The first area focuses on social welfare, social support and poverty alleviation for pensioners with a view to bettering their income and social circumstances. The Social Development Institution for Sudanese Pensioners was established in 2001 as an arm of the National Pensions Fund and approved in 2008 by the Central Bank of Sudan as a microfinance institution overseen by the Bank's Microfinance Unit and administered by a number of government establishments, such as the National Pensions Fund, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, the Ministry of Labour, the Central Bank of Sudan and the Pensioners' Union. The Institution is targeted at the 173,000 or so pensioners throughout the country who belong to the National Pensions Fund, offering productive income-generating services in the form of financing for small trade and service enterprises, crafts and farming activities and animal husbandry. Each project is

financed on average to the tune of SDG 3,000, which is guaranteed by the monthly pension, and there is no requirement for any deposit or other guarantees (table showing total pensions and pension amounts for the years 2007–2009).

122. The second area focuses on health care and treatment, with pensioners among the first groups to have been covered by health insurance back in 1997, and the Fund has now begun implementing measures to produce a health insurance card for pensioners and their families. From 2008 to 2009, the number of pensioners with health insurance coverage amounted to 349,355 across all states, as illustrated in a table showing coverage by state (annex 27). See also annex 28.

Article 10

Protection of the family and the rights of women and children

123. The family is the microcosm of society and its welfare and protection are a solid safeguard of a strong and healthy society. Underlining that reality, the Constitution makes it a duty of the State to foster the institution of the family, facilitate marriage, devote attention to children's upbringing, care for pregnant women and children, liberate women from injustice in all aspects of life, and promote the role of women in the family and in public life.

Legal framework

124. These principles are codified in the Constitution, article 15 (1) of which provides that the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to the protection of law. It also recognizes the right of men and women to marry and to found a family, in accordance with their respective family laws, and establishes that free and full consent of the intending spouses is a condition for any marriage.

125. In order to afford equal treatment to men and women through positive discrimination, in keeping with article 32 (2) of the Constitution, the Personal Status Code of 1991 regulates a woman's marriage, inheritance and all of her family-related personal status matters. Before entering into a contract of marriage, for instance, the wife-to-be must consent to both the marriage and dowry. Nor may a woman be coerced into marriage against her will. In the event of divorce, the divorcee is entitled, during the period of waiting for the divorce to become definitive (*iddah*), to receive maintenance for her food, clothing and accommodation. If she is breastfeeding, she is also entitled to a nursing allowance, which continues for two years until the child is weaned.

126. In the case of non-Muslim women, the provisions of the Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims of 1991 and the personal status laws for other non-religious communities are applied.

127. In addition to the Constitution, Sudanese law recognizes the right of adult men and women to enter into marriage and to found a family, which is encouraged by the Personal Status Code for Muslims of 1991. The right to marry is restricted only by the requirement for the person concerned to have attained 18 years of age and to have given explicit consent.

128. The Children's Act of 2010 also genuinely builds on children's rights by protecting those who are homeless or sexually exploited and by also defining a child as anyone below 18 years of age, thereby settling the great deal of controversy around this issue.

Practical application of the provision

129. Although women in the Sudan have been accorded constitutional and legal rights, they nonetheless continue, for reasons relating to educational attainment and social customs, to suffer from certain harmful traditional practices, in particular female circumcision, which is historically and traditionally widespread throughout the Horn of Africa and some West African countries and a cause of profound physical and psychological damage. The State and women's organizations, among others, have made tremendous efforts to eradicate the practice, which is now steadily declining. The national campaign against it is essentially based on the dissemination of information and awareness concerning its disadvantages and the fact that it is prohibited by law. The Sudan is a country with one of the highest proportions of female circumcision. In 1999, for instance, the proportion stood at 90 per cent, fell to 69.4 per cent in 2006 and amounted to 65.5 per cent in 2010, according to the Household Health Survey of that year. The proportion remains relatively high because cutting continues to be advocated owing to its association with chastity, marriage and religious devotion, which are positive values, albeit for a harmful act. This situation gave rise to the idea of the national Salima campaign, which reflects a positive social change towards healthy standards. It involves an alternative culture laden with positive values, namely chastity, marriage and religious devotion, and focuses on change in the framework of society, and not the individual, so that change becomes socially acceptable. The campaign also sends a new message, which is that every girl is born whole and intact (*salima*) and must be allowed to grow healthy and intact.

130. The Salima campaign is a wide-scale information and education initiative being implemented in all states in the Sudan with the aim of sensitizing families to the value and appeal of not cutting female genitalia by using a positive term (Salima). The campaign employs open communication channels, including radio and television (both state and national), opening up discussion and providing a stage for the voices of families and communities and for local cultural productions of song, folklore and theatre. Posters and paper stickers are also used in the campaign. The National Council for Child Welfare furthermore collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to develop a training guide on positive social change (Salima) targeted at influential community groups, such as grass-roots organizations.

131. In the context of eliminating female circumcision, the National Council for Strategic Planning and the National Council for Child Welfare elaborated a national strategy for the elimination of female circumcision in the Sudan (2008–2018). This strategy is aimed at building the capacities of institutions and civil society structures and developing community-based skills and capabilities in order to engage all individuals in promoting the abandonment of this custom. The objective of the strategy is to:

1. Enact legislation and laws prohibiting female circumcision and criminalizing anyone practising female circumcision of any type;
2. Sensitize all segments of society to the need to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, with an emphasis on female circumcision;
3. Build partnerships and exchange expertise at the local, regional and international levels;
4. Address more widely the issue of female circumcision in educational curricula and teacher training;
5. Mobilize the religious sector to perform its role as an effective partner in sensitizing the community to the importance of abandoning female circumcision;

6. Disseminate the positive values and benefits of not practising female circumcision;

7. Raise health awareness in order to assist health professionals.

132. This strategy was first implemented in the core areas of religion, information and health and several works by eminent Islamic theologians were published, including a fatwa on female circumcision by Shaikh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, a book on female circumcision by Dr. Yusuf al-Kudah, and a book by Shaikh Abdul Jalil al-Nathir al-Karuri on the Sunni tradition of circumcising boys and exempting girls from the practice.

133. Numerous training activities and information programmes on the Salima campaign were also organized.

134. In 2004, the Government of the Republic of the Sudan, represented by the Sudanese Medical Council, adopted a decision to prohibit doctors in the Sudan from practising female circumcision. The State also funded several awareness campaigns on the harmful effects of the custom and, as part of the programme of cooperation between the National Council for Child Welfare and UNICEF, a programme for the elimination of female circumcision was established in 2004 with the aim of coordinating among the various sectors, government entities and civil society. Through this programme, which is being implemented in stages, government strategies on the matter are being revamped in order to bring them together under a single plan for the elimination of female circumcision. The Government put the national strategy for the elimination of female circumcision (2008–2018) into effect at the federal and state levels in the core areas of health, education, media, law, religion, information and social affairs, in conjunction with ministries, government institutions, states and formal partners, including civil society organizations, community sectors and legislative institutions. At the religious level, the Fatwa Council issued a fatwa prohibiting infibulation, which is the most extreme type of female circumcision.

135. The Criminal Code of 2009 was amended to include a provision on special protection for women during armed conflict (art. 186) and from war crimes (art. 188 (i)) following a number of workshops held to discuss amendment of the Code. An entire chapter on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide was also added.

136. Likewise in the area of protection for women and children, a violence against women and children unit was established at the Ministry of Justice, pursuant to Council of Ministers decision No. 538 of 1 November 2005, and it was recently brought under the Ministry of Social Welfare. The State's plan for combating violence against women was also finalized, in consultation with the United Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), and has been in operation since December 2005. This plan is based on raising women's awareness of their rights and of means of protecting those rights. Similarly, legislation to facilitate and simplify the procedures for protecting women's rights was enacted and the Government furthermore adopted a national policy on women's empowerment and a national policy on girls' education.

137. State committees to combat violence against women were established in all Darfur states. The membership of these committees comprises representatives of official state entities, including the governor and the police, health professionals, civil society organizations, a UNMIS representative and a representative of African Union forces. These committees immediately embarked upon their tasks with substantial success.

138. As to efforts in the field of women's development at the formal level of the Ministry of Social Development, Women and Children's Affairs, a special women's department was established and all ministries were instructed to do the same. At the state level, a Ministry

of Social and Cultural Affairs was established in every one of the 26 states to look after the affairs of young persons, women, families and children.

139. At the grass-roots level, there are scores of voluntary women's organizations involved in women's affairs. Their work is coordinated by the General Union of Sudanese Women, which is a national voluntary organization operating countrywide.

140. The State guarantees to women the right of political participation; on the legislative front, the Government adopted the quota system under the Elections Act of 2008, which guarantees an allocation of 25 per cent of the total seats to women. The proportion of women's representation exceeded the allocation to reach 28.3 per cent in the elections held in 2010.

141. Women currently hold 28 per cent of seats in the parliament elected in 2010 and the number of women in the National Legislature rose from 9.7 per cent in 2004 to 25 per cent in the elections of 2010. There are over 300 women parliamentarians in legislative bodies across the country, which is the largest number in the modern history of the Sudan.

