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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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**Consideration of reports: reports submitted by States parties
in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant**

List of issues in relation to the second periodic report of Lebanon

Addendum

Replies of Lebanon to the list of issues*

[Date received: 13 July 2016]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Replies on some of the issues raised by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in document E/C.12/LBN/Q/2 of 11 March 2016 in relation to Lebanon's national report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the period 1993-2014

I. General information

- Although there has been a modest improvement in the situation in regard to human rights and good governance in Lebanon in recent years, there is still a pressing need for further progress since, while most of Lebanon's legislation seeks to protect human rights, there are some shortcomings in its implementation. The principal challenge continues to be the achievement of greater participation on an equal footing, and with equal opportunities, in the exercise of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights in addition to gender equality and the right to a safe environment.
- In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched the National Programme for Local Socioeconomic Development with a view to: helping to implement the provisions of the National Social Development Strategy; enabling the development services centres to play a fuller and more active role in the formulation of regional development programmes and plans in partnership with the local bodies concerned; supporting social development projects within a mechanism based on empowerment of marginalized groups, and especially young persons; working with pregnant female prisoners to improve the quality of services available to them in correctional facilities; and supporting and equipping health centres to cope with the increasing demand for the services needed to meet the needs of Syrian displaced persons in Lebanon.
- Within the framework of the endeavours being made by the Supreme Council for Childhood to develop the National Plan for Childhood, sectoral plans have been drafted for the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of street children, participation by children, early childhood, persons with disabilities and trafficking in children. Although these drafts were submitted for discussion with the parties concerned, the National Strategy to Safeguard and Protect Children against Violence was the only one approved by the Council of Ministers in 2012.

As a result of the worsening crisis brought about by the mass movement of displaced persons from Syria to Lebanon, the Lebanese Government realized that its method of response to the crisis constituted an indirect means to use the assistance provided in order to upgrade the infrastructure and thereby ensure better protection for marginalized groups during the post-crisis period. Accordingly, since October 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been applying the National Plan for the Protection of Women and Children in partnership with UNICEF and with funding from the European Union with a view to improving the quality of life of vulnerable women and children and reducing the hazards that they face by strengthening the Ministry's role as the national agency responsible for sectoral oversight and regulation in regard to child protection, gender-based violence and the provision of a safe environment and direct support services for families.

I.1.

(a) Provisions of the Lebanese Constitution enshrining fundamental human rights:

The fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, being recognized in the Constitution, take precedence over all other principles stipulated in the Lebanese legal system since they are innate rights and freedoms inherent in the human person. The Constitution enshrines the principle of the need to respect public freedoms, the principle that all citizens have equal rights and obligations, and the principle of social justice. Among the recognized fundamental public freedoms, emphasis is placed on freedom of opinion and belief.

Paragraph (c) of the preamble to the Constitution stipulates that: “Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic based on respect for public freedoms, especially freedom of opinion and belief, and on social justice and equality of rights and obligations among all citizens without distinction or preference”.

Under article 9 of the Constitution: “Freedom of belief is absolute. In homage to Almighty God, the State shall respect all religions and creeds and shall ensure and protect freedom of religious observance provided that such is not prejudicial to public order. The State shall also ensure respect for the personal status and religious interests of the population regardless of the religious community to which they belong.”

Far from confining itself to freedom to hold opinions or beliefs, the Lebanese Constitution also recognizes freedom to express them through the exercise of freedom of assembly and association. In this context, article 13 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Freedom to express opinion orally or in writing, as well as freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, shall be guaranteed within the limits of the law”.

With regard to the principle of equality among Lebanese, article 7 of the Constitution stipulates that: “All Lebanese shall be equal before the law, shall enjoy equal civil and political rights and shall be bound, without any distinction among them, by public obligations and duties”. Article 12 emphasizes that: “Every Lebanese shall have the right to hold public office, no preference being accorded except on the basis of merit and competence, in accordance with the conditions prescribed by law (...)”.

In addition to the above, the Lebanese Constitution recognizes other fundamental rights and freedoms such as, in particular:

- Respect for personal liberty insofar as, under article 8 of the Constitution: “Personal liberty shall be safeguarded and protected by law. No one may be arrested, imprisoned or detained except in conformity with the provisions of the law. No offence may be defined and no penalty may be prescribed except by law.”
- Respect for privacy insofar as, under article 14 of the Constitution: “Private homes shall be inviolable and shall not be entered except in the circumstances and the manner prescribed by law”.
- Respect for private property insofar as, under article 15 of the Constitution: “Private property rights shall be protected by law. No one’s property may be expropriated except on grounds of the public interest in the circumstances prescribed by law and provided that fair compensation has been paid in respect thereof.”

