



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Egypt under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2016*

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Introduction

1. Over the course of time, the Government in Egypt has adhered a solidly rooted tradition of promoting and protecting human rights; rights that were achieved through global efforts and the legitimacy of which is enshrined in international and regional treaties. The Government has always dedicated particular attention to the protection and promotion of children's rights and best interests in order to create a permanent and solid foundation for authentic development, rooted in the State's constitutional, legal and international commitment to the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunity and equality.

2. The combined fifth to seventh periodic reports, submitted under article 44 of the Convention, cover the period from 2008 – the date of submission of the previous report – to 2019. They also include information about efforts made between 2010 and 2019 to implement the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict (under art. 8 (1) of the Protocol) and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (under art. 12 (1) of the Protocol).

Methodology for the preparation of the report

- The present report is the fruit of a participatory and inclusive approach that involved intense consultations with various national players, in particular national human rights institutions and civil society, in addition to a number of public figures. The Government worked to ensure coordination between the competent ministries, the specialized National Councils, research centres and civil society organizations. Furthermore, 5,904 children of both sexes and from various governorates participated in camps and other activities organized by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.¹ Those initiatives provided an opportunity to canvass the children's opinions, inform them about their rights under the Convention and understand their view of the report.

Updated demographic and economic indicators

Population indicators

- According to 2017 estimates, the population stands at 94,798,827 (94.8 million), 51.6 per cent male and 48.4 per cent female;
- The annual growth rate is 2.56 per cent;
- Life expectancy at birth is 71.2 years for males and 73.9 years for females;
- The birth rate is 26.8 live births and the mortality rate is 5.7 deaths, per 1,000 inhabitants;
- Infant mortality stands at 15.1 per 1,000 live births;
- Of the total population, 42.2 per cent live in urban areas and 57.8 per cent in rural areas;
- Persons under 15 account for 34.2 per cent of the population;
- Persons of 65 and older account for 3.9 per cent of the population;
- Persons of working age (between 15 and 65) account for 61.9 per cent of the population;
- The illiteracy rate stood at 25.8 per cent in 2017 (21.2 per cent of males and 30.8 per cent of females);
- Persons with disabilities accounted for 10.64 per cent of the total population, according to the 2017 census;²

¹ Hereinafter referred to as the Council.

² According to the latest official census, issued by the State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics in 2017.

- Also according to the census, the number of households at the national level was 23,455,079.

Economic indicators

- The Egyptian economy is one of the most diversified among States of the Middle East and Africa, and it has the third highest growth rate in the world, currently 5.8 per cent;
- According to estimates from 2016, the workforce comprises around 26 million people, with 51 per cent in the service sector, 32 per cent in the agricultural sector and 17 per cent in the industrial sector;
- Foreign currency reserves have increased to more than \$45 billion;
- Unemployment fell to 7.5 per cent in 2019 and inflation decreased to 4.3 per cent in September 2019;
- State budget allocations for children grew in the period 2010/11–2017/18.

I. General measures of implementation

(a) The legal status of the Convention under Egyptian legislation

3. The Constitution takes a progressive approach to ensuring that Egypt meets its international human rights obligations and, for the first time ever, an article of the Constitution establishes a special status for international human rights treaties. In fact, article 93 reads: “The State is bound by the international human rights treaties, covenants and charters that Egypt has ratified, which have force of law once they have been published.” Thus, the State has a constitutional obligation to abide by such instruments, and the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined therein are protected under a constitutional rule. Under the same provision, moreover, the legislature is obliged not to enact any legislation that runs counter to the country’s obligations under those instruments. The Constitution also addresses children’s rights, stipulating that the State is to respect the rights of children and mothers from a developmental perspective, in a manner consistent with all international treaties and conventions to which Egypt is a party, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. In that regard, article 80 of the Constitution defines the age of childhood in terms that are consistent with the Convention and stipulates that the State is to safeguard and protect children’s rights.

4. A new body of national legislation has been enacted concerning the protection and promotion of children’s rights and freedoms. Each element of that legalization will be referenced at the appropriate place in the present report.

(b) National practices

5. Since the beginning of 2011, Egypt has traversed a period of internal turmoil and tension during which the Egyptian people lived through two revolutions. That situation gave rise to a need for a road map for the future that would point the way to the reconstruction of State institutions. In fact, the 2014 Constitution, as amended in 2019, represents a victory for the goals and principles of the revolution and constitutes a qualitative shift towards improving the human rights situation in Egypt, and the situation of children’s rights in particular.

6. The Constitution considers the family as the foundation of society and reaffirms the State’s concern to ensure its cohesion and stability, promote its values and ensure that women are able to reconcile their family duties with the needs of work. The Constitution (arts. 9, 10, 11 and 80) also underscores the State’s obligation to protect motherhood and childhood and it includes special safeguards for the protection and promotion of human rights, including the following:

- The rights and freedoms that are inherent to citizens may not be subverted or impaired; no law regulating the exercise of rights and freedoms may restrict them in a manner that violates their substance or essence;
- In order to promote a human rights culture, universities are under an obligation to teach human rights and the professional values and ethics of various academic disciplines;
- Any assault on personal freedoms of citizens or on the sanctity of their private lives, or on other rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and the law, is an offence not subject to any statute of limitations for either criminal or civil proceedings. Injured parties may launch criminal proceedings directly, and the State is to guarantee just compensation;
- The National Council for Human Rights has the right to report any violation to the Public Prosecution Service and to intervene alongside the injured party if he or she so requests;
- Independent and specialized national human rights mechanisms have been established, in line with the 1990 Paris Principles. They include the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. The neutrality of their members is enshrined in law as is the right of those bodies to report to the public authorities about any violations encountered in the course of their work. The National Councils all have legal personality; they are technically, financially and administratively independent and their views are canvassed when enacting laws and regulations relevant to their particular field of activities.

Egyptian contributions to human rights in the international and regional arenas

7. Egypt has acceded to the principal international human rights treaties and conventions because the State firmly believes in human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are consistent with its national identity and with its religious and cultural heritage and civilization. Reference is made to previous reports under treaties to which Egypt is already a party. To those may be added, in the period covered by the present report:

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, under Presidential Decree No. 400 of 2007, published in the Official Gazette No. 27 of 3 July 2008;
- Arab Charter on Human Rights, under Presidential Decree No. 429 of 2018 issued on 15 September 2018.

8. As regards recommendations 11 and 12, the State's commitment to achieving just and reasonable equality is enshrined in articles 2, 3, 9, 11 and 53 of the Constitution, alongside its obligation to provide equal opportunity for all citizens, without discrimination, in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Matters relating to personal status are regulated by religious laws. Women, moreover, are empowered to reconcile their family duties with the needs of work and the State is under an obligation to nurture and protect motherhood and childhood and to secure the welfare of female breadwinners, older women and women in need. It is also required to ensure full legal protection against any discriminatory act. In addition to this, a child has been defined as anyone under the age of 18, which is consistent with the Convention, and national legislation – in particular, the Children's Code, the Criminal Code and the Civil Status Code – addresses all forms of violence, including domestic violence, underage marriage and forced marriage.