142. Working women obtained major gains under the Public Service Act, which grants them special leave that takes into account their physical condition, including leave for reasons of pregnancy, birth, maternity, childcare and the waiting period after the death of a husband (*'iddah*), as well as leave in order to accompany a husband.

143. Under the Criminal Code, implementation of the death penalty is deferred in the case of pregnant and nursing women until they have finished breastfeeding.

144. Sudanese women have accomplished significant successes in the field of education, the biggest of which perhaps occurred in the 1990s during the higher education revolution (annex 29 shows the number of females and males in higher education as at 2009), when the intake of women rose from 36 to 55 per cent.

Harnessing women's capacities

Women and the economy

145. The General Department for Development and Banking Regulation has developed economic programmes responding to women's needs through a decree issued by the Central Bank of Sudan in 2007, pursuant to which an investment of at least 12 per cent of a bank's financial portfolio is permitted for financing small commercial enterprises. Of this, 70 per cent was allocated to financing commercial enterprises in rural areas, including 30 per cent for women's projects.

Women and the labour market

146. The pattern of labour for women in the Sudan is centred on the informal and agricultural sectors, but the expansion of education and other social services in the country has led to changes in that pattern. In particular, it has encouraged women to enter the formal sector, where their numbers in low- and middle-ranking positions are relatively high. The reasons for these phenomena are related to cultural and social factors that limit women's aspirations to hold high positions. Women have nonetheless held positions as deputy speaker of parliament and supreme court judge, in addition to positions in the diplomatic corps. A woman also assumed the position of chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission.

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

147. The right to housing is one of the fundamental rights enabling human beings to live decently and to exercise the right to privacy. Believing in the importance of this right, the Sudan has ratified many conventions and instruments that ensure and affirm it, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has also incorporated them into its national legislation, first and foremost the Constitution, followed by other laws and legislation on their guiding policies.

148. Adequate housing is housing that guarantees adequate privacy, space, furnishing, lighting and ventilation, basic infrastructure and protection.

149. The Sudan accordingly began to formulate plans and strategies as long ago as the late 1950s to ensure the right to housing. In 2007, the motto “Shelter for all” was launched and the National Housing and Reconstruction Project adopted with the aim of enabling access to affordable housing for persons with limited incomes and for disadvantaged groups.

150. As part of the State’s implementation of those commitments, the Ministry of Planning and Public Utilities carried out projects to supply three types of housing, namely public, economic and investment housing, with a focus on public and economic housing targeted at limited-income groups. In the case of public housing, the State facilitated the procedures for applicants by making the instalments payable over 21 years and reducing the charges by up to 15 per cent in the capital and in the states, while the instalments for economic housing are payable over 3 years with a reduction of 4 per cent. All adequate housing standards are met with respect to the supply of essential services and needs.

151. The Government also created the National Housing and Reconstruction Fund, which is targeted at public employees through trade unions. The intention of the Fund is to contribute to reconstruction planning, prepare guidelines and cooperate with the competent agencies at the national and state levels. It is also involved in obtaining loans and grants.

152. The Government similarly takes into account persons with special needs. The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2009, for instance, sets aside a percentage of the land in the public housing plan and a percentage of popular housing for persons with disabilities. Under the Act, a woman also has the right to housing on an equal footing with her husband.

153. In accordance with the constitutional, legislative and legal framework, the Land Department in Khartoum and most other states elaborated detailed housing plans. The price of a plot of land in villages and informal settlements is not more than \$600, payable in manageable instalments.

154. In order to address the problems associated with the removal of informal settlements, two residential towns were constructed in southern and northern Sudan, comprising 500,000 housing plots fully serviced with water and access to health and education facilities, roads and police stations, to accommodate persons relocated from those areas on the basis of prior social research and humanitarian considerations.

155. In an unprecedented move, the Land Department granted housing plots to Sudanese nationals living abroad on easy terms in order to create a connection between them and their land of origin and ensure that they are not deprived of their right to housing on account of being in the diaspora, whether for political, economic or other reasons. This programme was rolled out in 2009 and its results are thus far as follows:

United States residents	1 935 housing plots
Migrants to China	770
Western Europe	1 258
Oman	1 176
Islamic Republic of Iran	31
United Arab Emirates	3 427
Qatar	2 873
Saudi Arabia	3 000

156. In 2001, work began on a sophisticated mapping system covering all essential services, i.e., water, electricity, roads and sanitation. Citizens are thus able to acquire plots of land supplied with all essential services.

157. In order to facilitate procedures, the State, represented by the Land Department, undertook a number of measures in the context of ensuring the right to housing, including but not limited to:

- Rationalizing the disposal of government-owned land as a future precaution;
- Building human resources skills and enhancing professional performance in order to improve interaction with citizens;
- Simplifying administrative procedures and reducing fees;
- Introducing information and other technology and quality systems in order to raise performance and enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

158. Despite the many challenges that continue to impede the realization of this right, the State is continuing its efforts to create more policies aimed at giving effect thereto.

Article 12

Right to health⁸

Legal framework

159. The Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 2005 attaches importance to human beings as the centre of political and economic life. It therefore accords the utmost attention to their welfare, their rights and their physical, emotional and mental health, which have been incorporated into numerous articles.

160. The citizen's enjoyment of the right to health begins primarily with the surrounding environment. Accordingly, article 11 of the Interim Constitution of 2005 accords to every citizen in the Sudan the right to live in a clean and diverse natural environment and requires the State to refrain from pursuing any policies likely to have an adverse impact on the environment. Legislation has also been put in place with a view to the optimum utilization of natural resources.

161. Affirming the right to health care, the Constitution begins by giving consideration to citizens from the time of being and throughout their stages of growth. Article 14 thus provides for the right of young persons to physical and moral health, stipulating as follows: "The State shall formulate policies and provide facilities for the welfare of children and

⁸ See annexes 30 to 31.

young persons, ensure that they are brought up in a physically and emotionally healthy manner, and protect them from exploitation and from physical and emotional neglect.”

162. Article 19 of the Constitution provides that the State must guarantee free primary health care for all citizens and that it must also develop public health.

Practical application of the provision

163. The health insurance scheme now in place covers broad sectors of State and private sector workers and retirees. It is designed to meet the costs of health care and treatment for those persons and their families, who are covered under its wide umbrella. It has thus been possible through social solidarity to provide hundreds and thousands of limited-income persons and low-income earners with access to medical check-ups and medicines for a token sum. The Health Insurance Act of 1994 established a solidarity scheme to which all individuals contribute a set amount on the basis of their monthly income. Under this scheme, workers and their families are entitled to various health services, irrespective of family size and cost of the services provided. Workers now pay 4 per cent of their basic monthly salary and the State or the employer is responsible for contributing 6 per cent of the worker’s basic salary to the treatment-related solidarity scheme. The State therefore assumes the full cost of a worker’s treatment and 75 per cent of the cost of prescribed medicines, as well as the cost of major and minor surgical procedures. This service is not confined to State employees alone but covers all citizens, including students and small groups of State employees whose monthly instalments are paid by the Zakat Office (annexed hereto is information on the number of facilities created through the health insurance scheme at the state level and the population coverage, in addition to statistics on the beneficiaries of this service in the northern states).

164. With respect to training for health professionals, a number of medical faculties have been established in state universities, which have been instrumental in the graduation of qualified personnel and the secondment of doctors to work outside the Sudan.

165. Concerning medicines, the State has adopted a national medicines policy by elaborating a Quarter-Century Strategy (2005–2029) and, in 2005, the National Policy for Medicines, which developed price control and regulations to guarantee access for all citizens to the medicines they need at an affordable price. The State has implemented this Strategy, which includes development of the national health insurance scheme and cost reduction through exemption from customs duties and taxation and the regulation of profit margins, in addition to a redesign of supply strategies in order to increase the availability of safe, effective and affordable medicines.

166. In order to implement health strategies, the Government noticeably expanded the number of hospitals and health centres during the period 2003–2008, as shown in annex 32, which sets out information provided by the Ministry of Health in the annual health statistics report of 2009.

167. Poliomyelitis vaccination campaigns are periodically carried out in the capital, in the states, in displacement areas and in the Darfur camps, as are campaigns for booster doses of the vaccine.

