



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### Concluding observations on the initial report of Bahrain\*\*

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Bahrain<sup>1</sup> at its 18th, 19th and 20th meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 24 and 25 February 2022, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 30th meeting, held on 4 March 2022.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the initial report by the State party, albeit after a delay of 10 years. The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue with the State party's delegation.

#### B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken by the State party to enhance the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, as referred to in the present concluding observations. In particular, the Committee welcomes the establishment of a national human rights institution and the adoption of various labour laws and regulations. It also welcomes the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on 22 September 2011.

#### C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

##### Domestic application of the Covenant

4. While noting that the Covenant forms an integral part of the State party's domestic legal system, the Committee regrets the lack of information on how potential conflicts between domestic laws and the Covenant are resolved. It also regrets the lack of information on examples of cases in which the provisions of the Covenant have been invoked by individuals and/or applied by domestic courts (art. 2 (1)).

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the rights enshrined in the Covenant are fully incorporated in its domestic legislation and that the provisions of the Covenant take precedence in potential conflicts with domestic laws. It also recommends that the State party raise awareness of the Covenant and of the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights among members of the judiciary and the general public. The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.**

\* Reissued for technical reasons on 13 September 2022.

\*\* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-first session (14 February–4 March 2022).

<sup>1</sup> [E/C.12/BHR/1](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [E/C.12/2022/SR.18](#), [E/C.12/2022/SR.19](#) and [E/C.12/2022/SR.20](#).



### National human rights institution

6. While noting the legislative measures taken by the State party to strengthen the National Institution for Human Rights, the Committee is concerned that the Institution has not yet attained the independence required to perform its functions. The Committee regrets the lack of information about complaints of violations of economic, social and cultural rights that the Institution has received and the investigations it has carried out in response (art. 2 (1)).

7. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen the independence of the National Institution for Human Rights to ensure that it is in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and that it is able to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently. The Committee also requests that the State party include information in its next periodic report on the complaints of violations of economic, social and cultural rights that the National Institution for Human Rights has received and considered.**

### Human rights defenders

8. The Committee is concerned about reports of harassment, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, including those working on economic, social and cultural rights and social justice. They reportedly face retaliation, such as nationality deprivation, suspension and downgrading of professional positions in the public and private sectors and police and judicial harassment, including arbitrary detention. The Committee is particularly concerned about the lack of information on the situation of several human rights defenders, including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, whose detention was declared arbitrary by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,<sup>3</sup> and Abduljalil al-Singace and Naji Ali Fateel, all of whose immediate release was requested by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.<sup>4</sup>

9. **The Committee recommends that the State party protect human rights defenders from harassment, intimidation and reprisals, and that it guarantee an enabling environment for civil society organizations engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, inter alia, by carrying out information and awareness-raising campaigns focusing on the importance of their work. It refers the State party to its statement on human rights defenders and economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>5</sup> The Committee urges the State party to take measures as soon as possible to ensure the effective protection of all rights human rights defenders, including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Abduljalil al-Singace and Naji Ali Fateel, and to fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on the matter.**

### Climate change and environmental protection

10. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to establish a framework to oversee climate change-related issues in the State party, including the mandates of the Supreme Environmental Council and the Joint National Committee on Climate Change. It is concerned, however, that desertification, degradation of arable land, droughts, dust storms, coastal degradation owing to oil spills, and lack of freshwater resources have a considerable impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party. The Committee also notes that the State party is not on track to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement and its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including due to its oil and gas industries (art. 2 (1)).

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to protect the environment and address environmental degradation, taking into account**

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<sup>3</sup> [A/HRC/WGAD/2012/6](#).

<sup>4</sup> See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26354>.

<sup>5</sup> [E/C.12/2016/2](#).

its effects on economic, social and cultural rights. It also recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to achieve its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement and to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, in particular by promoting alternative and renewable energy sources and respecting its human rights obligations in its natural resource exploitation and export policies. The Committee refers the State party to the Committee's statement on climate change and the Covenant.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Business and human rights**

12. The Committee is concerned about the absence of legal obligations for business entities under the State party's jurisdiction to exercise human rights due diligence. It notes with particular concern reports on human rights impact assessments of business activities conducted in the oil and gas industries (art. 2 (1)).

