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Second periodic reports of States parties due in 1995

Lebanon*

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Preamble

1. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 and the provisions of the Covenant entered into force on 3 January 1976 in accordance with article 27 thereof.
2. Lebanon acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 3 November 1972 and, on 12 May 1993, in conformity with articles 16 and 17 thereof, submitted its initial report (document (E/1990/5/Add. 16 dated 6 July 1993) to the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1993.
3. The present report updates the previous report and contains the latest information on the human rights situation in Lebanon from the standpoint of economic, social and cultural rights during the period 1993-2014. The content of the report addresses the economic, social and cultural aspects of non-discrimination, equality of rights, general well-being and enjoyment of basic human rights and refers to the achievements made in Lebanon in these fields.
4. Lebanon has been faced with difficult circumstances under the pressure of various internal, regional and international military, security, economic and social factors. In particular, it was the victim of repeated Israeli acts of aggression against Lebanese territory in 1993, 1996 and 2006 which affected both the civilian population and the civil infrastructure insofar as the Israeli army engaged in barbaric acts in which it used aircraft, heavy artillery, missiles and cluster bombs to kill civilians and systematically destroy civilian installations, bridges, roads, factories, power plants and the runway of the international airport. In addition, during the years 2011-2014, the socioeconomic situation in Lebanon was adversely affected by the repercussions of the Syrian crisis as a result of the grave threat posed to its border security by terrorist organizations and an influx of Syrian migrants the total number of whom amounted to more than one third of Lebanon's population. The combination of these factors forced the State and its institutions to remain in a state of constant mobilization and was largely responsible for the delays in the preparation and submission of periodic reports within the prescribed deadlines.
5. Lebanon's present report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights during the period 1993-2014 constitutes a reaffirmation of the country's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. The following ministries contributed to the preparation of this report: Foreign Affairs and Emigrants; Economy and Trade; Culture; Social Affairs; Labour; Justice; Education and Higher Education; Public Health; and Interior and Municipalities.

Introduction

Economic, social and cultural development in Lebanon

A. Economic development

7. Lebanon's public debt, which exceeded US\$ 64 billion in 2014, places a heavy burden on the country's economy and the servicing of this debt (around US\$ 4.5 billion per annum) consumes the greater part of its national income, thereby impeding the funding of productive economic development plans. Consequently, the economic development projects that the Government adopts remain limited in comparison with Lebanon's needs.

8. Although Arab and foreign States are providing Lebanon with development assistance and soft loans, the paucity, conditions and predefined purposes of such assistance have not left the Lebanese Government much scope to distribute it in a balanced manner in all the regions.

9. The United Nations classifies Lebanon as a developing country in the light of its average per capita income (ranging from US\$ 7,000 in 2008 to US\$ 11,000 in 2014), its gross national income (rising from US\$ 35.5 billion in 2009 to US\$ 47.74 billion in 2014), the decline in its GDP annual growth rate from 8.5 per cent in 2009 to less than 2.0 per cent in 2014 due to the adverse repercussions of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese economy and employment opportunities, and its annual inflation rate which amounted to 4.8 per cent in 2013.

10. Since the achievement of its independence in 1943, Lebanon has pursued a free market economic system and the trade liberalization measures that it has taken have focused on the signature of free trade agreements with all the Arab States within the framework of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) in 1998, the European Union (EU) in 2002 and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA, comprising Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) in 2004. Lebanon also applied for membership of the World Trade Organization in 1999 and has been granted observer status therein.

11. Lebanon has signed bilateral investment agreements with the following 50 countries (listed in alphabetical order): Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium/Luxembourg, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sudan, Sultanate of Oman, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Yemen.

12. More than 90 per cent of the enterprises currently operating in the Lebanese economy fall within the categories of small and medium-sized enterprises, which employ around 50 per cent of the total number of registered employees. The Lebanese authorities are endeavouring to build up strong and sustainable small and medium-sized enterprises with a view to developing the Lebanese economy in all regions and all sectors and, in 2014, the Ministry of Economy and Trade formulated a national strategy for such enterprises, as well as a roadmap up to 2020, to support them and enable them to become competitive.

B. Social development

13. The population of Lebanon amounts to around 4.2 million and the number of Lebanese emigrants and persons of Lebanese descent living abroad totals around 8 million. The country's population density amounts to 350 persons per km² and more than 85 per cent of the population live in the cities and their suburbs, including 1.2 million persons in the capital, Beirut.

14. With regard to social development, Lebanon is facing numerous difficulties, as illustrated by the following:

- The high poverty rate. It is estimated that 1.17 million Lebanese were living in poverty in 2014;

- High rates of unemployment among Lebanese youth, estimated by the International Labour Organization at 22 per cent in 2013 and by the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers at 37 per cent in 2014;
- Reduced opportunities for Lebanese youth to find employment abroad due to the unstable political and security situation in the Arab region;
- The fact that, since the spring of 2011, around 20,000 Lebanese who had been living for a long time in Syrian villages close to the Lebanese border, as well as around 30,000 persons holding dual Lebanese/Syrian nationality, have had to leave Syria urgently and return to Lebanon, feeling their lives to be in danger. Their relatives in Lebanon have played a vital role in ensuring ongoing humanitarian support for these migrants by providing temporary accommodation and meeting other needs within the limits of their modest capabilities. Nevertheless, these migrants are complaining about the lack of financial resources, accommodation and employment and their inability to meet their living expenses in the places where they have found refuge inside Lebanese territory;
- The influx of large numbers of Syrian migrants (around 1.6 million) into Lebanon during the period 2011-2014, which has strained the country's socioeconomic resources, especially in regions which have historically been the poorest in Lebanon. This has placed increasing pressure not only on public finances and services, particularly in the education and health-care sectors which have been the most affected, but also on the infrastructure (electricity and water supply, sanitation and roads, etc.). The number of Syrian students in Lebanese schools amounted to around 90,000 in the academic year 2013/14 and the number of Syrian children enrolled in public schools in the academic year 2014/15 is expected to increase to 140,000-170,000, thereby constituting 57 per cent of the total number of students in public schools in Lebanon (for further details, reference can be made to section X of this report);
- Lebanon's hosting of Palestinian refugees who were displaced from their Palestinian homeland in 1948 and, according to UNRWA records, numbered around 450,000 on 1 July 2014. To these should be added around 50,000 Palestinian refugees who were living in Syria but migrated to Lebanon during the period 2012-2014 when the battles reached the sites of their camps, and especially Yarmouk camp near Damascus;
- Lebanon's hosting of several thousand Iraqi refugees who migrated to Lebanon due to the unstable political and security situation in their home country before and after the international coalition forces, led by the United States of America, invaded Iraq in 2003. Lebanon is also hosting thousands of Iraqis who migrated to Lebanon in 2013 and 2014 in the wake of the attacks and massacres perpetrated against religious minorities by terrorist extremist organizations in the regions that they had brought under their control inside Iraq;
- Care for the victims of the cluster bombs dropped by Israeli aircraft over Lebanon during the aggression of 2006, the number of whom amounted to 3,684 persons (903 killed and 2,781 wounded) during the period from July 2006 to May 2013. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre in the Ministry of National Defence is overseeing the humanitarian mine clearance and victim assistance operations in Lebanese territory.

15. The Lebanese working abroad are helping not only to assist their families and relatives inside Lebanon but also to bolster their homeland's financial resources. The value of the remittances received from Lebanese emigrants amounts to around US\$ 7 billion per annum.

16. During the period covered by this report, Lebanese governmental institutions have made intensive endeavours to provide health care and direct assistance for poverty-stricken persons, as well as education for their children. The Government has also sought to provide additional employment opportunities and fill vacancies in the public sector in order to absorb available skilled human resources and ensure social security as far as possible for the population. The private sector has helped to absorb graduates from Lebanese universities in banks, factories and commercial, financial, advertising and media institutions.

17. Civil society organizations in Lebanon are playing an increasingly active and influential role in social development issues and the promotion of human rights and Lebanon is regarded as an international standard-bearer in regard to the number of civil society organizations in relation to the size of its population. In fact, the number of these organizations increased from 88 prior to the country's achievement of independence from France in 1943 to 1,303 in 1979, 3,946 in 1999 and 6,639 in 2010, although the number of active associations does not exceed 600, of which only 150 are operating at the national level. These organizations and associations employ around 12,000 persons, in addition to 20,000 volunteers whose number increases in the event of emergencies and crises. The existence of such a large number of civil society organizations is attributable to the ease with which they can be established (under art. 13 of the Constitution and the Associations Act promulgated on 3 August 1909, as amended) without prior approval insofar as the founders are merely required to inform the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities under the notification regulations.

C. Cultural development

18. Lebanon is characterized by its intellectual and cultural open-minded attitude towards the world and is regarded as a centre for interaction, encounters and dialogue among civilizations.

19. In the cultural sphere, during the period 1993-2014 hundreds of local and international art exhibitions, theatrical presentations and music festivals were held in various regions of Lebanon, notable official encouragement was given for the organization of scholarly forums, lectures, discussion groups and conferences and, in 2014, the halls and theatre of the UNESCO Palace in Beirut hosted around 1,100 free cultural activities. During the same period, the Ministry of Culture sponsored 500 cultural activities and donated around 450 million Lebanese pounds to support the cultural activities of about 100 cultural associations and clubs operating in all parts of Lebanese territory.