9. Under the law, both parties to a marital relationship have rights that are counterpoised so as to achieve a fair and just balance between them. Under the Egyptian legislative system, the woman has the right to choose her husband, and a marriage contract is a consensual agreement that is offered and accepted, and that can be concluded only with the consent of the prospective bride. Fathers, moreover, are under an obligation to maintain their daughters until they marry and their sons until they complete their education. With a view to the best interests of minors, the law specifies that their custody lies with women; that custody can then continue after the child reaches the legally prescribed age if the child chooses to remain with the mother. For his part, the man is required to meet the costs of the custody, provide

appropriate accommodation for the mother and defray all the expenses incurred by the children during that period. All this serves to uphold the rights of the child. The existence of these children's rights should effectively negate the concerns raised by the Committee in its recommendations.

10. As concerns the limited use of the Convention in national courts, reference is made to the introduction where it is stated that the treaties to which Egypt is a party have force of law and can be invoked before all State authorities. In that regard, in fact, court rulings have directly referenced the Convention as will be explained in detail below.

11. As regards recommendation 13, in March 2018, in consultation with partners and groups representing children in Egypt, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood issued its "Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood 2018–2030", which constitutes a unified frame of reference for the work of stakeholders. It also provides decision makers with actionable priorities and envisages an institutional structure for working with children; coordination, follow-up and evaluation mechanisms; and the community outreach tools that need to be rolled out as a necessary condition for the success and sustainability of the initiative. It also distributes roles between government institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the running of programmes and activities. The drafters of the Strategic Framework drew from the international treaties and conventions to which Egypt has acceded.

(c) Coordination

12. The Government has been at pains to establish administrative bodies and structures, of various levels and invested with various powers, to promote, protect and disseminate a human rights culture, in accordance with ministerial regulations and decrees.

- Specialized National Councils

(i) National Council for Childhood and Motherhood

13. The Council was established under Presidential Decree No. 54 of 1988, as amended, and, subsequently, under the Children's Code,³ the creation of the Council being specifically envisioned in article 214 of the Constitution. The Council, which is financially and administratively independent, operates within the framework of the powers conferred upon it by the Constitution. Under articles 144 and 144 bis of the Children's Code, the Council has its own fund, called the "Childhood and Motherhood Welfare Fund", which is also independent and has its own budget.

(ii) National Council for Women

14. This Council was established under Presidential Decree No. 90 of 2000 and is regulated – in line with article 244 of the Constitution – by Act No. 30 of 2018. The Council, which is financially and administratively independent, aims to promote, develop, protect and raise awareness about women's rights, ensure that they can be duly exercised and consolidate the values of equality, equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

(iii) National Council for Human Rights

15. The Council was established under Act No. 94 of 2003, in line with the 1990 Paris Principles. That Act was then amended under Act No. 197 of 2017, pursuant to article 244 of the Constitution. The Council – which is technically, financially and administratively independent in the exercise of its functions and activities – aims to promote, develop and protect human rights and freedoms.

(iv) National Council for Persons with Disabilities

16. In implementation of article 244 of the Constitution, Act No. 11 of 2019 was issued promulgating the Act that regulates the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. The

³ Act No. 12 of 1996, as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008.

Council – which is technically, financially and administratively independent in the exercise of its functions and activities – aims to promote, develop, protect and raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities.

17. A number of significant steps have been taken, reflecting a belief in the importance of serious and effective implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols. They include the following:

- The child protection system has been reinforced thanks to the 16000 Child Helpline and child protection committees and sub-committees;
- A national strategy to eliminate violence against children has been developed through coordination with stakeholders, and a unified procedural guide for working with children at risk was written in January 2018;
- Reports submitted via helplines are handled thanks to coordination between Governors and the human rights departments of the Office of the Public Prosecutor and of the Ministry of the Interior;
- The Public Prosecution Service periodically issues handbooks and trains its members to coordinate and promote recourse to protection committees;
- There is coordination with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with a view to developing a system to protect “children on the move”;
- There is coordination between the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the European Union and UNICEF with a view to funding and implementing a programme to expand access to education and protection for children at risk.

18. Act No. 149 of 2019 regulating the activity of civil society associations seeks to encourage and nurture such associations with a view to further promoting and protecting human rights. An increase in the number of civil society associations has gone some way to addressing the problems that hinder their work.

19. As regards recommendations 14, 15 and 16, the efforts made, as described above, should serve to dispel the Committee’s concerns in this regard, especially since the recommendations related to the circumstances that preceded the aforementioned constitutional and legislative developments.

(d) Budget and independent monitoring

20. Article 214 of the Constitution states that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood is a specialized national mechanism that has technical, financial, and administrative independence and that deals with matters affecting children. Furthermore, it enjoys the privileges envisaged in the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions. In that connection:

- A separate unit dealing with children’s rights was set up as part of the National Council for Human Rights in 2012, in cooperation with UNICEF. Its purpose is to promote and disseminate a children’s rights culture;
- Training programmes have been organized to make children aware of their rights and training has also been imparted to persons who work with and on behalf of children; complaints about violations against children are duly recorded and the victims are provided with the support they need;
- Protection committees are granted absolute authority in making recommendations concerning children at risk (articles 98, 99 bis and 122 of the Children’s Code); some measures are taken on a case-by-case basis after a matter has been submitted to prosecutors or to the competent children’s court.

21. As regards recommendations 17 and 18, the information given above shows that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood is financially, technically and

administratively independent, that it is readily accessible to children, that it has sufficient human and technical resources and that, at the institutional level, it coordinates systematically and effectively with competent government agencies and other Councils. Thus, it meets the standards mentioned in the recommendations.

(e) Mechanisms for receiving complaints from children

22. In 2014, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood improved the effectiveness of the services it provides via its helpline, formed legal support units and began using social media in order to reach out directly to a greater number of children, their families and other target groups. In addition, a fact-finding committee was formed that attends many of the investigations conducted by the Public Prosecution Service, about which it then submits psychosocial assessment reports. The electronic hardware of the helpline was updated in 2018.

23. The helpline works in cooperation with 40 civil society organizations in 15 governorates, which examine reports then take the appropriate action while, for its part, the Council assess those organizations, in cooperation with UNICEF. The organizations' rate of response and follow-up on the reports has surpassed 96 per cent.

24. In 2014, as part of efforts to reinforce child helplines, the Ministry of Social Solidarity set up a free hotline to receive complaints from citizens about care institutions.

25. As regards recommendations 84 and 85, the Council has a number of free round-the-clock helplines. The helplines can be used to report cases of violence, abuse and ill-treatment and facilitate access by children and their families to the rights guaranteed to them by law and to free legal and social assistance.