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a national action plan and a regulatory framework that requires business entities to exercise human rights due diligence in their business activities at home and abroad. It also recommends that the State party ensure that business entities operating in the State party and those domiciled under its jurisdiction and acting abroad, irrespective of whether they are privately or State-owned, are held accountable for violations of economic, social and cultural rights for which they are responsible and that victims of such violations have access to effective remedies. The Committee refers the State party to its general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities.**

#### **Non-discrimination**

14. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) While the constitutional and legislative framework of the State party contains anti-discrimination provisions, there is no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and policy framework, and the prevalence of widespread discrimination in practice, stigmatization and negative stereotypes hinder the access of certain individuals and groups, such as persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, to economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2 (2));

(b) Despite the State party's efforts to improve their living conditions in recent years, many migrant workers face discrimination in employment and their access to adequate housing, education and health care and services is limited;

(c) Despite the constitutional prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, members of the Shia community and stateless persons, including stateless Bidoon and those who have been deprived of their citizenship, reportedly face discrimination in education, employment and the exercise of their cultural rights.

15. **While noting that there is no provision in law that is directly discriminatory, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and a policy framework aimed at ensuring equality and addressing direct, indirect, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on any ground;**

(b) **Strengthen its efforts to ensure that migrant workers have non-discriminatory access to economic, social and cultural rights, including by protecting them from discrimination in employment and removing the barriers they face with regard to access to adequate housing, education and health care and services;**

(c) **Take effective measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including by enhancing its efforts to address the discrimination faced by members of the Shia community in education, employment and in the exercise of their cultural rights;**

<sup>6</sup> [E/C.12/2018/1](#).

(d) **Adopt the measures necessary to prevent and reduce statelessness with a view to guaranteeing the non-discriminatory access of stateless persons to economic, social and cultural rights, and consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;**

(e) **Take all measures necessary to eliminate negative stereotypes and stigmatization of members of marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and refugees, including through awareness-raising campaigns for the public, health-care providers, teachers, social workers and law enforcement and other public officials;**

(f) **Establish mechanisms to ensure that victims of discrimination can seek effective remedies;**

(g) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.**

### **Equality between men and women**

16. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The existence of discriminatory legal provisions, such as those on nationality and inheritance;

(b) The entrenched patriarchal attitudes and the stereotypical image of women as mothers and wives only, which may prevent women from enjoying Covenant rights on an equal basis with men;

(c) That despite the efforts of the State party to increase the participation of women in the workforce, the employment rate among women is reportedly low;

(d) That women continue to be underrepresented in senior and decision-making positions in both the private and public sectors;

(e) That despite the efforts of the State party, the gender pay gap persists (art. 3).

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Review all laws and regulations with a view to repealing or amending those that are discriminatory or have a discriminatory effect on women, including laws on nationality and inheritance;**

(b) **Intensify efforts, through awareness-raising campaigns, to counter society's patriarchal attitudes and stereotypical image of women in family and society, and recognize women as individuals who have equal rights;**

(c) **Identify and address the obstacles that hinder women's equal participation in the workforce, including by combating perceived traditional gender roles in the family and in society, and promote women's participation in decision-making positions and management roles in the private sector;**

(d) **Take effective measures to close the gender pay gap, including by addressing the structural causes that result in women occupying lower paid jobs and facing obstacles to their enjoyment of career opportunities on an equal footing with men;**

(e) **Take into consideration and apply the guidance provided in the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.**

### **Unemployment**

18. The Committee notes the various measures taken by the State party to counter unemployment, including those aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. The Committee remains concerned, however, at the rates of unemployment in the State party, especially among persons with disabilities, youth and women, including university graduates. The Committee is also concerned that the State party's targeted policies and programmes have not effectively reduced unemployment (art. 6).

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Address the structural causes of unemployment in the State party, including the jobless economic growth;**
- (b) **Review vocational and university programmes so that they meet current labour market demands and capitalize on the high level of education to ensure that it translates into job opportunities;**
- (c) **Monitor the impact of the “first job for youth” programme and adopt labour measures targeted specifically at women and persons with disabilities;**
- (d) **Put into place services providing assistance to the unemployed, especially persons with disabilities and women;**
- (e) **Take into account, in the implementation of labour plans and policies, the Committee’s general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work.**