20. In 2014, there were 120 public libraries in Lebanon which were frequented by 100,000 visitors, 70 per cent of whom were children. The Ministry of Culture allocated an amount of 600 million Lebanese pounds to support the activities of these libraries and the National Library in Ba'qalin received around 40,000 visitors in 2014 during which it organized 94 cultural activities (for further details, reference can be made to section IX of this report).

21. Lebanon's public and private universities (40 universities and higher education facilities attended by around 192,000 male and female students according to the statistics for the academic year 2012/13), as well as Lebanese and foreign cultural centres and civil society institutions, have made an outstanding contribution to cultural development through the academic and extramural activities that they have organized and the education and training that they have provided to develop the talents, aptitudes and skills of children and youth of both sexes.

I. Non-discrimination and economic rights of non-nationals (art. 2)

22. Lebanon acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 21 April 1997, with a reservation concerning article 9, paragraph 2, thereof under which women should be granted equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children. This remains a controversial issue on which governmental authorities and civil society organizations have failed to reach agreement, although some progress has been made in regard to the residence facilities offered to foreign spouses of Lebanese women and their children (for further details, reference can be made to section II of this report).

23. Lebanon also made a reservation to article 16, paragraph 1, of the Convention, under which States Parties are required to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, in view of Lebanon's personal status laws concerning confessional communities (for further details, reference can be made to section II of this report).

24. Lebanon made a further reservation to article 29, paragraph 1, which specifies procedures for the settlement of disputes between States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention.

25. On 5 October 2005, Lebanon acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which was adopted by the United Nations on 15 November 2000, and also to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

26. Lebanon also acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 5 October 2000 and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 8 November 2004. It signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto on 4 June 2007 and, on 6 February 2007, signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

27. Within the framework of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions concerning human rights, Lebanon acceded to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on 10 March 2003. On 11 September 2001, it also acceded to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and adopted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190).

28. The Lebanese authorities are continuing the policy that they have adopted in regard to foreign workers, which is based on non-discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, nationality, religion, political opinion or national or social origin. Lebanese laws apply to Lebanese nationals and foreigners alike, with equal rights except in regard to the right to acquire ownership of property, which is limited in the case of foreigners, and some occupations the exercise of which is restricted to Lebanese nationals. Although foreigners are employed in the private sector, their employment in the public sector is extremely limited due to the availability of the requisite Lebanese human resources and the fact that Lebanese applicants for posts in the public sector are required to pass special examinations which foreign applicants are not eligible to sit.

II. Equal right to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights (arts. 3, 4 and 5)

29. The principal measures that the Lebanese authorities have taken to achieve the purposes of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and particularly the right of self-determination and the right to equality, during the period covered by this report include the promulgation of a number of enactments, including:

- Act No. 686 of 16 March 1998, concerning compulsory and free primary education;
- Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Act No. 422 of 6 June 2002, concerning juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk;
- Act No. 164 of 24 August 2011, concerning the punishment of human trafficking offences;
- Act No. 216 of 30 March 2012, defining each year of a custodial sentence as a term of 9 months' imprisonment;
- Act No. 293 of 7 May 2014, concerning the protection of women and other household members against domestic violence.

30. Lebanese society is characterized by its religious diversity insofar as its various regions are inhabited by 18 officially recognized confessional communities the political, social and cultural rights of which are diligently protected by the State. Recent years have witnessed numerous developments in regard to the right of self-determination and the right to equality. By way of example, civil society associations have endeavoured to secure the exemption of Lebanese nationals from the provisions of the personal status laws regulating the confessional communities to which they belong and a number of citizens have submitted applications for deletion of the names of their communities from their personal identity documents. On 21 October 2008, the Minister of Interior and Municipalities decided that these applications should be accepted and, on 6 February 2009, he issued a further decision affirming that the human rights to which every citizen was entitled included the right to demand that his or her confessional affiliation be omitted or deleted from civil registry records.

31. This development facilitated the conclusion of the first civil marriage in Lebanon between two Lebanese nationals whose confessional affiliations had been deleted from their personal identity documents in accordance with the provisions of Decree No. 60 L.R. of 1936 regulating religious communities in Lebanon, which recognized a "common law" community in which matters of personal status were governed by the Civil Code. The marriage contract was recorded by the civil registry on the basis of an opinion issued on 11 February 2013 by the Legislative Advisory Board of the Ministry of Justice which maintained that any Lebanese national not belonging to a confessional community had the right to conclude a civil marriage in Lebanon in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the international instruments enshrining the right to freedom of belief and the right to marry. However, the registration of this type of marriage contract was suspended in 2014 due to the refusal of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities to recognize it on grounds that are still being contested by civil society organizations.

32. Although the updating of the law on nationality (Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925, as amended by the Nationality Act promulgated on 11 January 1960) is a matter of great concern to broad sections of the Lebanese people and civil society

organizations, no amendment has yet been made to the provisions of the Act, and particularly those concerning the granting of Lebanese nationality to the children of a Lebanese mother and a non-Lebanese father, which are based on the principle of rejecting the settlement of non-Lebanese in accordance with paragraph “j” of the preamble to the Constitution. However, on 31 May 2010, the Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 4186 empowering the Director-General of Public Security to issue a courtesy residence permit valid for a renewable period of three years to any foreigner married to a Lebanese woman for not less than one year and also to the children born to a Lebanese mother by a foreign spouse, regardless of whether they are adult or minor, working or unemployed.

33. Lebanon is applying a democratic system of governance under which Members of Parliament are elected, directly and by secret ballot, by the people. The electoral law currently in force in Lebanon was promulgated by Act No. 25 of 8 October 2008 (Lebanon’s first electoral law dates back to 1922). The Parliament consists of 128 members of whom half are Muslims and half are Christians, but the level of female representation therein is very low and does not reflect the number of women who are entitled to vote in parliamentary elections.

34. On 15 July 2011, the Minister of Interior and Municipalities inaugurated a workshop to draft a new electoral law for the parliamentary elections in 2013 with a view to ensuring fair political representation in the light of reforms that had already been proposed, as well as further options such as proportional representation. However, although the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities completed its project, the legal and legislative procedures did not take an appropriate course, particularly after Parliament decided on 31 May 2013 to extend its mandate initially to 20 November 2014 and subsequently, on 5 November 2014, decided on a further extension to 20 June 2017 on the ground of the exceptional circumstances that Lebanon was facing. These two extensions were opposed by a broad section of the Lebanese people and also by civil society organizations.

35. All the various types of services provided by governmental institutions are available to all Lebanese nationals without any form of discrimination and recruitment in the public administrative sector and the academic educational sector is based on competence-related criteria in which no account is taken of the candidates’ gender.

36. Within the framework of the project for the promotion of gender equality in education (project for the removal of gender-based stereotypes from educational textbooks and curricula in Lebanon), the Educational Research and Development Centre of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with the UNESCO office in Lebanon and with funding from the Italian Government, implemented a joint project in 2010 to identify discriminatory texts in school textbooks and curricula. This project, in which 30 researchers and experts participated, helped to achieve the following objectives:

1. A gender balance in the number of writers of school textbooks and curricula for all educational stages and subjects;
2. A gender balance in the number of characters portrayed in texts and illustrations;
3. Presentation of the various fundamental social, reproductive, creative and leadership roles that both men and women are playing in a non-stereotyped manner in conformity with the Lebanese scale of values;
4. Adoption of texts written by Lebanese and non-Lebanese women on a wide variety of subjects.

37. Moreover, with a view to the achievement of gender equality in economic activity, article 11 of the Code of Commerce was abrogated by article 1 of Act No. 380 of 4 November 1994 which replaced it with the following text: “A married woman possesses full legal capacity to engage in commercial activities”.

III. Right to work and freedom of trade-union activity (arts. 6, 7 and 8)

38. Lebanon has acceded to 51 International Labour Organization conventions and seven Arab Labour Organization conventions. This is an indication of the extent to which Lebanon is developing and updating its Labour Law in conformity with its international commitments.

A. Guarantee of workers’ rights

39. In Lebanon, workers’ rights are safeguarded by the Labour Law promulgated on 23 September 1946, as amended, and the following decrees and enactments were issued during the period covered by this report:

- Decree No. 5883 of 3 November 1994 (general regulations concerning public sector wage-earners), as amended;
- Decree No. 3379 of 11 July 2000 (additional labour regulations and cash bonuses in government departments), as amended by Decree No. 8755 of 25 September 2002;
- Ministry of Finance Ordinance No. 1226/S 1 of 17 April 2010 concerning a civil servant’s right to benefit from the family allowance in respect of his foreign wife;
- Act No. 180 of 29 August 2011 amending article 31 of Legislative Decree No. 144 of 12 June 1959 (income tax law) with a view to ensuring gender equality by enabling working married women to benefit from a tax reduction in respect of their spouses and children in the same way as men;
- Decree No. 7838 of 23 March 2012 concerning the manner of calculation of the tax reduction provided for in the above-mentioned Act No. 180 of 2011;
- Act No. 239 of 22 October 2012 amending the National Defence Act in order to entitle a second wife (following the death of a first wife) to benefit from her husband’s military retirement pension;
- Decree No. 10110 of 22 March 2013 amending Decree No. 3950 of 27 April 1960 (regulations concerning allowances and benefits), as amended, in order to entitle female civil servants to benefit from the family allowance in respect of their spouses and children.