(f) Allocation of resources

26. A financial programme has been implemented with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The purpose of the programme is to recalibrate priorities and to develop more efficient and just distribution policies capable of improving the social situation, be it in geographical terms, by targeting the neediest groups or by seeking to mitigate the impact of financial and economic reforms. In that connection, a portion of the country's gross domestic product has been allocated to safeguard children's right to education and health, and the Government has pledged to roll out proactive measures for the most vulnerable groups. As a result of this, the State budget for the financial year 2017/18 envisaged an allocation of more than 81.2 billion Egyptian pounds (LE) exclusively for childhood-related matters, while in excess of LE 101.4 billion was spent partly on childhood-related matters.

27. In 2016, an account for the Childhood and Motherhood Welfare Fund was opened at the Central Bank with a deposit of LE 5 million, thanks to an increase in budget allocations. The sum aims to make up for the instability in external financing and to ensure the continuation of activities that prioritize the needs of children.

28. As regards recommendations 19 and 20, the Government of Egypt has worked to protect and promote children's rights, to ensure equal access for all children to the services and assistance they need for their development, to increase budget allocations on their behalf and to include them in sectoral budgets for health, education and child protection.

(g) Data collection

29. The Council has established the Child Rights Observatory which, in coordination with the competent authorities, is tasked with gathering indicators concerning children. One significant aspect of that coordination was when the Council was able to add sections concerning children to the questionnaire of the most recent census held in Egypt.

30. Since 2015, the State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics has been developing a national methodology with the aim of improving its statistics and ensuring closer coordination among all parts of the statistic-gathering system in Egypt, so as to facilitate the interchange of data.

31. In order to bridge information gaps, the Council conducts studies into matters for which no data is available at the national level; for example, a 2009 survey into children in street situations. A number of studies have been published in collaboration with UNICEF, including “Child Poverty and Living Standard Inequality in Egypt, 2008” and “Trends and Disparities in Child Poverty in Egypt between 2000 and 2008”.

32. It was via the Observatory that the Council was able to add a section on child labour and development to the questionnaire of a family status census held in Egypt in May 2009. The indicators that emerged from that initiative were used in a 2009 research paper entitled “Examination of the Situation of Children in Egypt”. In addition to this, a section on child behaviour was included in the questionnaire of a survey conducted in October 2009, with the resulting indicators being incorporated into a 2009 paper entitled “Methods for controlling child behaviour at home”. The questionnaire of a survey conducted in January 2011 included a section on awareness of children’s rights among mothers, and the outcomes were used in a 2011 paper entitled “Mothers’ Awareness of Children’s Rights”.

33. The Observatory conducted a study entitled “Assessing the nutrition of children and adolescents and identifying risk factors in the poorest villages”, which included an evaluation of malnutrition and anaemia indicators among children aged between 5 and 11. A health census conducted in Egypt in 2014 also included a calculation based on this indicator for the same age group.

34. As regards recommendations 21 and 22, the information given above shows the efforts made by the Government of Egypt to protect and promote children’s rights, in coordination with the National Centre for Statistics and UNICEF, and with the participation of civil society organizations.

(h) Dissemination and awareness-raising

35. Many governmental and national bodies, specialized National Councils and civil society organizations have been making efforts to raise awareness among all segments of society about children’s rights and the need to protect minors from all forms of violence, abuse and harmful social practices. Various promotional and awareness-raising activities have been held in that connection, including:

- The Council has launched several campaigns via helplines and social media to encourage interaction and communication with the various groups involved in protecting and upholding the rights of children; to make people aware of important issues such as the elimination of child marriage and violence in schools and homes; and to providing guidance to parents on how to deal with children;
- A media campaign has been launched using the slogan “Our Children”, sponsored by the Council, UNICEF and the European Union. The campaign is articulated in three stages: Firstly, positive parenting methods; secondly, “I am against bullying”, which reached 97 million beneficiaries; and thirdly, how to deal with adolescents;
- The Council has held workshops and seminars for children and persons who work with children on the implementation of child protection policies and on knowledge of the Convention, the Children’s Code and the Human Trafficking Act. The meetings also served to discuss topics such as non-discrimination and freedom of expression;
- Teams have been formed to advocate for children’s rights and to combat violence against children. The teams, which represent all children without discrimination, serve to build young persons’ capacity to raise awareness among their peers about the rights enshrined in the Convention and the Children’s Code. They also serve to raise awareness about the helpline and the risks of certain harmful practices such as child

marriage and female genital mutilation. The child participants helped to develop the action plan for the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood;

- In cooperation with UNICEF, the European Union and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, camps were organized in 10 different governorates during the period 2015–2019, where children were taught about their rights under the law and the Convention, the role of the Council and the services available via the helpline;
- Through its mobile educational unit (autobus.com), the Council participated in a nationwide awareness-raising initiative intended to draw attention to childhood-related issues and to give children the chance to acquire basic computer skills and to learn how to use the Internet safely.

36. As regards recommendations 23 and 24, the information provided above demonstrates the effectiveness of government efforts to protect and promote children's rights through awareness-raising activities on the Convention, the Children's Code and child rights in general, with the participation of the media and the involvement of children themselves.

(i) Training

37. The Government is eager to promote human rights training, and the competent government departments are undertaking to train law enforcement agencies on the provisions of the Convention and the Children's Code. For example:

- Between 2009 and 2018, the Ministry of Justice organized training courses and workshops for judges, prosecutors, police officers, experts, social workers including those working in child welfare homes and correctional institutions, and members of protection committees;
- The Public Prosecution Service provides training to prosecutors in the field of child justice, restorative justice and the application of United Nations guidelines on the treatment of child victims and witnesses. Training programmes include the concept of the "best interests of the child";
- The Council, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, seeks to build capacity among police officers in areas such as human trafficking, violence and the protection of children of imprisoned mothers. The Council also trains prison staff and organizes educational seminars for female inmates;
- In cooperation with international, regional and local organizations, the Ministry of Social Solidarity has organized training courses to build capacities among childcare workers in institutions and to raise their awareness vis-à-vis the children's rights system. The courses also focus on the implementation of protection policies, the main areas covered by such policies and knowledge of international and national standards;
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Council has run training courses for specialists in State-run schools on the "Teachers' guide to awareness of child trafficking". The aim is to raise awareness about that issue, the risks it presents, the forms it takes, the relevant laws and how best to protect children.

38. As regards recommendations 25 and 26, the Government and stakeholders continue to intensify their focus training with a view to protecting and promoting the rights of the child.

(j) Cooperation with civil society

39. The Council runs a number of activities in cooperation with civil society:

- In 2015, the Civil Associations Unit was made the focal point for contact with civil society organizations, with a view to creating databases about such organizations. The databases serve to evaluate the technical, financial and institutional structure of civil society organizations and provide them with appropriate support;
- Civil associations participate in the services provided by helplines nationwide;

- A protocol of partnership has been signed between the Council and the General Federation of Civil Institutions and Associations. The purpose of the protocol is to share information and experiences and to work together to support children's rights through training and awareness-raising workshops, building capacity of staff and effectively strengthening and evaluating associations that operate in the interests of children and mothers.