(b) The Arab Constitutional Law Association was established at a conference hosted by the Lebanese University in Beirut on 16 and 17 October 2014 on the topic “Mechanisms for the enforcement and protection of political, economic and social rights”. The holding of the conference in the Lebanese capital Beirut confirmed the fact that, in

spite of all the difficulties that the country is facing, Lebanon is truly a standard-bearer in the field of human rights culture.

I.2.

A bill of law on the establishment of a national human rights institution has been tabled and is on the agenda of the first plenary legislative session.

I.3.

The Lebanese Republic has not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and, to date, there are no new developments in this regard.

II. Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1-5)

II.5.

The last public budget adopted by the Chamber of Deputies was issued in 2005. The fact that no other public budget has since been issued makes it impossible to provide any information shedding light on the amounts allocated to the employment and social security sectors.

II.9.

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides services for persons with disabilities through the Department for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and the Programme to Safeguard the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in accordance with the provisions of Act No. 220/2000. The most noteworthy measures taken during this period consisted in:

- The classification and definition of visual, motor, auditory, intellectual and other forms of disability in a manner consistent with the World Health Organization classification.
- Issuance of personal disability cards and provision of institutional care and proximity services: In the six centres accredited by the Programme to Safeguard the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs is continuing the process of issuing cards to persons with disabilities after an examination by a competent physician. As of 16 June 2016, a total of 95,522 persons with disabilities were holding disability cards and 13 per cent of the team working for the Programme were themselves persons with disabilities. The Ministry also provides free proximity services including various types of wheelchairs, crutches, canes, walkers, orthopaedic footwear and beds, mattresses and bedding to prevent pressure ulcers.
- Elections to the National Commission: The most recent were held in 2012 and both male and female persons with disabilities, as well as specialized institutions and organizations and families of persons with disabilities, participated therein as electors and candidates.

- The establishment of long-term committees to formulate uniform standards for health-care, rehabilitation, support and other specialized services.
- Issuance of certificates to persons with disabilities and specialized institutions: The Ministry of Social Affairs is continuing the process of issuing certificates to persons with disabilities pursuant to the provisions of Act No. 220/2000 and Ministerial Decision No. 257/1 of 30 November 2000. From the beginning of the process on 1 December 2000 to 30 June 2012, a total of 114,072 certificates were issued to enable their holders to benefit from exemption from certain fees. The Decision permitted institutional service providers and associations of persons with disabilities to benefit from the provisions of the Act, including exemption from municipal fees in respect of vehicle registration and built-up property, as well as customs duty. Certificates were also provided for presentation to the National Social Security Fund.
- The Model Centre for Persons with Disabilities: This centre run by the Ministry of Social Affairs diagnoses cases of learning difficulties and scholastic backwardness in order to identify their causes and determine the most appropriate form of intervention to monitor them and reintegrate the persons concerned in regular classes. The centre, which is the sole official body authorized to study such cases, also offers a speech therapy service for children between 2 and 12 years of age.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination and partnership with the Ministry of Public Health, has announced tighter controls and measures to upgrade the mechanisms needed to safeguard the right of persons with disabilities to free treatment in public hospitals and also in private hospitals under the terms of contracts concluded with the Ministry of Public Health.
- Persons with disabilities who do not hold a personal disability card are not entitled to benefit from any of the services provided by the ministries concerned.
- The question of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is awaiting the resumption of legislative activity in the Lebanese Parliament.

II.10.

The Lebanese Ministry of Labour does not currently have any plan to review the employment of foreigners. However, preparations are being made for the conduct of a study by the International Labour Organization in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, through its National Steering Committee, on abolition of the sponsorship system and provision of insurance coverage, by specialized companies and institutions, for employment contracts in the event of non-payment of a migrant worker's wages due to an employer's illness or financial difficulties, etc.