40. The Ministry of Labour is playing a fundamental role in promoting and protecting the rights and social welfare of workers by implementing measures such as:

- Intensification of the activities of the index committee established under the provisions of Decree No. 4206 of 8 August 1981 to maintain a cost-of-living and price level index;
- Establishment of a sustainable dialogue committee under the provisions of Council of Ministers Decision No. 64/2012 of 25 April 2012 to promote and regulate an ongoing dialogue among the constituent components of society, and

particularly the social partners, in order to ensure the requisite degree of social harmony and stability;

- Drafting of bills of law on: health care for Lebanese covered by social security who are no longer actively employed; the pension and social protection system; and agricultural workers. (As of the date of preparation of this report, those bills had not yet been approved by Parliament);
- Formation, in accordance with the provisions of Act No. 121/1 of 25 September 2002, of a committee comprising representatives of the public and private sectors and civil society to implement Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

41. The rights that workers enjoy under the Labour Law promulgated on 23 September 1946, as subsequently amended, can be summarized as follows:

- Employment contracts:
 1. Employment contracts, whether concluded in writing or verbally, are governed by the provisions of common law. A written contract drawn up in the Arabic language may be translated into a foreign language if the employer or the employee is a foreigner who does not understand Arabic (art. 12 of the Labour Law);
 2. The Ministry of Labour issues every employee with an employment record book containing his name, identity card details, occupation, medical examination history and the dates on which he entered and left the service of each enterprise. His daily, weekly or monthly wage is also recorded therein if he so requests (art. 14 of the Labour Law).
- Employment of juveniles:
 1. It is strictly prohibited to employ juveniles under 13 years of age and no juvenile can be employed before undergoing a medical examination to ascertain his fitness for the work that he would be required to perform (art. 22, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 536 of 24 July 1996);
 2. It is prohibited to employ juveniles under 15 years of age in industrial enterprises or for work that is arduous or detrimental to health. It is likewise prohibited to employ juveniles under 16 years of age in activities which, by their very nature, are hazardous or could place their lives, health or morals at risk (art. 23, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 536 of 24 July 1996);
 3. It is prohibited to require juveniles under 18 years of age to work more than six hours per day, interrupted by a rest period of not less than one hour if they are working more than four consecutive hours per day. It is also prohibited to require them to work during the period from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. (subpara. 1 of the final paragraph of art. 23, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 91 of 14 June 1999);
 4. Every juvenile is entitled to 21 days' annual leave on full pay provided that he has been on the enterprise's payroll for at least one year (subpara. 3 of the final paragraph of art. 23, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 91 of 14 June 1999).
- Rights of working women:
 1. It is prohibited for an employer to practise any gender-based discrimination in regard to the type of work, remuneration, recruitment, promotion, wage increments or vocational training of his employees or the work clothing provided for them (art. 26, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 207 of 26 May 2000);
 2. Working women in all the categories referred to in the Act are entitled to 10 weeks' maternity leave, covering the pre- and post-delivery periods, on

presentation of a medical certificate specifying the expected date of delivery (art. 28, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 267 of 15 April 2014 amending arts. 28 and 29 of the Labour Law concerning maternity leave). Under the provisions of Decree No. 9825 promulgated on 1 February 2013, the maternity leave entitlement of women workers who are not civil servants had already been increased from 7 to 10 weeks;

3. Maternity leave is granted on full pay and, under the provisions of article 39 of the Labour Law, working women who have taken such maternity leave remain entitled to ordinary annual leave with pay during the same year. It is prohibited to dismiss or give notice to a woman during the period of her maternity leave unless she is found to have been employed elsewhere during the said period (art. 29, as amended by art. 1 of Act No. 267 of 15 April 2014).

- Working hours, leaves and salaries:

1. The maximum number of working hours is set at 48 hours per week in the occupations referred to in article 5, with the exception of agricultural occupations. In the case of children and juveniles, their working hours are limited by the provisions of articles 22-25 (art. 31 of the Labour Law);

2. Whenever male employees are working more than six hours and female employees more than five hours per day, their employer must grant them a rest period of not less than one hour in the middle of the working day. Employees are entitled to nine consecutive hours' rest in every period of 24 hours, except in cases in which the circumstances of the work require otherwise (art. 34 of the Labour Law);

3. All employees must be granted a weekly uninterrupted rest period of not less than 36 hours. The employer may schedule this rest period for his employees in accordance with the requirements of the work (art. 36 of the Labour Law);

4. Every employee is entitled to 15 days' annual leave on full pay provided that he has been in the enterprise's service for not less than one year. The employer may choose the date of such leaves in accordance with operational requirements but does not have the right to dismiss the employee or give him notice of dismissal during such leave (art. 39 of the Labour Law);

5. The minimum wage must be sufficient to meet the basic needs of the employee and his family, taking into consideration the type of work, and must not be less than the official minimum wage (art. 44 of the Labour Law);

6. Employees' salaries due in respect of the previous year constitute privileged debts, ranking only after treasury debt, legal charges and compulsory insurance, and this principle also applies in cases of insolvency (art. 48 of the Labour Law);

7. It is prohibited to give notice of dismissal to a pregnant woman, a woman on maternity leave or any employee on ordinary or sick leave. However, the employer is freed from this impediment if the employee is found to have been employed elsewhere during such period (art. 52 of the Labour Law, as amended by art. 4 of Act No. 207 of 26 May 2000).

- Imposition of penalties:

1. Any violation of the provisions of the Labour Law or the decrees and decisions issued pursuant thereto is referred to the competent courts and the perpetrator is liable, in respect of each such violation, to a fine ranging from 250,000 to 2,500,000 Lebanese pounds and/or detention for a term of one to three months, the penalty being doubled in the event of a repeated violation

during a single year (art. 2 of the Act promulgated on 17 September 1962, as amended by art. 46 of Act No. 173 of 14 February 2000, under the section on penalties after the annulment of arts. 107 and 108);

2. Mitigating circumstances cannot be considered, nor can the sentence be suspended, if the perpetrator of the offence or his representative had previously been warned in writing to correct his practices. Multiple violations are punished separately, on the basis of the number of employees affected, and penalties cannot be merged (paragraph added to the text of art. 2 of the Act promulgated on 17 September 1962 under the provisions of art. 1 of Decree No. 9816 of 4 May 1968);

3. If an entrepreneur fails to implement the preventive safety measures ordered under the terms of a warning received from the competent committee, the Director General of the Ministry of Labour may temporarily suspend the enterprise's operations for a period of up to 10 days in respect of which the wages of its staff and workers are payable in full (art. 5 of the Act promulgated on 17 September 1962 amending arts. 107 and 108 of the Labour Law).

B. Guarantee of protection for foreign workers

42. The Lebanese Labour Law applies to foreign workers, who enjoy most of the rights to which Lebanese workers are entitled, including the same working conditions, equal opportunities and the same respect for their rights. Article 59, paragraph 3, of the Labour Law was amended by Act No. 129 of 24 August 2010 to read as follows: "On separation from service, foreign employees shall enjoy the same rights as Lebanese workers, subject to the principle of reciprocity. Such employees are required to obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour. Exemption from the condition of reciprocity and from payment of the fee for issuance of a residence permit by the Ministry of Labour is granted exclusively to Palestinian employees who are refugees duly registered with the Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs in the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities."

43. Around 179,000 foreign workers were granted annual residence permits in 2014 and the number of work permits issued or renewed during that year amounted to around 202,000.

44. A bill of law on decent employment for male and female domestic workers was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and submitted to the Council of Ministers on 14 March 2013. The bill was drawn up in the light of the standards laid down in the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and particularly the provisions concerning guarantees in respect of wages, working hours, rest periods, weekly, annual and sick leave and the indemnity-related liabilities of both the employer and the domestic worker in the event of breach of contract.

45. Pursuant to the Minister of Labour's Decision No. 38/1 of 16 March 2009, a standard employment contract has been introduced for foreign female domestic workers. Under the terms of the contract, which is drawn up by a notary public, the employer undertakes to use the worker's services only for domestic work and solely in his place of residence, to pay the worker's salary in full at the end of each month and to provide decent working and living conditions. The employer also has an obligation to take out an insurance policy for the worker with an insurance company that meets the legally stipulated conditions (Minister of Labour's Decision No. 52/1 of 14 April 2009). The national facilitation committee, which was established by the Ministry of Labour to study the national labour situation, has prepared a handbook in several languages to familiarize foreign female domestic workers with their rights and

obligations and the complaint procedures to be followed if they encounter any problems. Foreign labour recruitment agencies have also been regulated in such a way as to prevent human trafficking and protect the human dignity of persons coming to work in Lebanon (Minister of Labour's Decision No. 1/1 of 3 January 2011). Pursuant to the Prime Minister's Decision No. 40/2007 of 10 April 2007, a national committee was established to formulate and implement projects to promote and protect the rights of female domestic workers in coordination with government agencies, the International Labour Organization, specialized Arab and international organizations, national non-governmental bodies and committees, and the embassies concerned.

46. On 10 April 2012, the Ministry of Labour established a complaints and information office and a hotline (number 1740) to receive complaints from Lebanese and foreign workers. In 2014, the labour inspection and investigation departments carried out 1,193 regular and unannounced inspections, 63 inquiries concerning work permits issued to foreigners, 1,152 investigations of complaints by workers and 92 investigations of complaints against agencies engaged in the recruitment of female domestic workers.