168. The following table shows the health status in the northern states:⁹

⁹ In short, the health, education and water services established consist in a network of health centres providing 100 per cent coverage across the state, local community-run facilities for mothers and children, the Academy of Health Sciences, two specialist hospitals in Dongola and Merowe, two kidney dialysis centres in Dabbah and Dongola, a malaria control project in the local communities of

<i>Item</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Number of population with access to primary health care	699 065	699 065
Number of infants having received the pentavalent vaccine	15 398	13 873
Percentage of births attended by trained health workers	73%	75%
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	94	94
Other:		
Infant mortality per 10,000 live births	57/1,000	57/1,000
Under-5 mortality rate per 100,000 live births	70	70
Number of physicians		
Consultants	45	43
General practitioners	111	117
Dentists	5	8
Nurses	751	751
Pharmacists	21	28
Number of hospital beds	1 716	1 796
Number of environmental health professionals	163	165
Number of referral hospitals	3	4
Number of midwives	336	336
Number of medical laboratory technicians and technologists	163	173
Number of villages and districts with midwifery services	315	315
Number of primary health-care centres and units	213	213
Percentage of population covered by health units	215%	215%
Percentage of population covered by hospitals	100%	100%

169. In Kassala state, hospitals have been upgraded, the blood bank in the Wad Helo community has been renovated, internal medicine wards have been refurbished, an intensive care unit has been established, and machinery and equipment have been either overhauled or newly supplied. At Kassala Hospital, an operating room has been built, 5 malaria control vehicles and 15 solar-powered refrigerators have been supplied, the pharmacy has been refurbished and the midwifery school has been renovated. In Red Sea state, the cost of health services rose by 14.6 per cent in 2006 owing to the fact that public hospitals lagged behind in comparison with the private sector and as a result of the availability of specialist hospitals and diagnostic services, the higher quality of the services provided and the improvement of average individual incomes, leading to an increased demand for those medical services and a consequent rise in their cost. In 2008, however, the proportion fell from 14.6 to 4.2 per cent on account of revolving drug fund services and the emergence of new processes, including increased coverage under the health insurance umbrella.

Halfah and Delgo, a basic certificate examination centre, an online library, basic education schools for relocated communities, drinking-water coverage for the state's villages and towns, and renovation of water networks (well digging – installations – tank repairs – plants).

Malaria control

170. Given that malaria and State policies for malaria control were the subject of one of the observations made by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its consideration of the previous report, we believe it appropriate to set out the details following in this section. Malaria is the main cause of morbidity and mortality in the Sudan. Symptomatic malaria is estimated to account for 17.5 per cent of hospital outpatient visits and some 11 per cent of hospital inpatient cases.

Achievements in malaria control

171. This part of the report is devoted to the efforts to control malaria, as the issue was raised in the concluding observations on the Sudan's previous report. The efforts undertaken by the Government were as follows:¹⁰

- Malaria control programmes were built at the central, state and local community levels;
- A specific training and retraining plan was implemented for workers at all levels;
- Official support for malaria control has thus far increased by over tenfold since 2005, the Government having allocated more than \$40 million to malaria control;
- In the period 2007–2009, the National Malaria Control Programme distributed 6 million mosquito nets and the proportion of families with 1 insecticide-treated mosquito net rose from at least 21 per cent in 2005 to 41 per cent in 2009, with capital support to the tune of \$2 million provided for this initiative;
- In 2009, 2.3 million patients were treated free of charge with an artemisinin-based compound (cases of uncomplicated malaria);
- Interventions carried out with the aim of reversing the incidence of malaria included the elaboration, in 2001, of a national 10-year strategy, which was updated for the period 2007–2010; updating of the national medicines policy to enable the use of treatment, with over 90 per cent of services provided free of charge; and implementation of a pilot project for the home management of malaria, with coverage reaching over 90 per cent of the target local communities;
- Coverage of malaria diagnosis, using either the rapid diagnostic test or microscopy (1,328 instruments), was expanded and the quality and accuracy of malaria microscopy were also improved;
- Coverage with treatment for uncomplicated malaria was provided free of charge at 1,066 health units, representing 92 per cent of total health institutions in the public sector;
- Rates of access to free treatment increased by including villages located in high malaria transmission areas with no health facilities in the home-based malaria treatment project, which is volunteer-run.

Results

172. The following results have been achieved:

- Reduction in the prevalence of malaria from 3.7 per cent in 2005 to 1.8 per cent in 2009;

¹⁰ Source of information: National Malaria Control Programme.

- Reduction of over 80 per cent in the incidence of malaria since the base year of 2000;
- Reduction of over 60 per cent in the malaria-specific mortality rate since the base year of 2000.

173. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is one of the challenges facing the Sudan. We therefore believe it appropriate to mention a number of AIDS-related topics, with the spotlight on achievements and challenges.

174. The AIDS prevalence rate among the 15–49 age group in northern Sudan is 0.67 per cent and the average rate among pregnant women receiving antenatal care is 0.19 per cent. The rate is estimated at 0.33 per cent in rural areas, 0.14 per cent in urban areas, 0.26 per cent in displacement areas and 0.27 per cent in refugee areas.¹¹

175. AIDS treatment and care services are employed in all states in northern Sudan, with treatment against the AIDS virus available in 32 locations. In 2009, 30,000 persons were tested for AIDS in 137 testing and counselling centres in northern Sudan. Mobile testing centres are also in use (annex 34).

176. Concerning intervention to halt the prevalence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), associations have been set up for those living with HIV/AIDS in 15 of the country's states, with assistance from the National AIDS Control Programme and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme. A number of strategic plans were developed from 2002 onwards until the time of the National Strategic Plan for 2010–2013. An AIDS curriculum and teacher training programme were also developed by the Ministry of Guidance and the Federal Ministry of Health. In order to reduce stigma, numerous efforts have been made through legal reform, advocacy, guidance and ongoing awareness-raising in the mass media.

177. The Sudan's AIDS problem calls for focused efforts and policymaking but entails a multitude of challenges, including but not limited to the stigma and discrimination to which AIDS patients and carriers are subjected, the inadequacy of the services on offer, the need to improve the quality of those services, the high population movement on account of rural-to-urban migration, the displacement and armed conflicts affecting HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, and the need for coordination and effective implementation of the sectoral development plan.

178. Problematic health conditions include tuberculosis, which is prevalent, with the Sudan carrying 15 per cent of the tuberculosis burden in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In 2009, there were an estimated 60 cases of tuberculosis per 100,000 population. A total of 8,572 cases were detected and the case detection rate stood at 62.2 per cent. According to the annual development report of 2009 produced by the National Tuberculosis Control Programme, the number of cases in northern Sudan for the years 2003–2009 ranged between 20,682 and 22,097.

179. A treatment success rate of 81.8 per cent was achieved among detected cases, although the invalidity rate remained high, averaging 10 per cent, particularly in conflict-affected areas where all health services, including services for tuberculosis, were hit. Health-care services were also channelled towards the treatment of acute diseases, with the

¹¹ National AIDS Control Programme. The Sudan Household Health Survey of 2006 also showed that 70.4 per cent of those covered by the survey had heard of AIDS, 51 per cent knew that sexual contact is the main transmission mode for the disease, 39 per cent believed that blood transfusion is the cause and only 4 per cent were aware of the three AIDS transmission modes.

result that the tuberculosis mortality rate fell from 4.7 per cent in 1999 to 2.3 per cent in 2008.

180. The challenges encountered in combating tuberculosis in the Sudan include the difficulty of maintaining a constant supply of medicines and the shortage of personnel with training in how to treat the severe side effects of the medicines. Coordination is lacking between the public and private sectors in the areas of detection and treatment, and access to the existing health services is limited, primarily in remote rural areas, because of distance and cost of travel; the absence of collective partnerships between government agencies and civil society organizations, which are considered vital to the delivery of health services, particularly to displaced persons; and lastly conflicts, which lead to displacement of the population.

Articles 13 and 14

Right to education¹²

Legal framework

181. Under the heading of education, sciences, art and culture, article 13 (1) (a) of the Constitution provides that the State must aspire in its strategies to the following principles:

(a) The State must promote education at all levels throughout the Sudan and ensure that education is free and compulsory at the basic level and in the case of literacy programmes;

(b) Any person or group of persons has the right to establish and maintain private schools and other educational institutions at all levels in accordance with the conditions and standards prescribed by law.

182. The State mobilizes public, private and grass-roots resources and capacities for the sake of education and the advancement of scientific research, particularly research for development, encourages the development of arts and crafts, and promotes their sponsorship by government institutions and citizens.

183. The State recognizes the cultural diversity in the Sudan and encourages the diverse cultures to flourish harmoniously and express themselves through the media and education. The State protects the Sudanese heritage, monuments and places of national, historical or religious significance from destruction, desecration, unlawful removal or illegal export. The State also guarantees academic freedom in higher education institutions and protects freedom of scientific research within the framework of the ethical rules for research.

184. Article 44 (1) of the Constitution clearly provides for the right to education: "Education is a right of every citizen and the State shall guarantee access to education, without discrimination as to religion, race, ethnicity, gender or disability." Article 44 (2) of the Constitution also provides for free education: "Education at the basic level is compulsory and must be provided free of charge by the State."

185. Under article 6 (e) of the Constitution, the right to education, including the teaching of religious matters pertaining to the different faiths, must be observed and respected. The Constitution affirms the right to religious education in article 38 of the Bill of Rights, which provides that: "Every person has the right to freedom of belief through worship, education, the practice of rites or the observance of religious festivals, in accordance with the requirements of the law and public order. No one may be forced to adopt a religion in

¹² See annexes 35 to 37.

which he or she does not believe or to perform rites or rituals that he or she does not accept voluntarily.”

186. The objectives and purposes provided for in the General Education Act of 1992 include the infusion of outstanding values and morals, allegiance to the homeland, a collective spirit, self-reliance, ambition, capacity-building, love of humanity and development of environmental awareness.