40. As regards recommendations 27, 28 and 29, in addition to the actions described above, the freedom to form civil associations and institutions is enshrined in article 75 of the Constitution. In enactment of that provision, Act No. 149 of 2019 was issued, which regulates civil society work with a view to promoting the role of civil associations and civil society organizations. According to article 2 of the Act, civil associations acquire legal personality merely upon notifying the authorities of their existence.

(k) Child rights and the business sector

41. Under article 36 of the Constitution, the State is required to encourage the private sector to shoulder its social responsibility in order to serve the national economy and society.

42. In 2010, Egypt became the first Arab and African nation, and the second country worldwide, to launch a national corporate social responsibility index. The 100 companies on the Egyptian Stock Exchange have been assessed according to that index.

43. The Council, in partnership with the Ministry of the Workforce and the International Labour Organization (ILO), has developed a national plan "to eradicate the worst forms of child labour in Egypt and support the family (2018–2025)". Under the plan, awareness-raising programmes for parents and employers are being run in areas with high rates of child labour.

44. Several initiatives are being rolled out by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, private sector companies and civil society institutions, including the following:

- The "*Bina Misr bukra ahl*" initiative to support the development of various forms of welfare institution while monitoring and reporting any violations that might occur in such institutions;
- The Egyptian Youth Choir and Orchestra, the members of which include children deprived of family care who are thus provided with social and cultural support and are able to hone their artistic talents;
- The "*La'ibat baladna*" initiative which uses sport as a means to integrate homeless children into society, a family or a social welfare institution, and to promote their psychosocial rehabilitation;
- The "*Shababna fikhidmat baladna*" initiative, which aims to impart knowledge, skills, professional principles and scientific methods to participants (social workers and psychologists) who work in welfare homes for children deprived of family care);
- The Ministry of Education launched a national "teachers first" project in 2016. The project – which was developed by the Special Council for Education and Academic Research of the Office of the President, in cooperation with the Ministry and with the consultancy company Imagine Education – aims to train 10,000 teachers and thus introduce a radical change into the educational process for 1 million students by May 2017;
- In cooperation with UNICEF, Plan International, Save the Children International and Misr El Kheir, teachers, headteachers, social workers and psychologists have received training regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in active learning strategies.

45. As regards recommendation 31, the information provided above shows the effective efforts that have been made by the Government in partnership with the business sector to protect and promote children's rights.

II. Definition of the child

46. Article 80 of the Constitution contains – for the first time – a definition of the child as “any person under the age of 18”. That definition was then adopted by legislators in the Children’s Code.

47. As regards recommendations 32 and 33 concerning the absence of “an explicit prohibition and criminalization of marriages of persons below 18 years of age”, it should be noted that the Constitution has, in fact, defined children in terms of age and that all legislation is required to abide by that limit, which is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

48. The Children’s Code envisions an amendment to article 31 bis of the Civil Status Code to prohibit the registration of a marriage contract for a person of either sex under the age of 18. Severe penalties are envisaged for any official who officiates at the stipulation of such a marriage contract, contrary to the provisions of that article.

49. A presidential declaration intended to combat child marriage was issued in 2017.

50. In 2018, the Council issued a policy paper on child marriage, in collaboration with UNICEF.

51. In June 2019, Cairo hosted a regional conference on the elimination of child marriage and female genital mutilation in Africa, under the auspices of the President of the Republic.

III. General principles

(a) Non-discrimination

52. Under the Constitution, the State undertakes to apply the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunity for all citizens, without discrimination. Moreover, all persons are equal before the law, without discrimination on any grounds, including disability (arts. 9, 11, 53, 80 and 81).

53. Under article 3 of the Children’s Code, children are to be protected against any kind of discrimination and to enjoy all their rights in a situation of real and effective equality.

54. Under the Code, moreover, persons with disabilities are guaranteed the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal footing with others, without discrimination on the grounds of their type of disability or their sex. They can enjoy these rights equally and effectively in all areas. According to articles 10 to 17 of the Code, persons with disabilities have the right to basic and university education, and they are entitled to inclusive education in the same State-run and private schools and institutions as are available to others.

55. With a view to upholding those principles, the Government has undertaken the following actions:

- The Egyptian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 is being implemented with a view to improving the quality of education in poor areas and to halving the gap between governorates in terms of access to education, health services and employment;
- Efforts have been made to close the school enrolment gap between males and females, which was in favour of males in the primary and intermediary stages. By the academic year 2016/17, it stood in favour of females by 2.2 per cent in the primary stage and by 5.4 per cent in the intermediate stage, while the overall enrolment rate for girls has increased at all educational levels.

56. As regards recommendations 34 and 35, the Government has worked to narrow the educational gap between children in urban and rural areas. It has also launched a national initiative for girls’ education and provided education and health services to refugee children, as detailed in sections VIII and IX of the present report.

(b) Best interests of the child

57. Under article 80 of the Constitution, the “best interests of the child” are guaranteed in all measures involving children. According to article 3 of the Children’s Code, the protection of children and the realization of their best interests are to be a priority in all decisions and procedures that concern them, whatever the entity involved in those decisions and procedures. A number of efforts have been made in matters regarding child custody, visiting rights and maintenance, including the following:

- The “best interests of the child” are duly taken into account in the interim decrees issued by the Public Prosecution Service – in cooperation with the Council – regarding child custody disputes and in the reports the Service submits during the course of human trafficking cases and cases involving criminal liability;
- A body of ministerial decrees has been promulgated regarding the admission of students with mild disabilities to regular educations; at the same time, civil associations and private facilities have been authorized to open kindergartens to help integrate such students into the educational system;
- The Administrative Court has ruled to overturn a decree in which the Minister of Justice sought to stipulate locations and dates; the Court thus granted judges the discretion to determine the location where a child visit may be conducted and the length of such a visit, as necessary in the best interests of the child.

58. As regards recommendations 36 and 37, the efforts the Government has made in the past have created the necessary legal culture and training environment to ensure that the principle of the “best interests of the child” is well consolidated among the competent authorities.

(c) Right to life

59. Reference is made in this connection to previous reports submitted by Egypt. The following information may be added:

- Under article 16 of the Constitution, the State undertakes to honour those who laid down their lives for their country and to provide for the welfare of the injured of the Revolution, military veterans, families of persons missing in action, etc., as well as persons injured during security operations, their spouses, children and parents, whom it undertakes to provide with employment opportunities;
- Article 3 of the Children’s Code envisions the right of children to live, survive and develop in the bosom of a cohesive and unified family, to be the subject of various preventive and precautionary measures and to be protected from all forms of physical, mental or sexual violence, harm or abuse, as well as from neglect, negligence or other forms of ill-treatment and exploitation.