47. Within the framework of the regulation of foreign labour, a cooperation agreement between Lebanon and Egypt was signed on 30 November 2008 and a memorandum of understanding between Lebanon and the Philippines on the same subject was signed on 1 February 2012. Negotiations are currently being conducted with the Sudan, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia with a view to the signature of similar agreements.

48. The Ministry of Labour's endeavours to prevent human trafficking have gone hand in hand with measures taken by the Lebanese judiciary, which issued 10 criminal indictments for human trafficking in 2013. In 2014, pursuant to article 586, paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4, and article 589 of the Penal Code, as amended and supplemented by Act No. 164 of 24 August 2011 concerning punishment of the crime of trafficking in persons, the Lebanese judiciary took further measures in cases involving human trafficking, as detailed below:

- Total number of cases in which persons are being prosecuted for human trafficking offences: 34 cases in which final judgements have not yet been handed down by the criminal court;
- Total number of suspects questioned by the Department of Public Prosecutions: 85;
- Total number of suspects charged by the investigating judge: 68;
- Number of persons indicted by the Indictments Chamber: 6;
- Number of persons convicted by the criminal court: 4.

C. Freedom to form trade unions and engage in trade-union activity

49. Freedom to form trade unions and engage in trade-union activity is protected by the Constitution and the laws in force in Lebanon where freedom of association and the right to organize are amply demonstrated by the existence of 598 trade unions and 69 federations of employers and workers engaged in all sectors and types of economic activity. The formation of occupational associations and trade unions and the exercise of trade-union activity are governed by the Lebanese Labour Law, none of the provisions of which were amended during the period covered by this report. Note should be taken of the following:

- The Ministry of Labour does not oblige anyone to join a trade union, although it does investigate any case in which an application for membership of a trade union is rejected;
- The Ministry of Labour does not refuse to certify any procedural rules of any trade union;
- The Ministry of Labour does not interfere in the scheduling of elections, nor does it set their dates, since such matters fall within the competence of the trade union's executive (art. 3 of Decree No. 7993 of 3 April 1952);
- The Ministry of Labour does not interfere in a trade union's affairs when overseeing its elections; the Ministry merely monitors the electoral process to ensure that the correct procedures are followed and that the right to vote and be elected is freely exercised.

50. The Labour Law, as subsequently amended, does not contain any provision regulating the right of workers to demonstrate. Some hold the view that, since article 84, paragraph 2, of the Labour Law prohibits trade unions from participating in demonstrations of a political nature, it can be inferred that the Labour Law does not prohibit participation in demonstrations or protests of an occupational nature. However, this interpretation remains debatable.

51. The primary role of the Ministry of Labour is to encourage social dialogue between the two parties involved in the production process with a view to the development of collective bargaining mechanisms within the framework of international standards in order to prevent capital from riding roughshod over the rights of workers and also in order to create a decent working environment protected by occupational safety measures and eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex, colour, belief, religion or other factors.

IV. Right to social security (art. 9)

52. Public sector employees benefit from the following insurance schemes:

- The Civil Servants' Cooperative for the permanent salaried staff of government ministries and departments (totalling around 63,000 persons and their families in 2014), excluding wage-earning employees;
- The Judges' Mutual Fund for judges serving on the bench, in the State Consultative Council and in the Auditor General's Office (around 500 judges and their families in 2014);
- Insurance schemes for military personnel (number not available).

53. Employees working in the private sector and in public institutions, as well as non-permanent and contractual public sector personnel, are covered by the National Social Security Fund (around 621,000 contributors and 760,000 members of their families as of 30 September 2014).

54. Persons not working in the public or private sectors are entitled to benefit from the services of the Ministry of Public Health (around 1 million persons).

55. Persons with special needs benefit from the services of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health on presentation of the card issued to them by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

56. With regard to older persons, endeavours are being made to improve their situation through a bill of law on pensions, social protection and optional insurance, in

addition to the health card that the Ministry of Public Health is planning to issue to persons who are not currently covered by insurance schemes.

57. On 11 August 2014, the Minister of Labour inaugurated a symposium on the topic of “Social security: present and future prospects” which was organized by the National Social Security Fund and attended by representatives of employers and workers to study the introduction of radical reforms in the Fund with a view to providing social security coverage for all Lebanese without exception, updating the concept and philosophy of social security and establishing a pyramidal administrative structure consistent with the needs of workers and conducive to the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable development in keeping with international labour standards.

58. Under the terms of Act No. 128 of 24 August 2010 amending article 9, paragraph 3, of the Social Security Act, Palestinian workers registered as refugees with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs) were granted the right to benefit from the separation-from-service indemnity in the same way as Lebanese workers after being exempted from the condition of reciprocity applicable to foreign workers. They were also exempted from payment of the fee for the issuance of a work permit.

59. During the period covered by this report (1993-2014), the following new categories were added to those entitled to benefit from the services of the National Social Security Fund:

- Authors and artists (Decree No. 8073 of 12 March 1996);
- Mayors of villages or urban districts (Act No. 225 of 29 May 2000);
- Persons over 64 years of age, provided that they register with the Fund within three months from the date on which they reach that legally specified age (Act No. 248 of 9 August 2000);
- Physicians contracted to the National Social Security Fund (Decree No. 4822 of 2 February 2001).

V. Protection of the family (art. 10)

A. Protection of the family and prohibition of all forms of violence and abuse, especially against women and children

60. On 1 April 2014, the Lebanese Parliament passed a bill (Act No. 293 of 7 May 2014) on the protection of women and other household members against domestic violence. The Act defines the household as comprising “an individual and/or his or her spouse, the father and mother of either of them, their brothers, sisters, ascendants and descendants, whether legitimate or illegitimate, and anyone linked to them by adoption or marriage up to the second degree, by testamentary guardianship or tutorship or by a responsibility to care for orphans or for a stepmother or stepfather”. The Act further defines domestic violence as “any act or failure to act, or threat thereof, on the part of any member of the household against one or more other members of the household, as defined above, involving any of the offences specified herein and resulting in death or physical, mental, sexual or economic harm”.

61. The Act is characterized by the severe penalties that it prescribes for persons who incite minors or women to engage in begging, immoral or indecent acts or prostitution. The penalties are even heavier if the offence is committed within the household and are doubled if the offence is accompanied by any form of violence or

threat, especially by one of the spouses against the other. The amendments that this new Act makes to articles 487, 488, 489, 523, 527, 547, 559 and 618 of the Lebanese Penal Code provide protection for minors, women and wives within the household against violence or threats thereof.

62. Under article 4 of the Act, the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal is required to assign one or more district attorneys in each governorate to receive complaints concerning acts of domestic violence. Under article 5, the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces is required to establish a unit specialized in offences of domestic violence to undertake the criminal investigation of the complaints received. The Act clearly defines the role of criminal investigation officers, which consists in: receiving and investigating complaints; proceeding promptly to the scene of the crime, hearing the statements of the victim and the witnesses to the domestic violence, including minor children, in the presence of social workers; informing the victim of her right to apply for a protection order for herself and the children in her legal custody, as well as her right to be assisted by a lawyer; and acquainting the victim with her other rights as enunciated in article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

63. The Act also makes provision for the establishment of a special fund, consisting of allocations from the State's budget and donations, to assist victims of domestic violence and ensure their welfare and protection through measures designed to put an end to criminal acts of domestic violence by rehabilitating the perpetrators thereof, preventing offenders from approaching the victims or entering the family home, or by temporarily moving the victims and other household members at risk to a safe place.

64. As recent examples of the enforcement of the Act concerning protection of women and other household members against domestic violence, the civil society organization KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation), which is actively combatting domestic violence, has reported that, in accordance with article 11 of the Act, the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal in Beirut detained a violent husband for a period of 48 hours, ordered him to pay the fees of the forensic medical examiner and returned his wife and their seven-month-old daughter to the family home after handing over to the wife her identity documents which her husband had seized. During the period from May 2014 to March 2015, the Lebanese judiciary issued 48 protection orders in response to a total of 54 petitions by women who had been subjected to domestic violence by their husbands. Of the six petitions that were rejected, after thorough scrutiny of their grounds, one had been submitted by a husband against his wife.

65. Through annual contracts with non-governmental organizations, the Ministry of Social Affairs is helping to provide social care and psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation services in preparation for the social reintegration of inmates of the women's prisons in Baabda, Tripoli and Zahle. In 2014, a total of 70 inmates benefited under the contract with the *Dar al-Amal* association.

B. Care of mothers, older persons, youth and the rising generation

1. Care of mothers

66. The Lebanese Government issued Decree No. 9825 of 1 February 2013, amending article 15 of Decree No. 5883 of 3 November 1994, under which the period of maternity leave on full pay was extended from 7 to 10 weeks. On 4 April 2013, the Government also agreed to amend Decree No. 3950 of 27 April 1960 in order to grant the family allowance to married female civil servants.

67. Subscribers to the National Social Security Fund are entitled to the following health and maternity insurance benefits for themselves and their families:

- Preventive and therapeutic medical care;
- Antenatal medical examinations and care for expectant mothers, as well as the requisite care during and after their delivery;
- Benefits in the event of temporary incapacity for work due to sickness or maternity;
- Coverage of funeral expenses in the event of death.