Practical application of the provision

187. Application of the right to free education in the Sudan is reflected in the information below, some of which is derived from statistics for the school year 2007/08.

188. When the Constitution divided powers among the different levels of government in the context of the federal system, education and scientific research were classified as the joint remit of the federal and state authorities (art. 112 (e)), the justification being that national planning and training are the remit of the federal authorities.

189. Between 2004 and 2009, the total enrolment rate stood at 1.1 per cent annually. Measurement of the net enrolment rate was hampered by lack of data owing to the fact that some children had no birth certificates at the time of admission and children of different ages were admitted.

190. There are literacy programmes for both men and women, with more women enrolled than men. A plan for the eradication of illiteracy has been in place since 2010 (see annex 37).

191. The total number of teaching staff at government and private universities for the year 2008/09 was as follows:

- (a) 3,299 male lecturers and 1,915 female lecturers;
- (b) 4,773 male assistant lecturers and 1,918 female assistant lecturers;
- (c) 913 teaching staff holding a doctorate and 708 holding a master’s degree.

The tables annexed hereto show the details for the years 2006–2009.

National Student Welfare Fund

192. The State established a fund, known as the National Student Welfare Fund, which provides students in higher education at the national level with services in the areas of housing, social welfare, student sponsorship, health care and supervision of student activities.

193. Despite its earnest efforts to meet the needs of students and help them as much as possible, the Fund faces the problem of providing adequate finance.

Number of students benefiting from the Fund’s services

194. The Fund provides sponsorship for students in the form of funding offered to disadvantaged students through a committee composed of the Fund, university deans and social workers. The number of male and female students benefiting from this sponsorship amounted to 90,309 in 2005 and 96,131 in 2006.

195. The Fund plays a part in health care through a health insurance service for students in higher education, from which 5,203 male and female have benefited. The Fund’s administration also supports treatment units and contributes to the cost of student treatment at home and abroad.

196. With respect to student travel, 68 buses were provided to take students from and to their places of residence and study in the capital and the states. As part of social welfare, the Fund also provides students with immediate funds in emergencies (theft, travel, etc.) over and above the monthly stipend. The Fund also endeavours to provide assistance for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

197. In the Northern state,¹³ realization of the right to education has progressed remarkably. The following table shows a comparison of the figures for 2009 and 2010.

<i>Item</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Number of population in the 2–6 age group	66 679	66 679
Number of children in preschool education	21 786	24 148
Males	10 764	11 723
Females	11 022	12 425
Preschool enrolment rate	33%	36%
Number of population in the 6–14 age group	146 081	146 081
Number of students at basic level	106 511	111 504
Males	52 273	58 159
Females	54 238	53 345
Intake rate at the basic level (6–14 years)	73%	76%
Number of students registered in secondary grade 1	7 712	8 552
Enrolment rate in grade 1 at secondary level	98%	98%
Illiteracy rate in population aged 15 years and over	1.76%	0.95%
Number of students with special needs at basic level	340	379
Males	165	193
Females	175	186
Number of students with special needs at secondary level	93	108
Males	49	57
Females	44	51
Total number of male teachers in the state	2 691	2 266
Total number of female teachers in the state	6 006	5 574
Education for nomads		
Number of schools	16	13
Number of teachers	251	158
Number of students	3 848	2 982

198. Concerning higher education, the Northern state in 2010 had three universities with numerous science and humanities faculties, namely the: Faculty of Agrarian Sciences; Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences; Faculty of Medicine and Health

¹³ The Northern State lies between latitudes 30°16' and 22°15' N and longitudes 30°25' and 32°30' E and is bordered on the east by Nile River state, on the south by Khartoum state, on the west by Darfur state and on the north by Kordofan. It has a surface area of 348,697 km². The total number of population in the state amounts to 699,065, of whom 353,745 are male and 345,320 are female. The state capital is the town of Dongola.

Sciences; Faculty of Sharia and Law; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Literature and Humanities; and the Faculty of Culture and Human Development. The following table shows details of the students, number of lecturers and so forth.

<i>Item</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Number of faculties	12	13
Number of students in the different faculties	6 897	7 722
Number of teaching staff in the different faculties		
Males		191
Females		84
Classroom capacity	51	51
Laboratory capacity	23	23
Workshop capacity	8	8
Number of university towns	8	10

199. Tremendous efforts have been made in Red Sea state to upgrade student services. During the period 2007–2010, a total of 14 secondary schools and 108 basic schools were therefore constructed, along with 19 supplementary schools in a number of rural areas. Non-governmental organizations also made appreciable self-help efforts in the area of school maintenance by carrying out maintenance work on over 34 schools.¹⁴

200. River Nile state is another example, illustrated in the following tables.

Education in River Nile state

<i>Item</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Number of children in preschool education	15 160	17 843
Number or population in the 3–6 age group	55 221	56 844
Preschool enrolment rate	27.4%	31.3%
Number of students registered in basic grade 1	25 236	27 978
Number of population aged 6	26 550	27 432
Rate of enrolment in basic grade 1	95%	101%
Number of students registered in secondary grade 1	4 328	4 210
Number having passed the basic certificate	4 328	4 210
Rate of enrolment in secondary grade 1	100%	100%
Number of students at basic level	128 554	138 883
Number of population in the 6–14 age group	195 252	200 983
Basic level intake among 6- to 14-year-olds	65.8%	69.1%

¹⁴ Source of information: Report on the socioeconomic impacts of government spending on development, 2007–2010, which was prepared by the Scientific Advisory Committee in Red Sea state. Development efforts in the state were made by several of the mechanisms operating in this domain, including the Higher Department for Development, the Development Commission, the State Development Department and the Department of Planning and International Cooperation. These efforts combined led to improved services in the areas of health, water, transport and electricity, more leisure sites and so on.

<i>Item</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Number of students at secondary level	12 424	12 546
Number of population in the 15–17 age group	62 643	64 281
Secondary level intake among 15- to 17-year-olds	19.8%	19.9%
Illiteracy rate among population aged 15 years and over	46%	40%
Number of children in preschool education		
Males	7 211	7 957
Females	7 959	9 886
Number of pupils at basic level		
Males	71 589	77 591
Females	56 965	61 292
Number of pupils at secondary level		
Males	7 027	7 095
Females	5 415	5 451
Number of students with special needs		
Basic		
Males	69	76
Females	52	57
Secondary		
Males		
Females		
Number of students in special education	1 142	
Preschool	450	
Males		1 466
Females	462	463
Basic	257	
Males		428
Females	492	296
Secondary	503	
Males		521
Females		549
Number of male teachers in the state		
Preschool	18	21
Basic	1 378	1 418
Secondary	502	530
Number of female teachers in the state		
Preschool	389	417
Basic	3 696	3 766
Secondary	446	482
Seating percentage		
Basic	60%	65%
Secondary	70%	75%

<i>Item</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Textbook supply percentage		
Basic	65%	30%
Secondary	65%	40%
Number of trained teachers in the state		
Preschool	270	276
Basic	1 386	1 399
Secondary	563	577
Education for nomads		
Number of schools	37	40
Number of teachers	186	208
Number of students	5 170	5 490

Higher education

<i>Item</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Number of universities		
Government-run	2	3
Non-government-run	-	-
Number of colleges		
Government-run	12	12
Non-government-run	-	-
Number of university students	5 511	6 069
Number of college students	5 511	6 069
Number of university and college teaching staff	135	135
Males	103	103
Females	32	32
College classroom capacity (number of seats)	4 219	4 279
University library capacity (number of seats)	430	430
Laboratory capacity (number of seats)	371	271
Workshop capacity	115	145
Number of university towns	2	3
Student intake capacity	1 791	1 514
Males	821	970
Females	706	808

Article 15

Right to take part in cultural life

Legal framework

201. The Interim Constitution of the Sudan of 2005 recognizes the cultural diversity of the Sudanese people in article 4 (c) and further affirms that recognition in article 13 (4), which provides as follows: “The State shall recognize the cultural diversity in the Sudan

and encourage the diverse cultures to flourish harmoniously and express themselves through the media and education.”

202. Recognition of the cultural diversity in the Sudan is also expressed in the current Constitution, pursuant to which the right to take part in cultural life is a right equally available to men and women. Article 32 (1) provides as follows: “The State shall guarantee the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to equal pay for equal work and other employment benefits.”

203. The Constitution also places a duty on the State to promote public morality and the traditional values recognized by society, with article 16 providing as follows: “The State shall enact laws to protect society from corruption, wrongdoing and social ills and direct society as a whole towards virtuous social values in keeping with the religions and cultures of the Sudan. The State shall enact laws and establish institutions to end corruption, prevent abuse of authority and guarantee integrity in public life. Participation in public life shall take place through the media, including television and radio programmes and the press.”

Practical application of the provision

204. The Sudan faces numerous challenges in managing this diversity with which it is replete and in channelling it in such a way as to ensure that it is a factor of unification and not division.

VI. Mechanisms

205. As part of the endeavour to guarantee the promotion and protection of human rights, there are a number of national mechanisms in place for giving practical effect to human rights principles and standards. The following are mentioned by way of example.