60. As regards the first part of recommendations 38 and 39, article 111 of the Children’s Code stipulates: “No sentence of death, of life imprisonment or of rigorous imprisonment shall be handed down against an accused person who was under the age of 18 at the time the offence was committed.” This means that the death penalty is to be handed down on the basis of the age of the accused person at the time an offence was committed not at the time the sentence is carried out. Legislators were also careful to ensure protection for children involved in criminal proceedings by stipulating, in article 133 of the Code: “If a sentence is handed down against an accused person on the grounds that that person is over the age of 15, after which official documents come to light showing that, in fact, the person is under 15, the Prosecutor General is to bring the matter back before the court that issued the original sentence for that sentence to be reconsidered in accordance with the law. If a sentence is handed down against an accused person on the grounds that that person is over the age of 18, after which official documents come to light showing that, in fact, the person is under 18, the Prosecutor General is to bring the matter back before the court that issued the original sentence for that sentence to be reconsidered in accordance with the law. The sentence is to be annulled and the case file referred for action to the Public Prosecution Service.” In both

cases, the enforcement of the sentence is suspended. The courts in Egypt are careful to ensure that no sentence of death is handed down against a child and, in fact, the enforcement of a death sentence is surrounded by many legal safeguards. The Court of Cassation has established that the issue of a child's age is of critical importance, and it has ruled to overturn death sentences on the grounds that the courts have failed to establish the age of the accused person.

61. As regards the second part of the recommendations, reference was made to "reports of excessive use of force by security forces against peaceful demonstrators during and after the 2011 January Revolution, resulting in the death and injury of children". Incidents that amounted to offences during those events have been the subject of numerous investigations and court proceedings, irrespective of whether the acts were committed by civilians or by law enforcement officials, or whether against adults or children.

62. Lastly, and as regards the third part of the recommendations, it was stated that, "in the light of article 39 of the Convention, the Committee further calls upon the State party to provide compensation to all children who suffered injuries during the January 2011 Revolution and ensure their full physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration". Acting under article 16 of the Constitution, the Government set up the National Council for the Welfare of Families of Martyrs and Injured, which is under the Office of the Prime Minister. In 2017, the National Council – which is an official body responsible for providing support, care and assistance to the families of martyrs and injured persons – issued a report on its activities over the previous six years. Those activities included: the provision of material support to the families of martyrs (LE 100,000 per family, with the same amount being paid out to injured persons with 100 per cent incapacity); medical treatment in private hospitals; travel to perform hajj; free rail, metro and bus travel; and exemption from tuition fees for children. In addition, thanks to cooperation with the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade, 261 injured persons and their families received ration cards. For its part, in 2013, the Ministry of Housing allocated 64 housing units to injured persons with a 100 per cent incapacity. Following the Revolution of 30 June 2013, persons martyred or injured by terrorist operations were included among the categories supported by the Council.

(d) Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

63. Freedom of thought and opinion is guaranteed under the Constitution. All persons have the right to express their views in oral, written or pictorial form, or using any other means of expression and publication (art. 65).

64. Under article 3 of the Children's Code, all children capable of forming their own opinions have the right of access to information to enable them to elaborate and express their views, and the right to have their voices heard on all matters that concern them, including judicial and administrative procedures. According to article 116 bis (d) of the Code, children have the right to be heard at every stage of proceedings: arrest, investigation, trial and enforcement of sentence. Within this framework, the Government has coordinated with the Council on activities intended to encourage the participation of children in a number of areas, including:

- The Ministry of Education has developed programmes and activities to promote the involvement of children. These include an "active learning" encyclopaedia and its roll-out in schools, and the provision of training to teachers on the advanced curricula;
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports also upholds the principle of children's participation through the civic education programme⁴ and a youth parliament;

⁴ The civic education programme for children in the 13–17 age group is run in cooperation with UNICEF. It serves to provide the young with the information and skills they need to exercise their rights and responsibilities as active citizens in all political economic and social fields. The programme focuses on four areas: knowledge, values, practices and relationships.

- The Council has also been involved in activities to promote children’s participation, including the following:
 - Launching the Egyptian Children’s Forum in 2011;
 - Organizing an Egyptian children’s round table in 2015 with the aim of enabling 50 children of both sexes to participate in the drafting of the periodic report submitted by Egypt to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and in the development of the National Strategy and Plan for Childhood. In 2016, a governorate-level children’s roundtable was held to discuss the National Plan for Childhood;
 - Implementing initiatives in cooperation with UNICEF with the goal of creating an environment conducive to the participation of children in the legal, social and political arenas;
 - Supporting parents and families to ensure that children are able to participate actively and to make their views known within the bosom of the family;
 - The National Council for Human Rights organized the “democratic schools” project with the aim of raising schoolchildren’s awareness about human rights culture and elections, and the need for those things to be rooted in democratic principles. To that end, mock elections were held, and training programmes were run to disseminate a culture of children’s rights.

65. As regards recommendations 40 and 41, the measures described above show how article 3 of the Convention is being effectively implemented.

IV. Civil rights and freedoms

(a) Name, nationality and preserving identity

Birth registration

66. Article 80 Constitution states that every child has the right to a name and to identification documents, while articles 4, 5 and 20 of the Children’s Code stipulate that all children have the right to a name that distinguishes them, that is to be recorded at birth in the register of births and that may not be derogatory or insulting to the dignity of the child or contrary to religious beliefs. The Code also identifies the persons responsible for reporting a birth, the information to be reported, including in cases of the discovery of a newborn child, the criteria for obtaining a copy of the record and penalties for violations (art. 24).

67. Articles 4, 6, 19, 20–27 and 29 of the Civil Status Code (Act No. 143 of 1994) deal with the registration of births inside the country, be it of Egyptians, foreigners or illegitimate children. The same provisions also set forth the penalty to which persons may be liable for failing to register a birth. An initial birth certificate is issued free of charge through the offices of the Ministry of Health and Population (arts. 68, 76 and 77).

68. According to the results of a 2014 survey conducted by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the registration rate for children under 5 stood at 99.4 per cent.

- In 2019, the Administrative Court ruled that a child of an unknown father is entitled to be registered in civil status records under the name of a fictitious father, so as to guard appearances for children whose father is unknown. Moreover, depriving a child from possession of a birth certificate because he or she was born outside wedlock is considered to constitute a form of physical and mental abuse against the child’s mother and, in particular, an affront to her constitutional rights. At the same time, children have a constitutional right to hold a birth certificate containing personal data that is not degrading to their dignity or a source of personal or social humiliation.

69. As regards recommendations 42 and 43, the efforts described above are in line with the recommendations on the mandatory registration of all children born in the State, as guaranteed by law.

Right to nationality

70. According to article 6 of the 2014 Constitution, anyone born of an Egyptian father or an Egyptian mother has the right to nationality, to legal recognition and to an official document containing their personal data. That right is guaranteed and regulated by law, which also stipulates the conditions for the acquisition of nationality.