With regard to the right of refugees and asylum seekers to work and benefit from social security, under the terms of the amendment made to article 95, paragraph 3, of the Lebanese Labour Code, Palestinian refugees are exempted from fees in respect of work permits and are entitled to the separation-from-service benefit payable by the National Social Security Fund. However, in the case of other displaced persons and refugees, the unemployment rate in Lebanon, particularly among youth, exceeds 25 per cent and therefore does not permit their enjoyment of such benefits, especially as more than 1,170,000 Lebanese are living below the poverty line. Even large and wealthy States could not bear the burdens that Lebanon has borne.

II.12.

Pursuant to the objectives of the National Strategy for Women (2011-2021), the Ministry of Social Affairs has established a “national technical working group to put an end to violence against women in Lebanon” which includes representatives of the various government departments, official bodies and associations and organizations concerned. The group has formulated the uniform national instruments needed to combat violence against women, such as a standard training curriculum, a code of conduct governing the manner in which medical and nursing personnel deal with cases of gender-based violence, and a medical fact-finding questionnaire on incidents involving violence. To the same end, the Ministry of Social Affairs has already equipped 8 model centres to provide full care for women and girls subjected to gender-based violence and the number of these centres is expected to increase to around 50 distributed throughout Lebanese territory.

- Within the framework of the promotion of gender equality and participation by women in public services, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in partnership with the British Council, has implemented a “project for women’s participation in public life” the aim of which was to raise young women’s awareness of their political, social and economic rights on an equal footing with men and to enable them to run development projects.
- With regard to endeavours to enforce Act No. 293/214, concerning the protection of women and other family members against domestic violence, the Ministry of Social Affairs is training social workers to apply the Act and monitor and follow up cases of domestic violence.

II.13.

There are no obstacles to women’s access to the labour market in Lebanon. In the private sector, in accordance with the Labour Code, the term “worker” covers both men and women. In the public sector, no distinction is made between men and women and there is no gender pay gap.

III. Issues relating to the specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6-15)

III.14.

Lebanon is currently facing a number of economic and financial challenges due to the local and regional political situations, the ongoing implications of the Syrian crisis, the interruption of transit trade and the decisions of some States to prevent their nationals from coming to Lebanon. These challenges are illustrated primarily by the following:

- The continued failure to elect a President of the Republic.
- The influx of huge numbers of Syrian refugees since the beginning of the crisis, which has had an impact on all sectors.
- The decline in effective growth rates.
- The rise in unemployment rates (more than 25 per cent).
- The rise in poverty rates.

- The decline in exports as a result of higher land transport costs (due to border closures) and, consequently, a mounting trade deficit.

In this connection, the Ministry of Economy and Trade is diligently endeavouring to formulate an economic vision for the year 2016 on the basis of four principal factors, one of which consists in improvement of the business environment in order to attract investments and encourage trade and flows of capital.

The best way to realize this vision is through implementation of the national strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises which was launched by the Ministry of Economy and Trade in 2014 for the purpose of promoting the establishment of dynamic enterprises of this type which would be able to compete at the international level and help to provide employment opportunities and strengthen a high value-added economy.

To this end, discussions have been held with United Nations agencies with a view to developing programmes and projects to support small and medium-sized enterprises and thereby create new employment opportunities. These programmes include:

1. A programme to support Lebanese host communities.
2. A plan for Lebanon to respond to the impact of the crisis on the cost of living and stability.
3. Job creation in the potato production and waste management sectors with support from the World Bank.
4. European Union projects to create a value chain in northern Lebanon covering primarily the carpentry (furniture) sector but also the fruit and vegetable sector.
5. Contacts with donor bodies, such as the World Bank, with a view to upgrading the observatory of the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

III.15.

There are no new resources commensurate with the high rate of youth unemployment.

III.16.

The problem of access to the labour market by persons with special needs is attributable to:

- Non-adaptation of public and even private transport to take such persons to their workplaces.
- Inability to make such workplaces in the public and private sectors, particularly in the case of old buildings, accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Reduced capacity of the Lebanese State to make such adaptations in view of the decline in economic growth.

The non-imposition of sanctions on employers for their failure to employ persons with disabilities is attributable to the fact that the last public budget announced in 2005 made no provision for this nor for unemployment benefits for such persons. However, the Minister of Labour has issued a memorandum stressing the need to ensure that employers comply with the 3-per-cent quota for the employment of persons with disabilities and prohibiting them from employing foreign workers if they have not applied this quota. He

has also requested the National Social Security Fund not to exonerate any employer failing to employ the specified quota of persons with disabilities.

III.17.