1. The National Legislature

206. The National Legislature is the federal legislative authority and is composed of two chambers: the National Assembly and the Council of States (article 83 (1) of the Constitution). Each chamber is representative of a different level of government.

The National Assembly

207. The National Assembly is composed of members chosen in free and fair elections. The National Elections Act determines the number of members and composition of the National Assembly (article 84 (1) and (2) of the Constitution). The term of office of the National Assembly is five years.

The Council of States

208. The Council of States is composed of two representatives from each state, elected by the state legislature in accordance with the National Elections Law and procedures established by the National Elections Commission, pursuant to article 85 of the Constitution. The term of membership is five years.

209. The Constitution determines the conditions for membership of the National Legislature under article 86, the circumstances in which membership is withdrawn under article 87, the seat of the National Legislature under article 88, the formation of committees under article 95, and the issuance of regulations under article 96.

210. Article 91 of the Constitution spells out the functions of the National Legislature, which consist in representing the will of the people, exercising legislative responsibilities, overseeing the national executive and promoting the decentralized system of government, in addition to amending the Constitution, approving amendments affecting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, approving the annual budget, approving declarations of war and confirming declarations of a state of emergency. Under the Constitution, the National Legislature is also entitled to impeach the President of the Republic or the First Vice-President and to summon and question national ministers. Other additional functions are likewise spelled out in the Constitution.

State legislatures

211. Under article 180 of the Constitution, states may set up a state legislature composed of members elected in accordance with the Constitution of the state concerned and regulations established by the National Elections Commission. State legislatures are empowered to prepare and approve the state Constitution, enact laws and draw up regulations.

2. The judiciary

212. The Constitution provides for the establishment of an independent national judiciary that is responsible for the administration of justice, national in character, accountable only to the President of the Republic (see the justice system, paragraphs 29 to 32 of this report) and fully independent of the executive and legislative branches of government. It is administered by a Judiciary Council, headed by the Chief Justice and comprising senior judges and others, which recommends the appointment, promotion, transfer, discipline and removal of judges. The financial independence of the judiciary is guaranteed by law. Judges have immunity and may not be subjected to any interference. They are bound by the Constitution to dispense justice and apply the rule of law. Public organs are required by the Constitution to implement the decisions of the judiciary.

213. The national judiciary is composed of a Supreme Court that functions according to the chambers system. There is a criminal chamber and a civil chamber and there are also chambers for personal status and administrative appeals. The Supreme Court is followed in rank by state appeal courts, general courts in the governorates and courts of first instance in urban and rural areas.

214. Adequate safeguards are in place against the arbitrary removal of judges in that they may be called to account only after a disciplinary board has been set up by the Higher Judiciary Council and the Chief Justice. Any sanctions against a judge must be upheld by the Higher Judiciary Council.

3. The Constitutional Court

215. The Constitutional Court was established pursuant to article 119 of the Constitution and is composed of nine judges with the qualities of experience, competence, impartiality, integrity and objectivity. It is independent of the legislature and the executive and separate from the national judiciary. It is the guardian and protector of the Constitution and has the jurisdiction to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Constitutional Court has also laid down constitutional principles and rulings and interpreted a number of provisions of the Constitution, guided by international human rights principles, which are now binding on national courts at all levels of litigation.

216. The Sudanese Constitution of 2005 (art. 105) provides for the establishment of an independent constitutional court, with a president and members appointed by the President of the Republic from among persons highly experienced in matters of justice, with the

approval of the National Assembly. The court is composed of a president, a vice-president and seven members and its activities are regulated by law.

217. In a case brought by the Society of Certified Accountants and Auditors against the Board of Legal Accountants and the Government of the Sudan, published in the Journal of the Constitutional Court for the period 1999–2003, the appellants relied on article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerning the right to work. Affirming the reference to this article by citing it in its findings on the merits of the dispute, the Constitutional Court decided with respect to the point of argument over the legal status conferring upon the appellants the right of appeal, in accordance with the Constitution of the Sudan of 1998 and international instruments, that their legal status was such that they were eligible to seek a legal remedy before the Constitutional Court in order to protect their right.

218. The Constitutional Court also suspended a decision banning the employment of women in certain jobs and at certain hours, considering it to be a violation of the right to work, which is guaranteed by the Constitution and law. The Court also accorded to those who are unable to pay legal fees the right to bring proceedings without incurring such fees once their inability to pay has been established.

4. The Public Grievances and Corrections Board

219. The Public Grievances and Corrections Board was established pursuant to article 130 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan of 1998 and its functions are set out in article 7 of the Public Grievances and Corrections Board Act of 1998. Article 143 of the Constitution also provides for the establishment of an independent body (the Public Grievances Chamber) to consider complaints relating to grievances of citizens concerning State institutions, without prejudice to the finality of judicial decisions. This body may, on its own motion, recommend to the Presidency of the Republic or to the National Assembly such measures as it deems fit for ensuring efficiency, justice and probity in the performance of government institutions. The Board also has branches in a number of other states, including Gezira and Sennar.

220. In accordance with the Public Grievances and Corrections Board Act, the Board's jurisdiction is limited to the following:

1. Considering grievances relating to State organs;
2. Considering evident damage arising out of or overlooked by final judicial decisions, without prejudice to the finality of those decisions;
3. Considering damage arising out of the actions of ministers, governors and high-level State officials over which the judiciary has no jurisdiction;
4. Examining laws that result in an evident grievance when applied and raising the matter with the competent authorities;
5. Ensuring efficiency and probity in the performance of State organs;
6. Ascertaining that State organs operate with the effectiveness needed to carry out the State's general policies in line with the strategies in place;
7. Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the various organs in order to highlight successes and failures;
8. Ensuring that State organs are working to their full potential (financial and human);
9. Checking that the laws and regulations governing administrative activity and work relations are effectively and fairly applied;

10. Examining individual complaints disseminated in the media if they collectively amount to a general failing in the performance of any State organ.

221. Grievances filed with the Board concern matters with social and economic consequences. The Board has settled all of the grievances presented to it and restored many rights to claimants. With respect to involvement in alleviating the effects of conflict and war, the Board has received a large number of grievances filed by war-affected persons and redressed the damage, where possible. With its open-door policy, the Grievances Department has also heard a number of verbal grievances and explained to the aggrieved parties the legal avenues that can be pursued.

222. The Board is actively engaged in combating corruption and censorship in the Sudan, in African States and worldwide, and participates in the activities of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and the African Ombudsman Association (AOMA). The Sudan held the AOMA vice-presidency for two terms, amounting to eight years, after which it was appointed as an honorary member of the AOMA board of directors. It is also a member of the board of directors and treasurer of the Arab Organization for Ombudsman Offices, which is headquartered in Cairo, has held the chairmanship of the board of directors of IOI (headquartered in Austria), and was one of three directors representing Africa for a five-year term. Recently, in October 2011, the Sudan was chosen to serve as the AOMA permanent representative and ambassador to the African Union.

223. In the human rights field, an example of the role performed by the Board is its settlement of a dispute over whether a home for the care and rehabilitation of urinary fistula patients fell under the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Islamic Endowments Authority or Khartoum Hospital. A number of doctors from the accident unit at Khartoum Bahri Teaching Hospital also filed a complaint with the Board against a decision of the Federal Under-Secretary for Health to transfer them to the states, their argument being that the transfer was punishment for their failure to comply with the instructions of the hospital's medical director. The decision reached by the Board was that:

1. Procedures for the transfer of doctors that are unsupported by law must be halted and the doctors' salaries must be paid from the date of their suspension;
2. Personnel must be held to account under the Workers' Accountability Act.

5. The National Human Rights Commission

224. As stipulated in article 142 of the Constitution, the Commission is composed of 15 members who are independent, competent, non-partisan and impartial. Its function is to monitor the application of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution and to receive complaints concerning alleged violations of those rights and freedoms. A law governing the Commission's work was promulgated in 2009 and the members of the Commission were designated in January 2012. Great reliance is placed on the Commission with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Sudan.

6. The Advisory Council for Human Rights

225. The Advisory Council for Human Rights began in 1992 as a coordinating committee for the State's human rights machinery. It was then upgraded in 1994, pursuant to a republican decree, to an advisory council for human rights presided over by the Minister of Justice and with a membership comprising official and unofficial entities.

226. The Advisory Council for Human Rights is competent to: provide advice and counsel to the State on human rights matters; prepare research and studies and disseminate the human rights culture through the media; train persons working for the State and for civil society organizations in human rights standards and principles; review national legislation

in order to harmonize it with the international and regional human rights instruments to which the Sudan has acceded; and carry out studies on the conventions to which the Sudan has not acceded and make recommendations accordingly. Through a complaints committee, the Council also receives complaints about human rights violations from individuals and organizations at the domestic and international levels. It prepares and submits the Sudan's periodic reports to international and regional human rights treaty mechanisms and is the national organ responsible for human rights coordination with UNMIS and the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It likewise plays a major role in training and capacity-building, in preparing studies on international and regional conventions, in leading amendments to domestic laws and in harmonizing the latter with international and regional laws. The Council has a number of divisions responsible for thematic areas of work, in addition to a complaints committee that continues, as ever, to be principally involved in handling complaints relating to economic, social and cultural rights. It has dealt, for instance, with various land-related complaints in the Jakhis areas, where the Director-General of Lands had 508 cases to handle, and in the Shegla area. A total of 380 families were transferred to the relocation areas in Eid Babiker and Fath in order to remove encroachments from field sites.