#### **Minimum wage**

20. While noting the provision of a minimum wage for civil servants in the public sector, under article 15 of the Civil Service Act, No. 48 of 2010, the Committee regrets that the State party does not have a statutory minimum wage applicable in the private sector (art. 7).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party establish, in collaboration with the social partners, an appropriate and regularly indexed national minimum wage, regardless of the type of contracts, working hour arrangements and sectors, in order to guarantee decent living conditions for all workers and their families. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work.**

#### **Right to just and favourable conditions of work**

22. The Committee welcomes the inclusion of migrant workers employed in some sectors of the economy under the protection of the Private Sector Labour Code, Act No. 36 of 2012, the establishment of the Individual Labour Disputes Settlement Authority, the exemption of workers from court fees in labour disputes, the prohibition of work under direct sunlight during the months of July and August and the amendments made to regulations concerning periods of rest and leisure. The Committee is nevertheless concerned that:

- (a) Domestic workers and workers in the informal economy are not sufficiently protected by existing labour laws, as only a limited number of the provisions of the Private Sector Labour Code are applicable to them, and there have been reports of non-payment of salaries and substandard working conditions;
- (b) Some migrant workers are accommodated in unregistered and overcrowded facilities in substandard conditions (art. 7).

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Take legislative measures to ensure that workers in all sectors of the economy, including domestic workers and workers in the informal economy, are protected by labour laws and regulations with a view to ensuring their right to just and favourable conditions of work, including with regard to remuneration, rest and leisure, limitation of working hours and protection against unfair dismissal;**
- (b) **Take all measures necessary for the effective enforcement of labour laws and regulations, and provide workers in all sectors with protection from exploitation and abuse, including by further improving complaint mechanisms in order to make them easily accessible, and protecting all workers against reprisals by ensuring that labour inspectorates are effective in monitoring conditions of work, including in construction and service sectors;**
- (c) **Continue improving the conditions of migrant workers at work and at so-called workers’ accommodation facilities, and ensure that the facilities are subject to monitoring by labour inspectorates;**

(d) **Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work;**

(e) **Consider ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).**

#### **Trade union rights**

24. The Committee notes that the State party's Trade Unions Act recognizes the right to form and join trade unions and the right to strike. While taking into account the declaration made by the State party upon its accession to the Covenant concerning article 8 (1) (d), the Committee expresses concern with regard to the fact that:

(a) Although migrant workers may join trade unions, trade union leadership roles are reserved for citizens;

(b) The law does not provide for the right to collective bargaining;

(c) The law prohibits the right to strike in numerous sectors of the economy, including oil, gas and education;

(d) The law does not require the reinstatement of workers whose contracts have been terminated for their participation in trade union activities (art. 8).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party take legislative measures in order to:**

(a) **Ensure that migrant workers can also take trade union leadership roles without discrimination;**

(b) **Guarantee the right to collective bargaining;**

(c) **Ensure that restrictions on the right to strike in certain sectors are interpreted strictly, with a view to ensuring that all those workers whose services cannot reasonably be deemed as essential are entitled to their right to strike;**

(d) **Ensure that workers who engage in trade union activities are effectively protected from any harassment and retaliatory actions, including transferral or unfair dismissal;**

(e) **Consider ratifying the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).**

#### **Right to social security**

26. The Committee notes that the State party provides social support in the form of cash benefits, under its Social Security Act, No. 18 of 2006, to families or individuals who do not have a sufficient source of income. It also notes that the State party has established contributory social security schemes under Act No. 13 of 1975, Decree Law No. 11 of 1976 and Decree Law No. 24 of 1976. However, the Committee regrets the lack of statistical information about coverage of its population, including disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families, by both contributory and non-contributory social security schemes. It also regrets the lack of information on whether the amount of social assistance benefits is sufficient to cover the real costs of living, including during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (art. 9).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party include in its next periodic report comparative statistical data on recipients of social security benefits, disaggregated by sex, age group, nationality, disability, family size, income group and other relevant criteria, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, to enable the Committee to better assess the social security system of the State party. It recommends that the State party also include in its next periodic report information on the correlation between social security benefits and the cost of living in order to guarantee beneficiaries and their families an adequate standard of living. The Committee draws**

the State party's attention to its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security.