68. The Ministry of Social Affairs monitors the family and health situation of pregnant women and their newborn infants in the women's prisons in order to ensure that the basic needs of such infants are met by keeping their state of health under surveillance while they are in the prison with their mothers. The Ministry also organizes numerous meetings to raise the awareness of female prisoners concerning reproductive health issues, improve their living conditions in prison and promote their socioeconomic empowerment.

2. Care of older persons

69. According to the statistics for 2007 contained in the national survey of household living conditions during the period 2004-2007, older persons constituted around 9.6 per cent of Lebanon's total population and only 45.1 per cent of them (46.2 per cent of the men and 43.8 per cent of the women) had health insurance coverage. The greatest challenge lies in the high proportion (50.5 per cent) of older persons uncovered by any form of insurance insofar as they are at constant risk in view of the fact that the need for ongoing health care increases with age. Lebanon is still endeavouring to address the issue of social protection for all categories of older persons within the following contexts:

- Social protection in the governmental sector through coverage of the costs of medical treatment for retirees (12,000 civilian and 36,000 military personnel according to the statistics for 2011);
- Social protection in the private sector through the provision of optional health insurance for older Lebanese (Act No. 248 of 9 September 2000). However, application of the provisions of that Act to new subscribers is currently suspended, although older persons who subscribed during the period from its promulgation to its suspension, as well as those who subscribed thereto within three months after their retirement, remain entitled to National Social Security Fund benefits.

70. Until such time as insurance is provided for older persons, subscribers to the social security scheme who retire on reaching the age of 64 are disaffiliated therefrom. This places older persons in a very difficult situation, especially as it is estimated that 73 per cent of them do not have any health or retirement insurance.

71. The Ministry of Social Affairs provides some welfare services for indigent and marginalized older persons. By way of example: every year, around 1,131 older persons benefit from the welfare services provided by 31 residential care institutions; around 13,731 benefit from the welfare services provided by 58 day-care institutions; around 7,952 benefit from the welfare services provided by 74 external and home-care institutions; around 3,934 benefit from the services of 41 soup kitchens providing hot meals; and 1,000 benefit from the marginalized older persons' support programme run by the Caritas confederation which provides welfare and development services and

monthly financial assistance with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs (statistics for 2012 and 2013).

72. Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the National Standing Commission on the Care of Older Persons has established standards to improve the quality of the services that residential and day-care institutions render for older persons and has issued guidelines for all the 127 institutions providing care, independently or under contract to the Ministry, for older persons in Lebanon.

73. A campaign for the early detection of Alzheimer's disease has been conducted. Forums have been organized to raise awareness of this disease and ways to care for persons suffering therefrom and informative booklets on its symptoms have been distributed.

74. Forty-three individuals are currently benefiting from the residential services that the Ministry of Social Affairs provides for adult and older persons under the agreement concluded with the *Risalat Hayat* association and 30 drug-addicted inmates of Roumieh Prison are benefiting from the social care services provided under the agreement concluded with the *Adl wa Rahma* association.

3. Care of youth and the rising generation

75. At its meeting held on 3 April 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted the "document on youth policy in Lebanon" which had been drafted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The document, which was made known at a special ceremony in the Presidential Palace on 1 December 2012, outlined the steps that the Government intended to take to improve the living conditions of youth, provide them with services and support their endeavours to participate actively in public life. The document also addressed issues of vital importance to Lebanese youth, such as: emigration, employment, economic participation, social integration, participation in political life, education and scientific research, access to cultural facilities, and health awareness. Persons between the ages of 15 and 29 constitute 27 per cent of Lebanon's population.

76. The National Employment Office is running the "first-job programme for youth" in accordance with Decree No. 8691 of 10 August 2012 in an attempt to secure employment opportunities for young adults. The programme is designed to encourage employers to offer an initial and sustainable employment opportunity for Lebanese youth, with a view to curbing their rate of emigration and endowing them with vocational skills, in return for which the National Employment Office would provide financial and other incentives for employers who recruit a Lebanese worker entering the job market for the first time.

C. Protection and care of children

77. Lebanon acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 20 November 1989, under the terms of Act No. 20 of 30 October 1990 and, under the terms of Act No. 118 of 25 October 1999, accepted the amendment made to article 43, paragraph 2, of that Convention on 12 December 1995.

78. On 11 February 2002, Lebanon signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict which was adopted on 25 May 2000.

79. On 10 October 2001, under the terms of Act No. 414 of 5 June 2002, Lebanon signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography which was adopted on 25 May 2000.

80. Under the terms of Act No. 335 of 2 August 2001, Lebanon acceded to the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

81. The Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 8987 of 29 September 2012 prohibiting the employment of juveniles under 18 years of age in work that posed a threat to their health, safety or moral conduct.

82. On 12 December 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted the National Strategy to Safeguard and Protect Children against All Forms of Violence and Exploitation which had been drawn up by the Supreme Council for Childhood.

83. The Lebanese Penal Code makes provision for the protection of children against all forms of sexual abuse and prescribes penalties for the perpetrators of sexual offences and, in particular, sexual assault of a minor (arts. 505, 506, 509, 510, 519 and 520). At the procedural level, as announced in circular No. 14 of 2005 from the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, a central special investigation office for the hearing of testimonies by child victims of sexual assault has been established in the Palais de Justice area of Beirut in collaboration with an association specialized in the provision of psychotherapeutic treatment to help traumatized child victims to recover. A hotline has also been set up to receive complaints.

84. Under the terms of Decree No. 5137 of 1 October 2010, the Ministry of Labour formed a national committee, chaired by the Ministry of Labour, to combat child labour. The committee is mandated to formulate and monitor the implementation of programmes, plans and projects to combat child labour in coordination with the International Labour Office and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and in collaboration with the relevant international and Arab organizations, national non-governmental organizations and committees and the competent governmental ministries and departments. On 7 November 2013, the committee launched the “national plan of action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon by the year 2016”.

85. The Ministry of Labour has made several amendments to the legal provisions of the draft new Labour Code in order to safeguard the rights and protect the occupational health and safety of young persons in accordance with Arab and international labour standards including, in particular, ILO Convention No. 182 and Recommendation No. 190 concerning the worst forms of child labour and Arab Labour Convention No.18 concerning the employment of young persons.

86. With regard to juvenile justice and the welfare of detained and convicted adolescents, the following should be noted:

1. The special juvenile wing in Roumieh Prison, which currently admits both detained and convicted juveniles, has a maximum capacity of 150 persons but is actually holding less than that number;
2. Detained and convicted juveniles participate in educational and vocational rehabilitation activities and programmes, including literacy, academic support, automotive mechanical engineering, metalworking and painting, as well as computer disassembly and repair, in accordance with their aptitudes and personal propensities. Awareness-raising sessions are also organized as an ancillary component of the rehabilitation programmes;
3. Under the terms of Act No. 422 of 6 June 2002 concerning the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk, the proportion of custodial measures has been reduced and alternative reformatory measures such as reprimand, probation and community service have been adopted. The Act does not prescribe penalties of imprisonment for persons under 15 years of age (art. 6) and prohibits the detention of juveniles under 12 years of age

unless they are found to be vagrants or beggars, in which case they are detained at a specialized social institution (art. 35).

VI. Provision of a decent life (art. 11)

A. Right to a decent life

87. The Lebanese Government has pursued a policy of eradicating poverty since its adoption of the National Poverty Targeting Programme the aim of which is to determine the poverty level of households by assessing their socioeconomic situation on the basis of 62 indicators or facts declared by the household's representative. During the 2011-2013 implementation phase, 36,575 households comprising 171,903 persons were classified as being below the poverty line and, consequently, entitled to receive benefits under the programme.

88. In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs put this programme into effect and issued cards to the most indigent households to help them to obtain some health, social and educational services free of charge or at a nominal cost by, for example, offering full health coverage at 30 public and 46 private hospitals, covering the cost of medication for chronic diseases, exempting students from enrolment fees at public schools, supplying them with school textbooks free of charge and providing a food basket if the head of the household is over 60 years of age, unemployed and living in a household comprising less than three persons (Council of Ministers' decision of 23 November 2011).

89. Within the framework of the Lebanese Government's endeavours to encourage Lebanese nationals to become homeowners, the Public Corporation for Housing, which constitutes a model of cooperation between the public and private sectors, offers housing loans up to a maximum of US\$ 180,000 at low interest (around 3.57 per cent) to make it easier for Lebanese to purchase residential apartments on easy terms. By the end of May 2014, 62,066 beneficiaries living in households comprising around a quarter of a million persons had signed definitive loan agreements amounting in value to 6,612 billion Lebanese pounds with the Public Corporation for Housing.

90. On 1 April 2014, Parliament passed the new Rent Act which contained provisions concerning rent contracts between owners and long-term tenants. However, the Act is still giving rise to controversy regarding the manner of its application which, according to a number of civil society organizations concerned with the right to housing, is equivocal and unclear and has aggravated the disputes between owners and long-term tenants instead of helping to promote conciliation by simultaneously safeguarding the rights of both parties. Those organizations also believe that the new Rent Act has failed to define a comprehensive and clear rent policy that recognizes the right of individuals to housing and eases the burdens on tenants in a manner consistent with their incomes while, at the same time, treating owners fairly and acknowledging the State's responsibility to regulate the housing rental market.

B. Right of persons with disabilities to a decent life

91. On 14 June 2007, Lebanon signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted in New York on 13 December 2006, and the instrument of accession to the Convention has been referred to Parliament for approval.