71. Articles 2 and 3 of Egyptian Nationality Act No. 26 of 1975 as amended by Act No. 154 of 2004, envisage two scenarios. Firstly: “An Egyptian is a person born to an Egyptian father or an Egyptian mother, or born in Egypt to unknown parents. A foundling in Egypt is considered to have been born in Egypt unless there is evidence to the contrary. According to the provisions of the previous paragraph, persons who hold a foreign nationality alongside their Egyptian nationality can notify the Minister of the Interior of their desire to renounce their Egyptian nationality. Minors who lost their Egyptian nationality under the provisions of the previous paragraph, can notify their desire to reacquire it, within one year of attaining their majority.” Secondly: “Persons born to an Egyptian mother and a non-Egyptian father before the date of entry into force of the present Act, can notify the Minister of the Interior of their desire to obtain Egyptian nationality, and they are to be considered as Egyptian when a decree to that effect has been issued by the Minister, or after a year has passed since the date of their notification and no reasoned decision rejecting the request has been issued.”

72. Decree No. 1225 of 2004 of the Minister of the Interior specifies the procedures whereby children born to an Egyptian mother and a non-Egyptian father may be granted nationality, in line with Act No. 154 of 2004. The Decree covers children of Egyptian mothers born both before and after the new law came into force.

73. As of 1 January 2018, 37,835 children had obtained Egyptian nationality through their mothers.

74. As regards recommendations 44 and 45, Egyptian legislators have amended the Nationality Act as described above in order to ensure equality between parents by enabling children to acquire nationality by the fact of having been born to an Egyptian father or to an Egyptian mother. Before that, nationality could be acquired only through an Egyptian father or through parents of unknown nationality, while foundlings were considered to be Egyptian in the absence of evidence to the contrary. In this way, statelessness in Egypt has been eliminated.

(b) Access to appropriate information and freedom of expression

75. Articles 65 and 68 of the Constitution guarantee the right of access to information and of freedom of expression. Those rights are also upheld under the law.

76. Between 2009 and 2015, the country’s radio and television network has:

- Dedicated an open slot, as well as daily and weekly programmes on children’s right to health, education, culture and knowledge, to the protection of children from the moment of their birth, and to care for their physical and mental health;
- The Egyptian Radio and Television Union has been pursuing a media strategy aimed at consolidating the right of children to express themselves, to participate in programmes intended for their consumption and to be involved in policies and decisions that affect them. The State Information Service has ensured that questions affecting children are duly discussed in its 65 internal media outlets nationwide, and it runs special children’s activities in the form of youth clubs, skills development, trips and a children’s library.

77. As regards recommendations 46 and 47, State institutions have rolled out a sufficient number of programmes and policies to protect and promote the rights of children and to guarantee their freedom of expression and of access to information. Efforts in that regard are continually increasing.

V. Violence against children

78. Article 52 of the Constitution criminalizes torture in all its forms and stipulates that such offences are not subject to any statute of limitations. The Criminal Code, for its part, envisages penalties for a number of torture-related offences. The minimum penalty is to be redoubled if the crime is committed by an adult against a child, if it is committed by a parent or a person with guardianship or custody of the child, or a person responsible for monitoring and educating the child, or who has any kind of authority over the infant, or if the offender is a servant of the aforementioned persons (art. 116 bis of the Children's Code).

(a) Legal prohibition on different forms of violence

79. The protection of children from all forms of violence and abuse is enshrined in article 80 of the Constitution, which details the rights of child victims and the obligation of the State to establish a special system of courts for child victims and witnesses. Children may not be held criminally liable or detained save in accordance with the law and for the period set forth therein. They are to be provided with legal aid and held in appropriate facilities separate from adult detainees.

80. In 2011, the Criminal Code was amended to increase penalties for the rape of a woman or indecent assault using force or threats, or the attempt thereof; for the abduction, concealment or substitution of a newborn infant or the false attribution of an infant to anyone other than the parents; and for the abduction of children without deception or coercion. The penalty is increased if abduction is accompanied by a ransom demand or by sexual intercourse with the abductee or by indecent assault.

81. Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010 explicitly excludes the possibility that victims or the persons responsible for them may give their consent to being exploited in human trafficking in any of the forms set forth in the Act. Article 6 (3) and (6) envisages more severe penalties if the victim is a child.

82. Articles 6 and 7 of Act No. 82 of 2016 to combat irregular migration and migrant smuggling envision harsher penalties for the crime of migrant smuggling, attempted migrant smuggling or mediation in migrant smuggling, if the smuggled migrants are women or children, or if they lack capacity or have disabilities.

83. A number of ministerial decrees have been issued with a view to protecting children from violence and situations of risk:

- The Decree of the Minister of Communications to form a national committee on the safe use of the Internet for children. The purpose of the committee is to develop a national plan to protect children against online exploitation, abuse or violence;
- The Decree of the Minister of Social Solidarity concerning the application of minimum care standards for the protection of children in orphanages and of quality standards in social welfare institutions. The Decree includes a set of model regulations for care institutions;
- Two Decrees of the Minister of Justice concerning the creation of special chambers in criminal courts to examine crimes of violence against women and children, and the establishment of forensic clinics for cases of violence against children (the "Woman and Child Clinic");
- The Decree of the Minister of Education to regulate discipline in schools and to form special school protection committees to address cases of violence.

(b) Implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children

84. The Government rolled out a strategy to address and prevent all forms of violence against children. The strategy, which aims to prohibit such violence under the law, includes

a series of measures to be taken by governmental institutions, in cooperation and coordination with United Nations and civil society organizations, as follows (in the order in which they appear in the recommendations):

- Developing a government strategy to eliminate violence against children, thanks to cooperation between the Council and UNICEF, in 2018;
- Publishing a procedural manual for working with children at risk, in collaboration with UNICEF and the European Union, in 2018;
- Including the goal of eliminating violence against children as part of the Egyptian Sustainable Development Strategy 2020–2030. This covers all the measures necessary to address violence against children and harmful practices whatever form they might take, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, extremist ideology and sexual exploitation, be it in families, schools or social media.

(c) Protocols for dealing with child offenders

85. The authorities have made every effort to respect human rights frameworks when dealing with child offenders and to apply the provisions envisaged for the criminal accountability of minors, such as their placement in juvenile detention facilities:

- The Ministry of Social Solidarity runs care programmes for children in institutions, in coordination with the police, government agencies, civil associations, civil society groups and international organizations, with a view to the rehabilitation and social reintegration of the children concerned;
- The Ministry of Health provides primary health care and organizes life-skills training and support services for families. This includes educational programmes aimed at curbing violence against Egyptian, migrant and refugee children, and their families, and to protect children within care institutions;
- The Ministry of the Interior and the Council signed a protocol on cooperation in the field of child protection. Under the protocol, all complaints received by the helpline are to be examined and the response coordinated among the authorities concerned. The Ministry is also involved in the activities of a national team to combat violence against children and in the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood, and it organizes seminars for schoolchildren to raise awareness about various forms of violence against minors;
- The Ministry of the Interior organizes courses and teams to train its staff and impart the expertise and skills they require in order to deal with that category of persons. In coordination with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, it also monitors violations against children in care homes then coordinates with other relevant stakeholders to ensure that appropriate action is taken. It is also involved in the work of committees that assess and evaluate the operation of care homes;
- The Ministry has published a manual that includes legal texts relating to children and advice on how to deal with juveniles. As part of the Ministry's strategy to combat torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, it also issues periodic bulletins on how to interact with juveniles in accordance with the Children's Code.