227. The complaints committee also intervened in a case involving persons with disabilities who were dismissed by Khartoum State Water Board because of their disabilities and who have now been reinstated.

7. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security

228. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security is the key ministry for women's affairs at the national level. One of its main priorities is to draw up policies and strategies for the advancement of women. It therefore plays a cutting-edge role in various portfolios relating specifically to women's economic, social and cultural rights. In this context, the Ministry elaborated a national strategy for women's empowerment, in March 2007, as practical support for the guarantees provided in the Constitution of the Sudan, domestic laws and international conventions. The strategy is based on a number of core components: health and environment; education; economic empowerment; human rights and law; political participation and decision-making; and lastly, peace and conflict resolution.

229. As part of carrying out these policies, the Ministry has implemented a number of projects for putting the strategy into practice.

230. In 2009, the Ministry also adopted a national policy for addressing the situation of child homelessness, the strategic aim being to improve the health, economic and mental status of children in that situation. Community-based protection mechanisms were set up and staffed with personnel trained in monitoring all forms of exploitation, and street children were registered in the accelerated education and vocational training programme, both before and after their integration. Support for accelerated education centres was provided by UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry now has 1,126 centres in South Kordofan as a result.

231. In the context of alternative families, several homes have been established: Dar al-Mygoma; Dar al-Mustaqbal for Girls; Dar al-Himayah for Girls; Rashad Rehabilitation Centre for Homeless Children; and Basha'ir Centre for Homeless Girls. These homes provide shelter for 339 boys and girls.

8. The National Council for Child Welfare

232. The National Council for Child Welfare was established by republican decree in 1991 under the chairpersonship of the President of the Republic and with a membership comprising state governors and federal ministers involved in children's issues. It is

competent to elaborate policies, plans and programmes relating to children as part of the State's overall policy, in collaboration with the other levels of government in the field of child welfare. It also works with governmental and voluntary entities, gathers statistics, organizes seminars, trains personnel and prepares periodic reports for submission to regional and international organizations. It was likewise actively involved in drafting the Children's Act of 2010 and it has a major role in the framework of education.

233. The Council plays a key role in protecting children's rights through various programmes and projects, including a programme for the eradication of female circumcision and a programme for the return of children separated from their families. In 2010, a total of 982 children in Khartoum state and 96 from the northern states were returned. Other successful projects include a project for promoting birth registration in the Sudan. The Council carries out child-related training and capacity-building programmes in Khartoum and the various states, with valuable support from UNICEF. The Children's Act of 2010 is one of the main achievements of the Council, which is working on a plan for its implementation. The Council has a number of child welfare councils at the state level.

234. On the initiative of the Council and the Ministry of the Interior, family protection units attached to the police force were established with the aim of protecting children, creating a healthy society and achieving calm.

235. The Council is also engaged in monitoring children's economic and social rights, specifically with respect to education from the preschool level and girls' education. Progress has been achieved and the intake at the basic level rose from 63.4 per cent during the school year 2007/08 to 64.6 per cent during 2008/09.

9. The Violence against Women and Children Unit

236. This Unit was established in 2005, pursuant to a decision of the President of the Republic, at the recommendation of the Cabinet, as an outcome of the national plan for combating violence against women. The Unit is competent to follow up the implementation of this plan with the United Nations and with international, national and regional organizations. Similar units have also been established in the three states of Darfur and a number of other states in the country. The Unit set up several projects aimed at women's economic empowerment and also supported units at the state level engaged directly or indirectly in women's development. In the context of its various awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, it ran a workshop, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund, to review the Personal Status Act of 1991, assisted by a group of sharia, health and law experts in order to develop a well-founded vision for determining the ideal marriageable age with respect to the age of discernment and discuss the marriageable age, given that the Act makes no mention of it.

237. In the case of Kassala state, the table below shows some of the activities undertaken by units across the state.

Kassala state

Ministry of Social Affairs – Women and Family Department

Report of the Violence against Women Unit – Rural women's economic empowerment project

<i>No.</i>	<i>Project name</i>	<i>Expected outcomes</i>	<i>Results-oriented activities</i>	<i>Total cost (SDG)</i>	<i>Implementation %</i>	<i>Achievement indicators</i>	<i>Reasons for non-implementation</i>
1	Increase rural women's income	Women's capacity-building, higher family income and better living standard	1. Training for 1,286 women. 2. Small enterprise ownership for 511 families. 3. Construction of a women's development centre. 4. Furnishing of 4 women's development centres.	702 106	100%	1. 1,286 women trained. 2. Ownership of small enterprises by 554 families in local communities (small shops – stalls – goats). 3. Construction of a women's development centre. 4. Furnishing of 4 women's development centres.	Implemented as planned
2	Raise awareness of women's rights and combat violent and negative behaviour	Create awareness of rights and duties and propagate a culture of peace in local communities	1. Workshops to provide information on fundamental human rights principles. 2. Printing and distribution of leaflets and posters and conduct of a field study to evaluate the situation of women in local communities.	148 868	100%	1. 340 women informed about the forms of violence practised in communities. 2. Printing and distribution of 1,000 leaflets in local communities. 3. Conduct of a field study to evaluate the situation of women in local communities.	Implemented as planned
3	Celebrations and festivals	Deepen women's participation in development, foster community-based action in women's circles and promote women's engagement.	Celebration of International Women's Day	23 405		1. 6 associations supplied with kitchenware, 9 marquees and 600 chairs to keep as their own. 2. Women honoured for their pioneering work in local communities.	Implemented as planned
Total				874 419			

10. The Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

238. The Committee was established pursuant to the Regulation on National Assembly Activities as one of several special standing committees on such matters as information, legislation, justice, the family, women and children. This Committee is competent to protect and promote human rights through legislative oversight and likewise to oversee the activities of the executive machinery, in accordance with the powers vested in the National Assembly. As part of its oversight functions, the Committee has opened a number of investigation files on various topics, including corruption and the matter of rotten agricultural seeds.

11. The Zakat Office

239. The Zakat Office is regarded as the first institution offering protection and social security in the Sudan to achieve social justice by shifting financial resources from the better-off to the disadvantaged groups in society. The philosophy of zakat (alms-tax) is focused on collecting funds by taking a fixed amount of a person's wealth for spending on specific groups, in particular the poor and needy. In the Sudan, the obligation of zakat is viewed as a social security mechanism embodying the State's concerns to instil a sense of solidarity and mutual human understanding among individuals in a society where the rich help the poor.

240. Zakat in the Sudan has become a prominent hallmark of the State's social fabric and is widely given in all states, local communities and regions, both rural and urban, thereby reaching those who are eligible for it. In the context of disseminating the zakat experience, the Institute of Zakat Sciences conducted various studies for the Office and publicized its experience as one that is unique to the world.

241. The key programmes of the Zakat Office include:

- Support for health projects, including the supply of rural hospitals in the states with microscopy equipment and kidney dialysis machines, and the provision of health insurance coverage for 306,663 poor households, equivalent to 32 per cent of the total number of insured persons in the Sudan;
- Support for education projects, including the refurbishment of basic schools, the supply of seating for students and the provision of essential school materials to a substantial number of students in basic and secondary education, in addition to sponsorship for university students;
- Support for water projects, including drilling and installation of wells, installation of hand pumps, well renovation, construction of earth dams and maintenance of water-pumping stations (*dawanki*);
- Support for agricultural projects, including the supply of agricultural machinery, transfer of municipal ploughs into the ownership of poor households, transfer of livestock ownership, seed distribution and the supply of mobile veterinary clinics.

242. In 2009, the number of male and female students sponsored by the Zakat Office amounted to 38,500, a cumulative increase of 52 per cent, at a cost of SDG 17.3 million. The Zakat Office also awards monthly stipends to orphans in order to help them meet the costs of living, school supplies and health insurance. It provides lodgings for those who are without accommodation, as it has 1,000 houses in Khartoum state, 500 in Kassala state and 300 in North Kordofan state. There is likewise an investment trust, which is a new project recently implemented to sponsor and take care of orphans by aiming to provide them with an ongoing source of income ranging between SDG 500 and 700.

12. Civil society organizations

243. There are over 3,000 civil society organizations, all of which are working to promote and protect human rights through awareness activities, the provision of legal aid and monitoring of the human rights situation in the Sudan in conjunction with the various State organs. Over 15 Sudanese organizations have consultative status with the United Nations Human Rights Council and are intent on monitoring human rights issues across the world generally and in the Sudan especially.

13. The General Union of Sudanese Women

244. The General Union of Sudanese Women took up essential issues on which to focus its efforts in all key areas of its activity (social and political affairs, health, education, etc.).

245. In the key economic area, it focused its concern on improving family living conditions by concentrating on rural women. It also spearheaded economic initiatives to combat and alleviate poverty, which were highly successful and contributed substantially to reducing acute poverty among women.