Syrian displaced persons who have a means of livelihood have been requested to give an undertaking not to work because they benefit from the services of international and local relief organizations and would be competing with Lebanese workers, thereby increasing the unemployment rate from which Lebanon is suffering at a time when its economic institutions are struggling and closing down as a result of illicit and uncontrollable competition. However, in sectors such as construction and agriculture in which foreign labour is needed, the employment of Syrian workers has continued to be permitted even after the influx of displaced persons.

Palestinian refugees are allowed to work in professions exercised by Lebanese in the private sector with the exception of the medical, nursing, legal and other regulated professions for which a permit is required.

III.18.

The report referred to the Cost-of-Living Index Committee and the Sustainable Dialogue Committee which have been established to study price fluctuations, assess wages and set minimum levels therefor in the sectors within their jurisdiction, with the possibility of amending these levels in a manner consistent with the capacities of the three social partners involved in the production process.

III.19.

Employment contracts may be verbal or in writing. Verbal contracts have the same probative value as written contracts, particularly as the employer has an obligation to declare his employees not only to the National Social Security Fund so that they can enjoy its benefits, but also to the central and regional employment departments of the Ministry of Labour in order to enable the latter to study the labour market and the types of professions that it needs and to verify, through labour inspection, the extent of compliance with the Labour Code, its implementing decrees and the standards of occupational health, safety and working conditions.

III.20.

This issue has already been partly covered by the comments made under II.10. above. The Lebanese Ministry of Labour does not currently have any plan to review the employment of foreigners. However, preparations are being made for the conduct of a study by the International Labour Organization in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, through its National Steering Committee, on abolition of the *kafala* (sponsorship) system and provision of insurance coverage, by specialized companies and institutions, for employment contracts in the event of non-payment of a migrant worker's wages due to an employer's illness or financial difficulties, etc.

The Ministry of Labour has compiled the following table in which the Committee will find details concerning the type and number of communications received through its hotline:

<i>Type of communication</i>	<i>Number</i>
Complaints by female domestic workers against their sponsors	2
Complaints against institutions employing Syrian workers	4
Communications concerning the Labour Code	1 440
Enquiries concerning leave entitlements	2 880
Various enquiries (privileged debts, etc.)	864
Total	5 190

III.21.

The rights of migrant workers are protected, without discrimination, by the Lebanese Labour Code and also by the principle of reciprocity under which, being both a labour-exporting and labour-importing country, Lebanon has an obligation to safeguard not only the rights of its nationals working abroad but also the rights of foreign migrants working in its territory. This protection is ensured through:

- The employment contract by which the contracting parties are legally bound;
- Complaints submitted by migrant workers to the Ministry of Labour;
- Complaints submitted to the labour arbitration boards (the labour courts in Lebanon).

In practice, the Lebanese Labour Code does not discriminate between national and foreign workers.

III.22.

The provisions of the Labour Code apply to persons working in industrial and commercial institutions and in agricultural institutions of an industrial or commercial nature, as well as employees of private educational institutions and public institutions of an industrial or commercial (i.e. profit-making) nature, while persons working in the agricultural sector or in domestic service are covered by the Code of Obligations and Contracts. Two bills of law are being drafted on agricultural workers and persons working in domestic service.

III.23.

The Labour Code does not use the term “strike”; it refers only to “work stoppage”, which is regulated by article 63 of the Collective Labour Contracts, Mediation and Arbitration Act.

III.24.

There are no statistical data on the informal economic sector. However, as recommended by the International Labour Organization, endeavours will be made to regulate this sector, as soon as circumstances permit, in such a way as to ensure that social

security benefits are accessible to construction workers, metalworkers, painters and persons working in other hitherto unregulated occupations.

III.25.

No statistical data are available on infractions observed and sanctions imposed in respect of the employment of children since the vast majority of children are employed in the agricultural sector, which is not subject to labour inspection, and in the unregulated sector comprising metallurgical, mechanical engineering and painting workshops. This phenomenon has become more widespread as a result of the influx of Syrian displaced persons and Palestinian refugees. Any attempt to carry out a census would prove fruitless.

Implementation of the Strategy has been impeded by the failure to allocate the budgetary resources needed for the achievement of its objectives, the lack of institutional capacities and planning and inadequate coordination among the official bodies concerned. However, in 2012, a number of circulars issued by the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Tourism reflected the growing official concern in regard to the phenomenon of violence and the need to prevent it by monitoring, reporting and promptly adjudicating cases thereof.