(d) Government action to cooperate with international bodies

86. The Ministry of Justice signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF concerning child criminal justice, and protection for child victims and witnesses. The two sides cooperated on the development and implementation of unified working procedures to help uphold the rights of child victims, and on workshops and seminars regarding the protection of children from all forms of violence and abuse.

87. The Council:

- Collaborated with the Centre for Development Services and UNICEF on a 2013 survey into violence against children aged between 13 and 17 in a number of governorates. As part of a 2014 population health survey, data was collected on physical and psychological violence against children between the ages of 1 and 14 years, at the national level;
- Organized seminars to draw attention to violence in schools and to raise awareness about different forms of violence against children, the psychological and physical effects such violence can have, the penalties to which perpetrators are liable and positive alternative methods that can be used to modify children's behaviour.

88. The International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, which is part of Al-Azhar University, has cooperated with the Coptic Church and UNICEF to publish a manual entitled: "Ulema for the Protection of Children from Violence". A further three volumes have been published giving an Islamic-Christian perspective on protecting children against violence and harmful practices, as well as a book entitled: "Peace, Love and Tolerance". A conference has been held at Al-Azhar University on the dignity of children in the online world and the protection of children from violence and harmful practices. In addition, 18 training courses on the theme of eliminating violence against children were run between 2016 and 2018 for students and imams throughout the country. The courses, run in cooperation with UNICEF, aimed to raise awareness about instances of violence against children, identify its causes and explore ways to prevent it.

89. As regards recommendations 48 and 49, the Council has made ongoing efforts to create an infrastructure for the collection of statistics and data, and to develop a statistical methodology in all areas relating to children.

90. As regards recommendations 50, 59 and 88, the Government continues to cooperate with civil society organizations to address and prevent different forms of violence against children, also with a view to implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children

(e) Harmful practices

(i) Female genital mutilation (known in the media as female circumcision)

91. The various forms of this harmful practice are duly criminalized in under Egyptian law. The Government also intervenes with a number of different activities and measures aimed at combating the phenomenon, reducing its incidence and spreading awareness about the medical and psychological perils it entails, as follows:

- Act No. 78 of 2016 was promulgated to increase the penalties prescribed under article 242 bis of the Criminal Code and to add article 242 bis (a), the goal being to tackle this offence and to increase the scope for criminalization. Under those provisions, persons responsible for practising female circumcision can be liable to rigorous imprisonment if the victim dies or suffers a disability, while persons who request an act of female circumcision that then effectively takes place also face imprisonment;
- The Prosecutor General issued circular No. 14 of 2016, giving instructions to members of the Public Prosecution Service on how to investigate crimes of female genital mutilation;
- The National Council for Population published its national strategy to combat female genital mutilation 2016–2020 while, in 2015, the National Council for Women issued a national strategy to combat violence against women, which also seeks to counter female genital mutilation as one form of violence against women and girls. In 2018, the Council issued a policy paper on the elimination of female genital mutilation;
- Under a 2017 decree of the Minister of Health, all health-care facilities – including State-run, charitable and private facilities – that take in cases of female circumcision are required to report them to the police;

- Data from the 2014 population survey showed a decrease in the practice of female circumcision. In fact, the incidence of female genital mutilation in girls aged between 0 and 17 decreased from 24 per cent in 2008 to 18 per cent, and the percentage of women aged between 15 and 49 who support the continuation of the practice decreased from 62 per cent in 2008 to 58 per cent in 2008;
- In February 2017, the National Council for Population launched a “Doctors against female genital mutilation” initiative, as part of the national family planning and anti-female circumcision programme. Its purpose was to raise awareness among doctors and medical students about female genital mutilation from a medical, social, religious and legal perspective;
- In 2017, the Supreme Council of Universities gave its approval to the inclusion of an educational module against circumcision as part of the curriculum of Egyptian medical schools and other medical training courses, including for nurses and female rural pioneers;
- The website “*kefaya khatan*” was launched in 2017 as part of the “*kefaya khatan banat*” campaign. The website covers all the steps taken as part of the national strategy to combat female genital mutilation being run by the National Council for Population, which cooperates with more than 300 civil society groups in governorates and villages;
- Between 2009 and 2014, a number of workshops and training courses on circumcision were organized for members of medical teams (doctors and nurses); civil associations; female rural pioneers; teachers and supervisors; a number of print, radio and television journalists; and clerics;
- A national committee for the elimination of female genital mutilation was formed and began its duties in May 2019 with members representing all relevant stakeholders, including ministries, government agencies, civil society, development partners, Al-Azhar University and the Church. As part of its activities, the committee has launched a campaign under the slogan: “Protect her from circumcision” to coincide with the National Day for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, which falls on 14 June each year. In 2019, the campaign reached 4,101,346 beneficiaries;
- The Council organized an African regional conference on eliminating child marriage and female genital mutilation. The conference, which was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic and in partnership with United Nations and civil society organizations, took place in Cairo in June 2019.

92. As regards recommendations 68 and 69, the steps detailed above, particularly the legal amendments that criminalize the practice of female genital mutilation, have engendered a serious response to this phenomenon, raised awareness about its dangers and led to a reduction in the number of women and girls affected by it. The continuation of those efforts should serve to dispel the Committee’s concerns.

(ii) Child marriage

93. The registration of marriage contracts concerning persons under the age of 18 is forbidden under the Civil Status Code (art. 31 bis). Persons who falsely claim before the competent authorities that one of the spouses has reached the age legally prescribed to conclude a contract of marriage are liable to imprisonment or a fine, if a marriage contract is then concluded on the basis of the statements they make or the documents they produce. Persons who are legally competent to conclude a marriage contract and do so knowing that one of the spouses has not reached the legally prescribed age are liable to the same penalty (art. 227 of the Criminal Code).

94. Provision is made for the criminalization of child marriage if it takes place as a consequence of the abuse of parental authority or the promise of a sum of money or the concession of privileges to gain the consent of a person with authority over a girl. The relevant provisions are set forth in detail in articles 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010, as amended.

95. Egypt withdrew its reservation to article 21 (2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which prohibits child marriage, and it set the minimum marriageable age at 18 under Presidential Decree No. 75 of 2015.

96. Reference is made in this connection to the information about criminalization contained in the present report. The Government has also rolled out a raft of measures to combat child marriage, including cooperation with the National Council for Population on a 2015 national strategy to reduce such marriages. In 2018, moreover, the Council opened a child marriage unit which has a helpline and protection committees to monitor cases of child marriage and has prepared a policy paper aimed at eliminating the phenomenon.