#### **Parental leave**

28. While noting the information provided by the State party on provision of maternity leave for working mothers in the private and public sectors,<sup>7</sup> the Committee is concerned at the absence of parental leave and the short length of paternity leave (arts. 3 and 10).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party take legislative measures to ensure statutory entitlement to all family care-related leave, including parental leave and extended paternity leave. It also recommends that the State party take all the measures necessary to meet the childcare needs of families.**

#### **Protection of the family**

30. While noting the information provided by the State party on efforts made to protect children and the family,<sup>8</sup> including the enactment of Act No. 17 of 2015 defining domestic violence, the Committee notes with concern that the personal status laws of the State party relating to marriage, age of marriage, divorce, child custody, guardianship and inheritance are not sufficiently harmonized and they are discriminatory with regard to sex, nationality, religion and belief (arts. 2, 3 and 10).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party modify its personal status laws relating to marriage, age of marriage, divorce, child custody, guardianship and inheritance with a view to harmonizing them and ensuring their compliance with articles 2, 3 and 10 of the Covenant.**

#### **Protection of children**

32. While noting the enactment in 2021 of the Act on Restorative Justice for Children, which provides for their protection from ill-treatment, the Committee notes with concern that the provisions of that law do not exempt children from appearing before military courts in some cases (art. 10).

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expediently pass into law the amendment to the Citizenship Act and other measures aimed at harmonizing the legislation of Bahrain with the Convention on the Rights of the Child;**

(b) **Ensure the provision of qualified, free and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law from the outset of the investigation and throughout the legal proceedings, and grant them access to a lawyer and to their family immediately after arrest.**

#### **Rights to water and sanitation**

34. While noting the efforts made by the State party to ensure its population's access to water and sanitation, in particular through its desalination plants, the Committee notes with concern that the State party is reportedly at a very high risk of suffering from a water crisis in the forthcoming decades. It is also concerned about the impact of overextraction, seawater invasion, oil spills and other industrial discharges on the quantity and quality of the State party's groundwater sources, as well as unequal access within the country to improved water sources and adequate sanitation facilities (art. 11).

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to implement its National Water Strategy 2030 with a view to guaranteeing everyone's access to safe drinking water and sanitation without discrimination. It also recommends that the State party take effective measures to provide long-term, sustainable solutions to counter the risks and challenges to the quality and quantity of its water sources. The**

<sup>7</sup> E/C.12/BHR/1, paras. 162–170.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., paras. 120–236.

**Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water.**

### **Poverty**

36. The Committee notes with concern the lack of information about the number of persons living in poverty in the State party. It is also concerned that the most disadvantaged and marginalized households may not be able to comply with the administrative procedures required to qualify for the social security programmes which seek to alleviate poverty (arts. 9 and 11).

**37. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a rights-based approach to its poverty reduction programmes specifically focused on those who are most affected by poverty. Moreover, it recommends that the State party ensure that procedural difficulties do not lead to the withdrawal, reduction or suspension of benefits, in order to enhance the efficacy of the measures. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its statement on poverty.<sup>9</sup>**

### **Right to adequate housing**

38. The Committee notes the efforts of the Ministry of Housing to provide social housing in order to address homelessness. However, it is concerned about the relatively high number of people, particularly from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, living in inadequate or substandard housing. It regrets the lack of information on the substantive and procedural safeguards provided in domestic law in case of eviction, including under the property rental law (Act No. 27 of 2014). The Committee is concerned at reports of the poor conditions in which persons in detention are held, including overcrowding (art. 11).

**39. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to ensure access to adequate housing for all, including by facilitating disadvantaged and marginalized individuals' and groups' access to social housing;**

(b) **Address overcrowding in detention facilities and include in its next periodic report information on the substantive and procedural safeguards provided in domestic law in case of eviction, including legal provisions for protection against forced eviction and the provision of compensation or the option of adequate alternative housing for persons who have been forcibly evicted;**

(c) **The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.**

### **Access to health care and services**

40. While noting the information provided by the State party on the implementation of its Health Improvement Strategy 2015–2018, the Committee is nevertheless concerned about:

(a) The reportedly low capacity of its hospitals and other health-care facilities and the limited availability of medical infrastructure and equipment, as well as of qualified doctors and other health-care professionals, including as a result of arrests and dismissal of a large number of health-care professionals following demonstrations that took place in 2011;

(b) The limited access that disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, in particular persons deprived of their liberty, stateless persons and migrant workers, have to health care and services, including to COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccination (art. 12).