With regard to the provision of increased protection for children, the Ministry of Social Affairs, with support from the UNICEF office in Lebanon, has adopted a national plan to protect children and women in Lebanon which focuses primarily on making the national child protection system more effective by linking it to the central administration so that it can benefit from a full range of preventive, care and rehabilitative services through the development services centres, their regional offices distributed throughout Lebanon and partner associations and institutions concerned with women and children.

One of the principal features of this plan consists in the issuance of uniform operating procedures for the referral and reporting system in order to standardize methods of intervention and establish frameworks for coordination among government departments, and particularly between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and also with private associations. More than 500 social workers have already been trained to apply these uniform procedures within a clearly defined operational context.

Through the annual contracts that it concludes with private associations endeavouring to protect children and respond to cases of abuse, the Ministry of Social Affairs is helping to fund the various services that they provide for child victims and children at risk. These services are rendered, without any racial or cultural discrimination, by a specialized team at day-care or residential centres to which children are referred by order of a judge or a public prosecutor when they would be endangered by remaining with their families.

In addition to therapeutic, care and rehabilitative services, most of the specialized associations receiving child victims or children at risk also perform follow-up, counselling and psychological support functions.

III.26.

Further to the comments made under III.25., the migration of Syrian displaced persons has also impeded efforts to address the problem of street children. Although the Ministry of Social Affairs is operating shelters and the internal security forces of the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities have a special branch to deal with this

phenomenon and protect children against sexual exploitation and illicit work, no statistics are available in this regard.

A study on “Children living and working on the streets in Lebanon: profile and magnitude” was recently conducted in 2015 by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, UNICEF and Save the Children International. The aim of the study was to set up and implement a programme to combat this phenomenon within the overall framework of the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Lebanon with a view to pulling the maximum number of children off the streets.

The methodology applied covered more than 700 cases of Lebanese and non-Lebanese children and the study was the first of its type to be conducted in various locations and regions of Lebanon in which a relatively large number of children were living and working on the streets.

Through the use of internationally recognized statistical methodologies and techniques designed to determine the characteristics and number of street children, the study estimated the total number of children living and working on the streets at around 1,510 in the 18 Lebanese regions included in the research sample.

Nationality: The number of street children, including Syrian and non-Syrian nationals, who had come from Syria accounted for three quarters (74 per cent) of the total number of street children in Lebanon, as compared with the proportion of two thirds estimated during the previous decade. Children holding Lebanese nationality accounted for around 10 per cent of the total number of street children, as compared with a proportion of around 15 per cent in 2004, and the proportion of street children of Palestinian origin had declined from 10 per cent in 2004 to around 8 per cent. The others were stateless or belonged to ethnic minorities living in Lebanon, including the Dom (gypsies), Turkmen and Arab Bedouin.

Residence: More than half (51 per cent) of the street children were living in and around the capital, mainly in its southern suburbs and the Baabda district (31 per cent). Most of the others were distributed between Tripoli (17 per cent), Akkar (14 per cent), Zahle (9 per cent) and Saida (6 per cent). The study also found that 27 per cent of the street children were living in shanty towns and slums while around a quarter were living in apartments in residential buildings and 18 per cent in a single room in which all the family members slept.

Education: The majority of street children were either illiterate and/or had never attended school. The proportion who were totally illiterate amounted to 42 per cent, which was almost equivalent to the proportion who had never attended school (40 per cent). Only about one third (32 per cent) of the children believed that they had good or fair reading skills, while another third (29 per cent) thought that they had the same levels of writing skills. The proportion of street children who had never attended school amounted to 40 per cent; 57 per cent had dropped out of school and only 3 per cent were attending school and working on the streets at the same time. The lowest proportion of street children who had never attended school (32 per cent) was recorded among those who had grown up in Syria, while the highest proportion (72 per cent) was observed among children engaged in begging.

Working conditions: Most of the street children were found to have entered the labour market at 7-14 years of age. The majority (39 per cent) had done so at 12-14 years of age, closely followed by those in the 7-11 age group (36 per cent). Their working hours ranged from 4 to 16 per day, with an average workday of 8.46 hours. Children working on the streets were also exposed to numerous occupational hazards, including the lifting of heavy loads (39 per cent) and involvement in various types of traffic accidents (30 per cent).