92. During the period 1995-2012, a total of around 79,000 individuals held personal disability cards.

93. Parliament passed Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities with a view to safeguarding all aspects of their rights. The Act was based on two principles: the shift from welfare and charity to rights and the shift from marginalization and isolation to integration.

94. The Act constituted the overall legislative framework for the successful endeavours that the Ministry of Social Affairs and other relevant ministries have made to ensure realization of the rights of persons with disabilities through, inter alia: issuance of personal disability cards; elections to membership of the National Commission on Persons with Disabilities on 29 July 2012 (the first members were elected in 2001 for a three-year term) in which persons with disabilities participated; and the formation of committees on health, rehabilitation and support services in the Ministry of Social Affairs, a committee on the promotion of the occupational rights of persons with disabilities in the Ministry of Labour, a committee on the education of persons with special needs in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, a committee on facilitation of the mobility of persons with disabilities and the establishment of minimum accessibility standards in building regulations in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (Decree No. 7194 of 16 December 2011). The Civil Service Board and the National Employment Office have also formed a committee on the employment of persons with disabilities.

95. In accordance with article 71 of the Act, the Ministry of Labour pays three quarters of the minimum wage (unemployment benefit) to persons with disabilities seeking employment. The conditions and criteria that persons with disabilities must meet in order to be eligible for the unemployment benefit were laid down in Decree No. 7784 of 15 April 2002.

96. Under the terms of the Act, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and the Ministry of Labour, as well as Middle East Airlines, grant numerous tax exemptions and financial discounts to persons with disabilities.

97. The Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 16417 of 24 February 2006 defining the circumstances in which persons with learning difficulties could be exempted from official examinations. The services and programmes that the Ministry of Social Affairs offers to persons with learning difficulties have also been increased.

98. The Ministry of Public Health is playing an active role in the provision of preventive and therapeutic treatment for persons with disabilities through its nationwide immunization campaigns against poliomyelitis, its coverage of the costs of prostheses for uninsured persons with disabilities, its financial support of rehabilitation centres for such persons, its provision of free treatment and surgical operations for uninsured individuals holding personal disability cards and its coverage of the difference between the entitlements of insured persons and the actual cost of their medical treatment (Ministry of Public Health circulars Nos. 41 and 42 of 18 June 2001).

99. The Ministry of Social Affairs has intensified its endeavours to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities through the following measures:

- Ongoing replenishment of the budgetary resources of the programme to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, thereby ensuring the effective delivery of ancillary services (assistive devices to facilitate transport and mobility and offset disability-related complications such as, in particular, sterility, incontinence and scoliosis) from which more than 30 per cent of the registered holders of personal disability cards have benefited;

- Issuance of certificates of exemption from a number of fees in order to raise levels of independence, particularly in regard to housing and transport. The fact that the number of certificates being issued is now 50 per cent higher than the number issued during the last 10 years is an indication that persons with disabilities and/or their families are claiming their entitlements to a much greater extent and seeking to ensure that the institutions concerned respect their rights under the Act;
- Increased contributions to the special education needed to develop the skills and capacities of persons with severe or multiple disabilities;
- Launching of a programme to cover children with autistic spectrum disorder;
- Increase in the number of specialized educational, rehabilitation, welfare and training institutions;
- Issuance of special parking permits for persons with disabilities (art. 8 of Decision No. 2/2015 of 12 January 2015 taken by the Minister for Social Affairs pursuant to the provisions of art. 48 of Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000).

100. On 27 June 2013, Lebanon signed the Marrakech Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

VII. Right to health (art. 12)

101. The Government is spending large amounts of money on the medical treatment of Lebanese nationals. The Ministry of Public Health has an annual budgetary allocation of 420 billion Lebanese pounds (US\$ 280 million), which is supposed to cover the medical expenses of 1.5 million citizens. Total annual expenditure on treatment in Lebanon amounts to US\$ 1.5 billion, equivalent to 3 per cent of the gross national product, and will increase every year as a consequence of inflation and new medical technologies. The medical treatment sector in Lebanon is valued at US\$ 7 billion, in addition to the cost of the highly specialized scientific and academic skills of senior Lebanese medical staff. A total of 25,000 employees are working in the sector, which also provides other employment opportunities for tens of thousands of Lebanese in companies manufacturing medical equipment, in the pharmaceutical industry and in institutions providing parallel medical and health services.

102. Since only 50 percent of the Lebanese people enjoy health coverage through governmental or private insurance schemes (93 per cent and 7 per cent respectively), the Ministry of Public Health ensures health coverage for the remaining 50 per cent of the people at public hospitals or through contracts with private hospitals.

103. The Ministry of Public health provides basic health-care services such as maternal and child care, compulsory vaccinations and health counselling. The Ministry has also made considerable endeavours to reduce the incidence of maternal mortality and puerperal diseases and, at the beginning of 2011, established the National Observatory for Maternal and Neonatal Mortality. The maternal mortality ratio recorded a notable decline from 24 cases per 100,000 live births in 2011 to 17 cases in 2013 due to the quantitative and qualitative improvement of medical services and the increase in preventive and awareness-raising activities. The following comparative table shows the notable decline in mortality per 1,000 of the population, as well as the notable increase in life expectancy for both men and women, during the period 1990-2012.

<i>Sector/age</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Neonatal mortality (%)	16		5	Decline
Infant mortality under 1 year of age (%)	27	17	8	Decline
Infant mortality under 5 years of age (%)	33	20	9	Decline
Probability of men dying between 15 and 60 years of age (%)	280		72	Decline
Probability of women dying between 15 and 60 years of age (%)	150		47	Decline
Life expectancy of men from birth	64		78	Increase
Life expectancy of women from birth	71		82	Increase
Average life expectancy for men and women	67		80	Increase

Source: WHO statistics for 2014.

104. Within the framework of the nationwide immunization programme, the Ministry of Public Health administers the basic vaccinations free of charge at all its clinics and health centres (Ministry of Public Health circular No. 33 of 6 July 2004). A mammographic examination has been made compulsory for every woman entering a hospital for treatment at the expense of the Ministry of Public Health unless such examination has already been conducted during the 12 months preceding the date of her admission to the hospital (Ministry of Public Health circular No. 90 of 12 October 2010). The Ministry of Public Health also covers the costs of all open-heart surgical procedures and all medication for chronic diseases.

105. Through its development services centres and associations under contract to it, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides paediatric, gynaecological, public health and dental services and organizes annual vaccination campaigns. These services are rendered at nominal cost with a view to ensuring that all sections of society, and particularly indigent and marginalized categories, have access to basic health services.

106. Since 2003, the reproductive health centres have been implementing a project to enhance the sexual education of adolescents and protect them from sexually transmissible diseases through the organization of awareness-raising courses for Lebanese youth and the production of informative films and booklets in the preparation of which adolescents themselves have participated.

107. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is continuing its endeavours to make secondary school students more aware of the adverse effects of narcotic drugs and the preventive measures to be taken in this regard. Students in the basic education system are also being informed of the dangers of such drugs.

108. In 2013, in accordance with Decision No. 227/1 of 4 March 2013, the Ministry of Public Health began to implement the national e-health programme which provides assistance in the use of various means of communication, such as smartphones and wireless devices, for the dissemination of information and the provision of diagnostic and therapeutic health services, particularly for individuals in remote areas and for incapacitated and older patients.

109. On 2 June 2014, the Lebanese judiciary introduced a new procedure to deal with drug addicts appearing before the courts (around 2,000 persons per year) in conformity with a judicial precedent set by the Court of Cassation which, on 3 October 2013, ordered a stay of proceedings against an addict and referred him to the Committee to Combat Addiction after he undertook to follow the treatment prescribed. This procedure recognizes the addict's right to receive treatment and, at the same time, is in compliance with the Narcotic Drugs Act of 1998 insofar as the addict remains under surveillance until the completion of his treatment and the proceedings against

him are dropped when the clinic in which he is being treated certifies that he has been cured.

VIII. Right to education (arts. 13 and 14)

A. Free and compulsory basic and primary education

110. Act No. 686 of 16 March 1998 enshrined the principle of free and compulsory primary education in public schools.

111. Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000 recognized the right of persons with disabilities to receive an education.

112. Act No. 150 of 17 August 2011 made basic education compulsory, and free of charge in public schools, for all students regardless of their gender. In 2013, in accordance with Decision No. 810/M/2013, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education formed a committee to incorporate the gender perspective in its general policy.

113. Act No. 211 of 30 March 2012 authorized the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to distribute textbooks free of charge to students attending kindergartens or receiving basic education in public schools.

114. Decrees were issued concerning the plan to develop education (1994), the restructuring of education (1995) and the new curricula (1997).

115. The Lebanese Government covers the costs of education and special education or vocational training for persons with disabilities if so requested by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

116. In 2003, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with UNESCO, began the implementation of a national plan to ensure education for all during the period 2003-2015 through: expansion and improvement of care at the stage of early childhood; provision of high-quality compulsory and free education for all children at the stage of basic education; organization of programmes to eradicate functional illiteracy among children and young dropouts from the education system; establishment of a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the education system on an ongoing basis, rationalize its administration and involve the local community in educational decision-making; and the design of appropriate curricula and facilities for the education of children with special needs. Many of that plan's objectives have already been achieved.