Poverty alleviation policies

246. As part of its strategy, which in the key economic area is devoted to women's issues and women's economic problems, the General Union of Sudanese Women developed policies and programmes and spearheaded economic initiatives aimed at improving family living conditions and alleviating poverty. These were instrumental in women's development, in raising family living standards and in lifting families out of the poverty cycle through having an economic income, all of which was achieved by placing the focus in numerous programmes on the rural women who constitute the majority of women in the Sudan and on their pioneering role.

247. The innovation prize for rural women was established under the kind patronage of Mrs. Fatima Khalid, wife of the President of the Republic, and development associations. Funding agreements were also signed with banks, portfolios and revolving funds were set up and attention was devoted to women working in the various informal sectors (agriculture, animal husbandry, food production, manual and cottage industries, cooperatives and services).

248. Attention is likewise devoted to maximizing the role of women in economic life and working to develop, promote and organize economically active women through finance institutions.

Poverty alleviation projects

249. The General Union of Sudanese Women is concerned to resolve women's issues and economic issues in particular in order to improve women's standard of living. It was therefore imperative to ensure access to finance in the form of soft loans and to establish poverty alleviation projects, i.e., a women's portfolio project, an interest-free loan and microfinance project, a home improvement project, a project for setting up a marital home, a revolving fund project for promoting the development of women living in seclusion and alleviating poverty, a revolving fund project to improve the situation of women tea sellers and a project for financing seasonal family needs. An innovation prize for rural women was also established.

1. Women's portfolio project

250. Launched in 1999 and put into practice in 2000, the project involves a funding portfolio for women to which various banks, finance institutions and the federal and state

Ministries of Finance contribute. The portfolio is funded as an endowment for this immense economic activity and offers microfinance and significant facilities for women.

251. Funding in kind, in cash or in the form of services is provided on easy terms and conditions. The project was implemented in the capital and 15 states through the Agricultural Bank and the Savings Bank and the portfolio is now being expanded and developed, in agreement with the Savings Bank, in order to provide finance in states where there is currently no portfolio.

Aims of the project

252. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Raise family living standards and provide funding for women and income-generating activities;
2. Form an effective tool for fighting poverty;
3. Harness women's outstanding capacities and skills in order to promote development action in rural and urban areas;
4. Make good use of raw materials, particularly agricultural ones, in the production seasons by processing, drying and storing them for times of shortage;
5. Follow the principle of teamwork and foster in women a love of manual work and legitimate earning;
6. Develop the informal sector, which offers many employment opportunities for the majority of poor women, and lift them out of that cycle;
7. Ensure the effective and genuine engagement of women in self-reliance activities in the interest of food security and diversification;
8. Achieve portfolio-related objectives in the area of education, such as group discussions, decision-making and knowledge enhancement;
9. Provide training in different fields.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Women's portfolio (started in 2000)	Endowment of SDG 200,000 from the Sudanese Telecommunications Company (Sudatel) amounting to SDG 5,416,887 as at the end of 2010	1. Savings and Social Development Bank 2. Agricultural Bank, as it is geographically dispersed across the country	4,402 families in 14 states

2. Fund for poor women project

253. This project was carried out by agreement between the Zakat Office, the Savings Bank and the General Union of Sudanese Women. It was started in 2008 and implemented in January 2009. The project has two components:

First component

Interest-free loan fund

254. This project was implemented in 10 states (Gezira, Kassala, Red Sea, Sennar, White Nile, North Kordofan, North Darfur, Northern, River Nile and Gedaref).

255. Finance was provided through the Savings Bank, using simple banking procedures and secured by a sworn declaration, to the tune of SDG 900,000 for each state and SDG 1,000 for each of the 1,100 women benefiting from this project, with a repayment success rate of 98 per cent.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of states benefiting</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Interest-free loan project (started in 2009)	Federal Zakat Office SDG 1.5 million	Savings and Social Development Bank	10 states	1,181 women beneficiaries in 10 states as at the end of 2010

256. The projects financed are as follows:

1. Trading (kitchenware – perfumes – refrigerators for selling ice – small restaurants – foods);
2. Agricultural activities (raising chickens – raising and fattening sheep, goats and dairy cattle);
3. Small domestic ovens for bread-baking;
4. Libraries;
5. Perfume-making.

Second component

Microfinance

257. This project was implemented in seven states (Northern, River Nile, Gedaref, Sennar, White Nile, North Kordofan and part of Khartoum), with a start-up amount of SDG 480,000 to the tune of SDG 67,000 for each state. Implementation began in January 2009 and transfers took place through the offices of the General Union of Sudanese Women, using streamlined procedures and secured by a trust receipt. In 2010, we provided funding of SDG 920,000 and three states (Kassala, Gezira and Khartoum) were added to the project, each state receiving SDG 70,000. With the increase in the number of states receiving finance, the number of women beneficiaries amounted to 3,500, with funding to the tune of SDG 200,000. The repayment success rate is 100 per cent and the financing is still ongoing.

Aims of the project

258. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Raise family living standards and improve family income levels;
2. Empower women economically, with consequent benefits for their families;
3. Propagate a culture of social banking in order to alleviate poverty;
4. Build the productive capacities of poor families by resolving financial problems;

5. Coordinate and integrate efforts among institutions working for the poor in order to obtain positive and beneficial outcomes for poor families.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of states benefiting</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Microfinance project (started in 2009)	Federal Zakat Office SDG 1 million	Within the offices of the General Union of Sudanese Women	10 states	At the end of 2010, the number of women beneficiaries amounted to 3,500 in 10 northern states

259. The projects financed are small enterprises engaged in such activities as poultry farming, perfume-making, selling prepayment cards for mobile telephones, operating plant nurseries and running home bakeries.

3. Home improvement project

260. This project is designed to provide financing for families to make suitable improvements to their home and family environment. The financing is repaid over 18 months in equal monthly instalments, with a profit margin of 4 per cent per annum. The amount of finance available is SDG 3,000, with a monthly repayment amount of not more than SDG 200. The collateral for the amount is the salary of a family member or a personal guarantee backed by a secured cheque. The financing is provided in stages for the home improvements, which might consist in such requirements as maintenance work, the addition of an extension or the construction of a well. This project was implemented in 2010 through the Family Bank, in collaboration with the General Union of Sudanese Women, and the finance amounted to SDG 363,000, from which 92 women benefited through the window to the Family Bank provided by the Union.

Aims of the project

261. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Enhance family living standards by improving family homes;
2. Alleviate the burden and suffering of women as they perform their domestic functions and make life easier for them;
3. Devote effort and time to women and extend the benefit to other activities for the good of families and society;
4. Create a sound and healthy family environment and consequently minimize the health and environmental risks to women and their family members;
5. Make homes into attractive places for families to be in.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding amount</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Home improvement	SDG 363,000	Family Bank	92 women

4. Project for setting up a marital home

262. This project provides microfinance for intending spouses and couples in the first two years of their marriage in order to cover their essential requirements in terms of the following: one bedroom, a refrigerator, a stove and gas cylinder, a blender, an iron, two

double beds, two foam mattresses and a digital television, provided that the finance amounts to not more than SDG 4,000. This project was implemented in 2010 through the Family Bank, in conjunction with the General Union of Sudanese Women, and provided finance to the tune of SDG 72,000 from which 18 women benefited.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding amount</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Furnishing the marital home	SDG 72,000	Family Bank	18 women

Aims of the project

263. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Devote attention to the family and family issues, particularly at the time when the family is first being established;
2. Advocate social cohesion by facilitating marriage;
3. Alleviate the burden on women by sharing the weight of their concerns in setting up a home;
4. Realize the objectives of the General Union of Sudanese Women with respect to facilitating marriage.

Income-generating projects

264. Income-generating projects have been implemented through the window provided by the Family Bank, from which 78 women have benefited to set up various types of enterprises, such as selling traditional garments, kitchenware, ready-made clothing or perfumes, running boutiques, keeping poultry for eggs and meat, and raising sheep and goats.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding amount</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Income-generating projects	SDG 296,000	Family Bank	78 women

5. Revolving fund project for promoting the development of women living in seclusion and alleviating poverty

265. This project involves revolving funds provided as an interest-free loan, starting with small groups of women in seclusion. The amount is repaid within a period of not more than nine months, as from one month after the date when the finance is provided. The amount obtained is distributed monthly to other groups in order to cover the largest possible number of women by rotating the money among the groups.

Aims of the project

266. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Improve women's productive skills;
2. Provide support for vulnerable groups of women practising seclusion;
3. Link the activity in places of seclusion with economic activity so as to complement the picture of seclusion;

4. Foster a spirit of competition among the women beneficiaries;
5. Deliver services to the largest number of women beneficiaries through the fund and instil in them a spirit of solidarity.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Revolving fund to promote the development of women living in seclusion (started in 2003)	Savings and Social Development Bank SDG 25,000 for five local communities in Khartoum state	Savings and Social Development Bank	By revolving funds, up to 2,500 women benefited

6. Revolving fund to improve the situation of women tea sellers

267. This revolving fund project is directed at women working as tea sellers. Funding is provided in the form of equipment and other items, i.e., a wheeled table that comes with an umbrella, a gas stove and utensils for making tea and is easy to assemble, dismantle and move about from place to place.