Around 29 per cent of them said that they had been chased or arrested by law-enforcement officials and around 3 per cent said that they sometimes received less than the daily wage that had been agreed. About 6 per cent of them claimed to have been victims of sexual assault or rape in the workplace. Around half of them declared that there was no one to whom they could turn in order to report abuses or seek protection, while just over one third (35 per cent) resorted to a family member in such circumstances.

Legal issues: Street children were sometimes arrested but were not usually held in custody for long periods of time. Of the 14 per cent who said that they had been arrested by the police, the vast majority (86 per cent) were held in custody only for a few hours, 10 per cent were detained for more than a day but less than a week and only 4 per cent were imprisoned for a period of 7-16 days.

- In 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities and in collaboration with the private associations concerned, conducted a large-scale campaign to pull children off the streets in all the regions. This was done by the internal security forces, on instructions received from the Department of Public Prosecutions, in the presence of social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the children were handed over to the private associations concerned. However, this campaign proved to be unsustainable since those associations were unable to provide the services needed. The campaign was supplemented by two capacity-building courses in which around 50 social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs received training in intervention procedures for the benefit of street children.
- Pursuant to its policy of ensuring the social, health and educational welfare of street children, the Ministry of Social Affairs makes contractual arrangements with private associations providing vocational and educational training for such children in order to endow them with the skills needed for their social reintegration.

III.27.

Within the framework of its endeavours to ensure the implementation of Act No. 293/2014 concerning the protection of women and other family members against domestic violence, the Ministry of Social Affairs is training social workers to apply the provisions of the Act and to monitor and follow up on cases of domestic violence.

III.28.

In order to promote the principle of participation by older persons in public life and productivity, the Ministry of Social Affairs has implemented a series of projects to propagate a culture of retirement in which the experience of older persons can be used for the development of local communities. The Ministry has also set standards to ensure the quality of the services provided for older persons in day-care and residential institutions and has conducted numerous campaigns to promote greater awareness concerning the need for the early detection of Alzheimer's disease and the medicinal and non-medicinal treatment available therefor.

In the private sector, Lebanese citizens over 64 years of age are no longer covered by the provisions of the Labour Code and, therefore, cannot benefit from the National Social Security Fund unless they worked for an institution that enrolled them therein, in which case, following verification by the Fund, they are entitled to sickness, maternity and family allowance benefits. In the public sector, on the other hand, retired civil servants and military personnel benefit from the services provided by the Civil Servants' Cooperative

and military medical facilities, while judges benefit from the Judges' Mutual Fund and members of the regulated medical and legal professions receive pensions from their respective professional associations. Although a bill of law on pensions and social protection is being studied by parliamentary committees and is expected to be approved, the circumstances that Lebanon is currently experiencing are preventing its adoption and promulgation.

III.29.

- Through the National Poverty Targeting Programme, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, is implementing winter assistance programmes for a fixed proportion of the neediest Lebanese households selected from the Programme's database in accordance with agreed criteria. As of January 2016, the number of Lebanese households registered with the Programme and classified as being below the poverty line amounted to 104,741 and a total of 456,819 persons were expected to benefit therefrom.
- In addition to other services, 5,076 households are currently benefiting from the temporary food assistance cards issued to the most indigent households.
- Under the winter assistance programme which is being implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, around 75,000 Lebanese children in the age group 0-15 years benefited from cash allowances during the 2015/16 winter season.
- In the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), the basic services sector contains an item on winter assistance for indigent Lebanese adversely affected by the Syrian crisis.

The purpose of this assistance is to enable Lebanese households living in extreme poverty to meet their basic needs, thereby defusing tension between displaced Syrians and the host community.

III.38.

The Lebanese Ministry of Culture is supporting the programmes of cultural associations and clubs with due regard for the needs of such associations and clubs operating in rural and remote areas and which require material and moral support and sponsorship insofar as they bear the heaviest burden of promoting culture among groups which are widely regarded as being disadvantaged or marginalized. The Ministry also contributes to the cost of tickets, which are offered free of charge at public schools in all Lebanese regions, for appropriate cultural performances and other forms of entertainment.

The network of public libraries that has been established throughout Lebanese territory also helps to promote culture and engagement in various cultural activities, especially during National Reading Week, and focuses as far as possible on the so-called disadvantaged and marginalized regions.

With regard to musical activities, the National Conservatory has established a number of branches in Lebanese regions so that persons wishing to take music lessons can do so without the need to travel to the capital Beirut. The performances presented by the Conservatory are free of charge and open to all.