**41. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the allocation of human, technical and financial resources to the health sector in order to ensure the accessibility, availability, affordability and quality of health care and services for everyone without discrimination, including by improving**

<sup>9</sup> [E/C.12/2001/10](#).



the infrastructure of the health-care system and ensuring that hospitals are adequately staffed with suitable medical personnel and that they have sufficient and appropriate infrastructure and equipment;

(b) Take effective measures to identify and address the different barriers faced by disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including persons with disabilities, persons deprived of their liberty, stateless persons and migrant workers, in accessing health care and services;

(c) Apply the guidance provided in the Committee's general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and its statements on the COVID-19 pandemic and economic, social and cultural rights<sup>10</sup> and on universal and equitable access to vaccines for COVID-19.<sup>11</sup>

### **Mental health**

42. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the State party's implementation of its mental health laws and policies and on the accessibility, availability, affordability and quality of its mental health care and services (art. 12).

43. The Committee requests that the State party include in its next periodic report information about the implementation of its mental health laws and policies, in accordance with international human rights norms and standards. It recommends that the State party take measures to ensure the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of professional mental health care and services, including community-based services, and inform the Committee about the implementation of these measures in its next periodic report.

### **Sexual and reproductive health**

44. The Committee is concerned about the criminalization of abortion, even in cases where pregnancy is the result of incest or rape. It is also concerned about the reported difficulties faced by women in accessing sexual and reproductive health care and services, including contraceptives. The Committee regrets the lack of information on sexual and reproductive health education for women (art. 12).

45. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend its laws on the termination of pregnancy with a view to making them consistent with women's integrity and autonomy, in particular by decriminalizing abortion in cases of incest and rape and by expanding the set of circumstances under which abortion is legal;

(b) Ensure the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of sexual and reproductive health care and services, including access to affordable, safe and effective contraceptives and emergency contraceptives;

(c) Introduce age-appropriate education in sexual and reproductive health and include information on the steps taken in its next periodic report;

(d) Take into consideration its general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health.

### **Right to education**

46. While noting that the State party provides primary and secondary education in public schools free of charge for its citizens, the Committee remains concerned that the educational laws and regulations of the State party do not provide children who are not citizens, including children of migrant workers and stateless children, with access to primary and secondary education free of charge.<sup>12</sup> It is also concerned about cases of children deprived of their

<sup>10</sup> E/C.12/2020/1.

<sup>11</sup> E/C.12/2020/2.

<sup>12</sup> E/C.12/BHR/1, para. 365.

liberty being denied access to education in detention facilities. The Committee regrets the lack of information on access to inclusive and quality education by disadvantaged and marginalized children, including children of migrant workers, stateless children and children with disabilities (art. 13).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to guarantee in law and in practice non-discriminatory access to compulsory primary and secondary education free of charge to all children, in particular disadvantaged and marginalized children, including but not limited to children of migrant workers, stateless children, children deprived of their liberty and children with disabilities. It also requests that the State party include in its next periodic report disaggregated statistical data on its education system, including school enrolment, attendance and completion rates, in order to enable the Committee to better assess access to education in the State party.**

#### **Cultural rights**

48. Despite the constitutional prohibition of discrimination based on religious affiliation, members of the Shia community reportedly face discrimination in education, employment and in the exercise of their cultural rights. The Committee is concerned about the reported restrictions on access to a number of religious and cultural sites for the Shia community, in addition to reports of the demolition of some of their religious sites. It is also concerned about reports of harassment, intimidation, arrests and detention of religious and cultural figures (art. 15).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that everyone can exercise their right to take part in cultural and religious life without discrimination or undue restrictions, in accordance with article 15 of the Covenant, as interpreted in the Committee's general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life. It also recommends that the State party continue taking the measures necessary, in consultation with the communities affected, for the restoration of damaged religious sites.**

#### **Freedom to pursue scientific research and creative activities**

50. While noting the information provided by the delegation about freedom of expression and the support given to creative activities, the Committee is concerned that some restrictions are placed on scientific research and creative activities (art. 15).

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party respect the freedom indispensable for creative activity, including by ensuring that forms of censorship do not duly limit it. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to paragraphs 17 to 20 of its general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life.**

### **D. Other recommendations**

52. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.**

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.**

54. **The Committee recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals**

on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.<sup>13</sup>

55. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee encourages the State party to engage with the National Institution for Human Rights, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

56. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations, information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9 (human rights defenders), 15 (a) (non-discrimination) and 33 (a) (protection of children) above.

57. The Committee requests the State party to submit its second periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2027, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words.

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<sup>13</sup> [E/C.12/2019/1](#).