117. On 20 December 2010, the Governments of Lebanon and the United States of America signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation within the framework of a project to rehabilitate public schools and develop the professional skills of members of the teaching staff with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project made provision for improvements in the learning environment, teacher training and the development of educational governing bodies.

118. On 11 February 2013, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Special Education Unit of the Directorate of Guidance and Counselling), in collaboration and association with the Centre for Educational Research and Development and the Italian Government, launched the "model integrated public schools" project (involving 70 schools) and issued a handbook on common learning difficulties at schools within the framework of the national plan for the educational integration of persons with special needs. In collaboration with the Centre for Educational Research and Development, the British Council and the SKILD organization, the Ministry also designated 22 April

as an official national day for students with learning difficulties (Decision No. 777/M/2013 of 29 June 2013) during which a teaching lesson in public and private schools would be devoted to the promotion of a culture of respect for the rights and requirements of persons with special needs. In the early part of 2013, the protocol on cooperation with the Lebanese Centre for Special Education was renewed for a further 10-year period in order to equip 200 public schools with resource rooms and train full-time teachers specialized in working with students with special needs.

119. On 21 December 2012, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education signed a cooperation agreement with the Kids First Association for the implementation of a “kidproof” education programme to ensure the safety of children in Lebanese schools. The programme made provision for the teaching of subjects such as personal, physical, emotional and Internet safety, as well as ways to deal with bullying, as part of the national civic education curriculum in pre-university general education (Ministerial Decision No. 1093/M/2013 of 18 September 2013).

120. The following comparative tables show the structural changes in general, vocational, technical and higher education in Lebanon during the period 2003-2013.

General education in Lebanon (public, non-fee-paying private, fee-paying private, private UNRWA)

<i>Sector/academic year</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2012/13</i>
Number of students	918 611	908 201	937 930	975 695
Proportion of females (%)	49.92	50.22	50.24	50.10
Proportion of Lebanese (%)	96.54	95.93	91.94	88.22
Number of schools	2 781	2 805	2 790	2 777
Number of teaching staff	87 908	87 808	89 794	94 499

Source: Statistical bulletins of the Centre for Educational Research and Development.

Vocational and technical education in Lebanon (public and private)

<i>Sector/academic year</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2012/13</i>
Number of students	99 878	107 418	111 866	90 228
Proportion of females (%)	45.88	46.74	47.23	44.72
Number of schools	432	463	430	
Number of teaching staff	16 192	18 321	19 003	

Source: Statistical bulletins of the Centre for Educational Research and Development.

Higher education in Lebanon (public and private)

<i>Sector/academic year</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2012/13</i>
Number of universities	40	38	39	40
Number of students	132 645	167 165	192 138	191 788
Proportion of females (%)	53.56	54.60	52.40	54.34
Proportion of males (%)	46.44	45.40	47.60	45.66
Proportion of Lebanese (%)	90.32	85.72	83.40	87.91
Proportion of foreigners (%)	9.68	14.28	16.60	12.09

Source: Statistical bulletins of the Centre for Educational Research and Development.

B. Adult education and eradication of illiteracy

121. Under the terms of its Decision No. 26 of 19 January 1995, the Council of Ministers established the National Committee on Adult Education and Eradication of Illiteracy comprising representatives of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Higher Education, Culture, Tourism, Labour, and Youth and Sports, as well as representatives of the National Commission for UNESCO, the UNESCO Regional Bureau, UNICEF and civil society. In accordance with Decision No. 246/1 of 8 February 2011 issued by the Minister of Social Affairs, the eradication of illiteracy project was merged with the national adult education programme.

122. The objective of the national adult education programme was to provide an opportunity for older persons to benefit from ongoing education and lifelong learning and overcome technological and multifaceted functional illiteracy.

123. Two training courses that were held on adult education and literacy for the empowerment of girls and women were attended by selected trainees from the development services centres working in the field of the eradication of illiteracy.

124. A national conference on the eradication of illiteracy in Lebanon was held with a view to raising the awareness of decision makers concerning the importance of literacy and non-formal education for girls and women.

125. A set of specific national indicators has been compiled for literacy programmes and computerized services linking the adult education programme to the development services centres are being provided.

126. A resource pack on literacy education has been made available in the form of a specialized publication entitled *Life Skills* which contains guidelines on ways to develop the knowledge of older persons and make it easier for them to respond positively to the challenges of everyday life and improve their intellectual, physical and mental capacities.

IX. Right to take part in cultural life, and freedom of scientific research (art. 15)

A. Right to take part in cultural life

127. The right to culture is enshrined in paragraph (g) of the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution which states that: "Balanced cultural, social and economic development of the regions is a basic pillar of national unity and structural stability". That right is also highlighted by the mandate and functions assigned to the Ministry of Culture in Act No. 215 of 2 April 1993 under which it was established and in Act No. 35 of 16 October 2008 regulating its organizational structure.

128. The Ministry of Culture is undertaking a number of projects and activities in which emphasis is placed on the right to take part in cultural life in order to facilitate access by the largest possible number of persons, and particularly children and youth, to local and international intellectual works, promote Lebanese intellectual and cultural productivity, protect intellectual property rights, make Lebanon's cultural heritage more widely known and encourage in-depth research into, and knowledge of, the common heritage of mankind. This approach is illustrated by the following:

1. Expansion of the network of public libraries and reading centres and encouragement of cultural activities;

2. Organization of the Beirut International Biennials for Children's Paintings once every two years;
3. Holding of annual school and university theatre festivals.
4. Organization of an annual poetry and short story competition for secondary school students.
5. Application of the system of collective management of copyright and related rights in Lebanon (Decree No. 918 of 15 November 2007).
6. Regulation of artistic professions (Act No. 56 of 27 December 2008) and establishment of a unified solidarity fund for artists (Implementing Decree No. 7535 of 15 February 2012).
7. Encouragement of visits to archaeological museums and exhibitions and organization of periodic activities and events therein. The National Museum in Beirut was reopened in 1996 after its renovation and repair of the damage that it suffered during the distressing events that shook Lebanon during the period 1975-1990.
8. Facilitation of the work of Lebanese and foreign archaeological missions carrying out excavations at numerous sites in Lebanese territory.
9. Encouragement of the propagation of musical culture through musical education, performances and events and support for the endeavours of the National Higher Conservatory of Music in which more than 5,000 students are studying for a nominal enrolment fee. The Conservatory has two orchestras (a philharmonic orchestra comprising 100 instrumentalists which presents around 30 performances every year, and a national orchestra comprising 55 instrumentalists which presents around 15 oriental Arabic musical performances every year) in addition to chamber music groups that present around 30 performances every year. All these performances are open to all and there is no charge for admission.
10. Inclusion of the Lebanese *zajal* [recited or sung folk poetry] on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 27 November 2014.

129. In 2006, during the period covered by this report, Lebanon acceded to the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage of 2001 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003. The Council of Ministers also agreed to Lebanon's accession to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005 and the bill of law approving its accession to that Convention has been presented to Parliament for adoption.

B. Freedom of scientific research, intellectual and literary property rights and creative activity

1. Freedom of scientific research

130. In Lebanon, scientific research is conducted in both the public and private sectors within the limits of their respective scientific capabilities and financial resources. The National Council for Scientific Research was established in 1962 to promote and encourage research in all fields of basic and applied sciences, including social sciences. The Council, which was mandated to outline national policy for the development of scientific research and achievement of the optimum use of the country's scientific resources for the public benefit, is currently operating four

specialized scientific centres: the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission, the National Centre for Remote Sensing, the National Centre for Geophysical Research and the National Centre for Marine Sciences.

131. The National Council for Scientific Research has drawn up general guidelines for Lebanon's policies in regard to science, technology and creativity, with emphasis on the programme to support scientific research which is open to all public and private universities and research centres in Lebanon. The programme applies the academic, professional and ethical standards recognized by the major international universities and research centres and accords priority to research projects that respect the standards and criteria relating to creativity, quality and the ethical principles of intellectual property and scientific, anthropological and zoological research. With effect from the year 2000, the Centre increased its support for scientific research projects, 33 per cent of which were conducted by the Lebanese University and 67 per cent by other universities, institutes and affiliated research units.

132. In 1996, the Council established the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission with support from the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to set up the infrastructure needed to protect Lebanon against ionizing radiation and develop the peaceful uses of atomic energy for applied scientific research (Decree No. 15512 of 19 October 2005 defining the Commission's functions).

133. In 2009, the Council placed the scientific research ship Qana at the disposal of the National Centre for Marine Sciences. This ship, which is the only one of its type in the region, contains the modern equipment and advanced technology needed to measure pollution in deep waters, map the seabed and study fish stocks and marine life.

134. In 2011, the Council announced that it would be awarding an international annual prize for chemistry. In 2013, it awarded 15 prizes in all scientific disciplines and, on 12 November 2014, awarded four scientific researchers a prize for distinguished scientific achievement. Since its establishment, the Council has also awarded around 30 PhD fellowships every year and, in 2002, it initiated the programme for outstanding public secondary school students which has enabled 200 such students to pursue a university education.

135. In 2014, the Council published the *Space Atlas of Lebanon*, a scientific reference work containing images of Lebanese territory produced by high-precision cameras mounted on satellites, which has proved useful to researchers studying development, the environment, agriculture, marine sciences, geology, natural resources and other scientific fields.