Aims of the project

268. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Devote attention to women in the informal sector and improve their situation;
2. Increase their family income and better their living conditions;
3. Promote the development of small activities bringing in an income on which a great many women who are family breadwinners depend;
4. Combat poverty by encouraging women to work and be productive;
5. Realize the objectives of the General Union of Sudanese Women with respect to women's affairs and the advancement of women;
6. Provide security and stability for the women beneficiaries and keep them from being pursued by the competent authorities;
7. Develop savings awareness;
8. Organize and develop markets for tea sellers so that they can practise their profession in a proper and dignified manner.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Revolving fund to improve the situation of women tea sellers (started in 2003)	Savings and Social Development Bank SDG 500 per individual, amounting as at 2008 to SDG 500 x 700 = SDG 350,000	Savings and Social Development Bank	As at 2008, over 700 women beneficiaries from local communities in Omdurman, Bahri and Khartoum

7. Project for financing seasonal family needs

269. This project finances seasonal family needs (schools – Ramadan – feast days), with funding provided by the Family Bank. It is implemented by the General Union of Sudanese

Women and the funding is provided on the basis of easy guarantees and instalment terms. Founded in 2010 with a capital of SDG 600,000, the Women's Finance Fund was first rolled out in Khartoum state, with 1,150 women benefiting, and will be extended to all states in which there is a branch of the Family Bank. A Ramadan parcel scheme was also implemented in A.H. 1432 (corresponding to 2009), with 1,151 families benefiting.

Aims of the project

270. The aims of the project are as follows:

1. Meet seasonal family needs (school and feast day seasons) and make financing a means to that end;
2. Disseminate a culture of microfinance among the segments of society and target groups;
3. Work for the horizontal and vertical expansion of and access to such finance for families;
4. Alleviate the burden on families, particularly families with limited incomes, in meeting their needs.

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Funding source and amount</i>	<i>Banks and finance institutions</i>	<i>Number of women beneficiaries</i>
Financing seasonal family needs	Family Bank SDG 600,000	Family Bank and General Union of Sudanese Women	1,150 families in Khartoum state benefited from financing in the initial pilot for the Ramadan parcel scheme
	General Union of Sudanese Women SDG 750,000		1,151 women in Khartoum state benefited from the Ramadan parcel scheme in A.H. 1432 (corresponding to 2009)

8. Innovation prize for rural women

271. This is a prize awarded to rural women in order to promote grass-roots rural development and identify projects in which women are engaged in the interest of improving the quality of life for rural inhabitants. This prize was established by Mrs. Fatima Khalid, wife of the President of the Republic, to support poor rural women. Six prizes have been awarded and preparations for the seventh prize have begun.

Aims of the prize

1. Promote the role of rural women in economic and social development;
2. Encourage women to break out of the traditional sphere of production into economic production that brings in an income by using every means to promote and achieve innovation in production;
3. Heighten awareness of the importance of the issue of rural women and their contribution to economic development;
4. Foster the exchange of expertise and experiences among rural women innovators with a specialist knowledge of rural development in order to overcome obstacles;

5. Shine the spotlight on an important sector of society that contributes effectively to its development.

Areas of the prize

1. Productive rural activities (agricultural/horticultural and animal husbandry) of individuals and groups;
2. Community-based activities yielding benefits to the community (training, rural outreach and capacity-building);
3. Rural service activities.

Obstacles, proposals and future plan

Obstacles

272. Despite the successes achieved by the projects, a large number of women are unable to benefit from finance because of the many obstacles in the way, namely: (1) similarity of projects; (2) lack of adequate training for improvement; (3) heavy dues and taxes associated with the projects; (4) the requirement for certified approvals from local and health authorities, which increases cost; (5) the problem of product marketing, which hampers repayment.

Proposals

273. Proposals are as follows:

1. Market additional updated finance projects in collaboration with banks;
2. Facilitate access to finance for a larger number of women beneficiaries;
3. Work with banks and relevant entities to remove the obstacles preventing women from benefiting from finance;
4. Create markets for products so that repayment requirements can be met;
5. Work on product development and improvement;
6. Devote attention to training for women beneficiaries and actors and also intensify such training.

Future plan of the General Union

274. The future plan consists in the following:

1. Develop the women's portfolio in coordination with the Savings Bank;
2. Establish a women's finance institution in cooperation with the Microfinance Unit of the Bank of Sudan;
3. Provide intensive training courses at the state level in collaboration with banks, finance entities and organizations;
4. Establish more development associations in partnership with banks and organizations in rural and urban areas;
5. Set up a complex for marketing finance products in association with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, banks, organizations and finance entities.

VII. Challenges

275. The Sudan is an example of a country emerging from internal armed conflict. Any objective evaluation of progress achieved towards the attainment of internationally agreed social and economic goals should not therefore overlook the adverse and inhibiting impact of these conflicts on the past two decades, the present time and the foreseeable future. The Sudan has continued to face ongoing challenges throughout its modern history and has only recently emerged from one of the longest wars on the African continent. No sooner had the war in the south ended than another conflict was triggered in Darfur, in western Sudan, as a result of the environmental conditions befalling the region in the form of drought and desertification, affecting the limited resources. The resulting competition for those resources took another turn with the proliferation of arms flooding in from neighbouring countries. The role of dispute and conflict has been clearly apparent in the following:

- A large portion of financial and human resources was diverted in support of the national effort to restore security and order, protect citizens and deliver humanitarian assistance to the victims of armed conflict and persons affected by conflict, which had an adverse impact on the budget earmarked for services throughout the country, in particular the regions affected by armed conflict and the towns in those regions. Services badly affected included those relating to education, health, clean drinking water, electricity, infrastructure, environment and job creation;
- It proved difficult to implement development projects in the conflict-affected regions owing to lack of security, fragmentation and the severely weakened social and economic fabric;
- Even after the cessation of armed conflict, the realization and maintenance of peace demand tremendous resources to cover, among others, new expenditure items relating to the Peace Agreement, such as transfers to the state Governments and funding for the establishment and operation of recently established structures and institutions. Such expenditures have produced a deficit in the State's general budget;
- Poverty and illiteracy continue to pose a major challenge and are a key obstacle to many human rights-related laws and mechanisms, despite the immense efforts made and still being exerted in this sphere;
- Notwithstanding the activities organized previously with the valuable support of the UNHCR Office and the various UNMIS departments, and despite the support of international organizations and States in implementing training programmes on human rights issues, including training in the preparation and writing of reports, the shortage of trained and qualified personnel remains a substantial challenge for the Sudan;
- The stance of the international community and its enduring and persistent focus on civil and political rights in countries have created a lack of interest in economic, social and cultural rights and discouraged many States from assuming their full role in the promotion and protection of economic rights, which calls for a change in this pattern of behaviour on the part of the international community;
- The economic embargo and unilateral sanctions have affected the Sudanese people's enjoyment of economic and social rights, in addition to causing grave damage to the national economy at a time when the Sudan was and is striving to fulfil all of its international and regional obligations;
- External debts and the fact that the Sudan has not yet benefited from any cancellation of such debts are another problem;

- There are also a number of challenges in the field of education, despite the extensive progress achieved. In addition to the poverty and illiteracy already mentioned, the relevant educational institutions lack capacities, particularly in the areas of planning, financing, budgeting and the renovation of school facilities. Decentralization also poses challenges and pressure is likewise created by the teacher development policy, which requires that university graduates be employed to teach at the basic level.

VIII. Concluding remarks

276. Recovery from the effects of disputes and armed conflicts is a vital stage, as it can return living conditions to normal and basic services to the standard at which they should be. This stage is crucial to the long-term development process and calls for understanding on the part of citizens and the international community.

277. In both the civil and political and the economic, social and cultural spheres, the promotion and protection of human rights in the Sudan are an utmost priority, particularly during the coming phase and notwithstanding the multitude of unprecedented challenges reflected in this report. The national will nonetheless remains firmly set on exerting greater efforts to confront these challenges and move forward in accomplishing the noble goals of human rights principles.

278. The Sudanese Government has endeavoured through the submission of this report to reflect its efforts to fulfil its undertakings, which it has repeatedly affirmed, to improve the situation of economic, social and cultural rights in the Sudan. Through realizing these goals, it hopes to drive forward the national efforts to promote and protect human rights on the ground by assessing developments and challenges, exchanging best practices and opening up areas for cooperation with the Committee. It also looks forward to constructive recommendations and ultimately to undertakings likely to have a positive bearing on the development of the human rights situation in the Sudan so as to accomplish the goal to which we all aspired when the Committee was established as an effective mechanism for the development of human rights situations in all countries worldwide.

279. We appeal to the international community to avoid the policy of double standards, selectivity and politicization of human rights issues and to strive for neutrality and transparency in its dealings with States in the interest of concerted and constructive efforts between the various committees and States for the promotion and protection of human rights.

280. Last and not least, the Government of the Sudan apologizes for this unintended delay and looks forward to joint cooperation and constructive and objective dialogue with the Committee for the sake of Sudanese citizens.