2. Rights in respect of commercial and industrial intellectual property

136. The Ministry of Economy and Trade has conducted a major campaign to convince lawmakers of the need to update the intellectual property legislation including, in particular, the Trademarks Act and the Industrial Designs Act, amend various provisions of the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property Act, draft a bill of law on the protection of geographical indications and make preparations for accession to a number of international treaties such as the Protocol relating to the Madrid Agreement concerning the International Registration of Marks and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

137. The principal step taken in the field of commercial and industrial intellectual property during the period covered by this report was the promulgation of the Patents Act No. 240 of 7 August 2000 and the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property Act No. 75 of 3 April 1999.

3. Literary and artistic property

138. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for safeguarding intellectual property rights and, in particular, those provided for in the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property Act No. 75 of 3 April 1999 and Decree No. 918 of 15 November 2007 regulating the procedure for the establishment and operation of associations and companies engaged in the collective management of copyright and related rights. Under the terms of the latter decree, the SACEM company was licensed to conduct the collective management of the copyrights of writers, composers and music publishers in Lebanon solely in respect of the public performance and mechanical printing of their musical works.

139. The Department for the Protection of Intellectual Property in the Ministry of Economy and Trade is responsible for the registration of the intellectual property rights of creative artists, authors and holders of patents or trademarks in respect of use of their works or investments.

4. Creative activity

140. The Ministry of Culture is doing its utmost to promote and encourage creativity through sponsorship or financial support. This is illustrated by the financial support accorded to playwrights (250 million Lebanese pounds allocated to subsidize the staging of 10 theatrical performances in 2014), to Lebanese film-makers (250 million Lebanese pounds allocated to subsidize the production of 10 films in 2014) and to writers, authors of literary works and poets through the purchase of stocks of their books for distribution to public libraries in order to encourage reading (300 million Lebanese pounds allocated in 2014 for the purchase of books written by Lebanese authors). The same applies to Lebanese painters and artists through sponsorship of their exhibitions or purchase of their paintings or sculptures (an amount of 250-300 million Lebanese pounds was allocated in 2014 for the purchase of such works by 150 Lebanese artists) so that they could be exhibited in and outside the country as examples of Lebanese cultural creativity.

X. Economic and social impact of Syrian migration: 2011-2014

141. The influx of Syrian migrants has cost Lebanon billions of dollars, placed its economy under heavy pressure and severely strained its health, education, electricity and infrastructural services. The Syrian migrant crisis has also given rise to social tensions insofar as Syrian migrants are competing with Lebanese nationals for the meagre employment opportunities available.

A. Economic impact of the presence of Syrian migrants in Lebanon

142. According to the World Bank report entitled *Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict*, which was prepared at Lebanon's request and issued on 20 September 2013, the repercussions of the conflict in Syria were having a direct and indirect negative impact on the Lebanese economy as illustrated by the decline in investments, the decrease in employment opportunities, the interruption of trade, the fall-off in tourism and the lower level of revenue received by the public treasury. The severity of this impact was evident since the Lebanese economy was dependent on the services sector, accounting for 75 per cent of GDP, which was highly susceptible to political and security-related risks. The report also noted the following:

- GDP was expected to decline by an estimated \$7.5 billion by the end of 2014 in comparison with the figure that the economy could have achieved if the crisis had not occurred in Syria;
- The direct and indirect costs to the Treasury were estimated at \$5.1 billion;
- The growth rate during the period 2012-2014 was expected to drop by 2.9 percentage points per year, which would lead to considerable losses in terms of wages, profits, tax receipts, per capita consumption and investment;
- Revenue would decline by around \$1.5 billion and public expenditure would increase by \$1.1 billion due to the sharp rise in demand for, and consumption of, services by the migrants. For the first time since 2006, the debt ratio would rise during the period 2012-2014.

143. The crisis in Syria has impeded export-import traffic between Lebanon and its Arab environment due to the fact that Lebanon's trade corridors pass through Syria via the Masnaa, Aboudieh and Arida crossing points. There was a notable decline in the level of commercial activity in 2013, especially in regard to the trade in food products and consumer goods that Lebanon imports from Syria, as a result of which the prices of many basic foodstuffs increased. This was accompanied by a sharp decline in transit trade, especially in exports and re-exports, and the demand for transit trucking services has diminished by two thirds since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis.

144. The influx of Syrian migrants has impacted the labour sector by raising the unemployment rate among Lebanese workers due to the increasing number of illegal and undocumented workers. Before the crisis in Syria, Lebanon used to receive around 400,000 Syrian seasonal workers per year. However, the number of Syrian migrants seeking seasonal work during the period 2012-2014 far exceeded that number, thereby severely straining the Lebanese labour market's absorption capacity, especially in sectors not requiring specific skills, and this led to increased unemployment among Lebanese workers, particularly as Syrian workers are willing to accept wages that are more than 50 per cent lower than those demanded by their Lebanese counterparts.

145. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the rents of residential apartments and small houses since many wealthy Syrian families have rented small apartments in various regions of Lebanon, thereby increasing the demand for and, consequently, the rent of such apartments.

146. The higher demand for public services such as water and electricity, which were barely sufficient to meet the needs of Lebanese citizens, has led to more frequent power outages in the electricity distribution network and has placed unprecedented pressure on Lebanon's water resources in which exceptional shortfalls were experienced in 2014.

B. Social impact of the presence of Syrian migrants in Lebanon

147. The influx of Syrian migrants has considerably increased the supply of manpower in Lebanon, thereby intensifying competition for employment opportunities and reducing wage levels. This has clearly had a negative social impact on Lebanese citizens as illustrated by the following:

- According to a report published by the International Labour Organization, the unemployment rate rose to an estimated 22 per cent in 2013 (with the loss of around 340,000 jobs) and 25 per cent in 2014, particularly among unskilled workers in the most poverty-stricken regions (the North and the Bekaa) which,

by reason of their geographical location, have received the highest proportion of migrants in relation to their population;

- In 2013, the number of indigent persons in Lebanon rose from around 1 million to 1.17 million;
- The increasingly grave problems of demographic overcrowding, poverty, scarcity of resources and competition even for low-ranking jobs have caused social friction between the Syrian migrants and the Lebanese communities hosting them.

148. The Ministry of Social Affairs has endeavoured to ensure that assistance is provided for the host community at the same time as it is distributed to the Syrian migrants and the United Nations Development Programme has begun to fund small enterprises to support the host community. The number of Lebanese directly affected by Syrian migration to Lebanon amounts to 1.5 million the majority of whom are living in communities that have historically been poor.

149. Due to the large number of Syrian migrants, the health and medical sector in Lebanon is under exceptional pressure with which the Lebanese authorities concerned, in collaboration with international organizations, are attempting to deal by devising appropriate solutions to ensure the ongoing provision of adequate health services for the migrants.

150. The public education sector also had great difficulty in absorbing 90,000 Syrian migrant students in public schools in the academic year 2013/14. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with international organizations, is currently endeavouring to organize afternoon classes in public schools in order to enable Syrian migrant students to continue their education in a normal manner and the Lebanese authorities concerned are also trying to expand the scope of educational services to cover the largest possible number of migrant students (around 300,000), constituting the majority of the migrants under 18 years of age, who are not attending school.

Conclusion Difficulties and challenges

151. The difficulties and challenges that Lebanon faced during the period 1993-2014 have had an adverse impact on its economic, social and cultural development endeavours. Moreover, the disturbances that occurred in the Middle East region, the instability that affected a number of Arab States and the exceptional circumstances that shook Lebanon during that period were not conducive to the fulfilment of Lebanon's aspirations to add to the achievements that it had made during the preceding 21 years in the field of economic, social and cultural rights.

152. The large-scale Israeli acts of aggression against Lebanon in the years 1993, 1996 and 2006, in which thousands of Lebanese were killed, wounded or displaced, destroyed a large part of the basic infrastructure, demolished thousands of residential buildings and industrial and commercial installations and crippled economic activity, especially in the services, tourism, agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors constituting the mainstay of the Lebanese economy.

153. The assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on 14 February 2005 unquestionably dealt a severe blow to the Government's hopes and aspirations to make progress in the field of human rights and improve the living conditions of citizens and foreign residents at a time when it was obliged to accord priority to the restoration of internal stability and defence of the country's borders against external terrorism.

154. The ongoing war and escalating acts of armed violence in Syria and the lack of any prospect of the Syrian migrants being able to return to their homeland in the near future are further aggravating the difficulties and challenges that Lebanon is facing. If the influx of migrants continues at its present rate and the Lebanese Government is required to shoulder further burdens to deal with it at a time when international concern is waning and less financial support is being provided by international humanitarian organizations, even greater pressure will be placed on the meagre resources that the Government has at its disposal to assist the Syrian migrants and the communities hosting them which, already suffering from poverty, are in dire need of urgent financial and in-kind support and sustainable socioeconomic aid programmes.

155. However, despite these difficulties and challenges, several legislative enactments concerning human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, were promulgated during the period 1993-2014. The competent parliamentary committees also completed their study of a number of bills of law, consistent with the provisions and requirements of the international human rights instruments to which Lebanon has acceded, which are now ready to be presented to Parliament for adoption when the internal political circumstances so permit. This has so far proved impossible given the legislative deadlock from which Lebanon has been suffering since 2014 due to the ongoing disputes among political factions within the Government concerning matters that have no direct bearing on human rights issues.

156. The adoption of those bills of law when Parliament resumes its normal legislative role will give strong momentum to the pursuit of the objectives of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Lebanon.