97. Between 2009 and 2019, the Child Helpline received 1,439 reports of child marriage nationwide. In cooperation with the Public Prosecution Service and protection committees those marriages were broken off and a pledge extracted from the guardian not to conclude the marriage until after the person concerned had reached the legal age.

98. As regards recommendations 32, 33, 70 and 71, the Government is cooperating with the Council to continue and increase the effectiveness of the measures described above.

(f) Sexual exploitation and abuse of children

99. The State's obligation to ensure the welfare of children and to protect them from all forms of violence, ill-treatment, abuse and sexual and commercial exploitation is set forth in article 80 of the Constitution. Article 116 bis (a) of the Children's Code, as amended, envisages penalties for anyone who exploits or engages children in pornographic or sexually exploitative acts or who uses computers and the Internet to disseminate pornography involving the exploitation of children in prostitution.

100. Cybercrime Act No. 175 of 2018 includes provisions intended to protect children from sexual exploitation through modern communications media.

101. The Children's Code and the Criminal Code contain a body of provisions to penalize acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, including rape, female abduction, circumcision, abortion, obscene acts in private and sexual harassment.

102. Mention may be made of the following measures that the Government has taken in this connection:

- The Government launched a strategy to eliminate violence against children, thanks to cooperation between ministries and civil society;
- The National Commission for the Safe Use of the Internet has issued its first guide entitled: "Together for a Safe Internet", which aims to provide guidance and advice to families and other groups about how to protect children on the Internet;
- The National Council for Women and the Ministry of the Interior signed a protocol in 2013 to cooperate in combating violence against girls and to develop up-to-date mechanisms to protect girls and to provide them with legal assistance;
- Civil society participates in the fight against harassment. In that connection, a campaign has been launched that includes educational materials for children in schools, television programmes aimed at parents and training for schools, parents and grandparents, with a view to eliminating sexual harassment and abuse. The purpose is to enable children, families and societal institutions to recognize sexual abuse and learn how to prevent and protect against it;
- The Peace Centre for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Victims of Exploitation and Violence has been established, thanks to cooperation between the "Face" Organization, IOM, the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of the Interior.

103. As regards recommendations 82 and 83, governmental and national mechanisms are continuing to work to increase the effectiveness of protection for children and women, to promote their rights and to counter and curb the aforementioned practices.

VI. Family environment and alternative care

(a) Family environment and parental guidance

104. The family founded in religion, morals and patriotism is enshrined in article 10 of the Constitution as the cornerstone of society, and the State must undertake to ensure its cohesion and stability and consolidate its values. The State, moreover, is to respect the rights and duties of parents and it works, through governmental and non-governmental institutions, to ensure the sound upbringing and care of children and to guide parents in correct childrearing methods and interaction with their children, irrespective of whether or not they have disabilities.

105. Measures taken to support families and guide parents:

- The Ministry of Social Solidarity provides services intended to strengthen the family as a unit, via family counselling offices, shelters and nurseries. The purpose is to disseminate awareness in society about the importance of families, avoid marital disputes, assist personal status courts in examining the causes of such disputes and propose appropriate solutions. The Ministry also carries out family-related research and publishes the results. As of 2016, there were 171 family counselling offices, and the number of beneficiaries had reached 15,700;
- The Council set up a child-friendly psychological counselling room in 2014 to provide psychosocial support in cases referred via the helpline. As of December 2019, 16,423 cases had been referred;
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity provides direct support to persons who are indigent, such as a social security allowance and a child allowance.

(b) Parents' shared responsibilities

106. Family responsibilities are shared between the parents. In the event of a separation, the custody of minors devolves to the mother (guardianship of person), who has the authority to discipline, direct, educate and undertake any other matters related to the child, in accordance with article 54 of the Children's Code.

107. A *khul'* divorce ruling does not entail any derogation from the rights of the children, although the woman does forgo her financial rights in order to terminate a marital relationship without the husband's consent and to compensate the husband for his outlay in that regard. The father remains responsible for the maintenance of his children. These matters are regulated by Act No. 1 of 2000, which concerns procedures for legal action in civil status cases.

(c) Separation from parents

108. Children have a natural right to live and develop in safety with their parents, and the law envisages comprehensive protection for them and states that they are not to be removed from their family environment. In the case of children deprived of their parents, guardianship passes according to the sequence set forth above. The Children's Code defines cases in which children are at risk, and child protection committees have been set up at governorate level to monitor cases in which the risk level is such that the committee can report the matter to the competent prosecutors. Prosecutors can then issue a warning to the guardian of the child concerned and, if the risk persists, can ask the courts to place the infant in a social care institution (arts. 96 to 99 bis of the Children's Code).

(d) Family unity

109. The rights of movement, residence and migration are guaranteed under the Constitution. No citizen may be expelled from or prevented from returning to national

territory (art. 62 of the Constitution). The Government makes every effort to ensure the unity of the family in several fields. These include:

- Children who are irregular (unaccompanied) migrants have the right to apply to the Egyptian embassy in the country of destination to request voluntary repatriation. Under Act No. 82 of 2016 to combat irregular migration and migrant smuggling, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood is responsible for unaccompanied children who have no legal representative and no one to appear on their behalf before the courts. The Act envisages penalties for the crime of migrant smuggling, attempted migrant smuggling or mediation in migrant smuggling. These penalties are increased in a number of circumstances, including if the lives of the smuggled persons are endangered, if they suffer inhuman treatment, if the smuggled migrants are women or children, or if they lack capacity or have disabilities (art. 3). Reference is also made to other sections of the present report that address child protection in the context of migrant smuggling.

Family disputes

110. Act No. 1 of 2000, which concerns procedures for legal action in civil status cases, and Act No. 10 of 2004 regulate all matters relating to family disputes of various kinds. A special prosecution office dealing with family matters has been set up, which deals ex officio with cases and appeals and is responsible for preparing civil cases so that they can be adjudicated promptly. Courts hold their sitting in camera so as to protect family-related matters. Moreover, when handing down rulings affecting children, the courts take due account of the psychological condition and best interests of the child concerned. The second of the two aforementioned Acts includes provision for family dispute resolution bureaux, which offer their services free of charge.

111. The Public Prosecution Service is to issue temporary decrees to address disputes regarding the home in which child custody is to be exercised, in line with article 18 ter of Act No. 25 of 1929 (art. 70 of Act No. 1 of 2000).

(e) Securing child maintenance (art. 27 (4))

112. The law envisages the creation of a family insurance system, underwritten by the Family Insurance Fund. This serves to guarantee the enforcement of rulings granting payment to divorced wives and children, if the convicted party fails to pay.

113. Legislators have established deterrent penalties that include imprisonment for up to 1 year or the payment of a fine of LE 500 for anyone who fails to make court-ordered payments. As a way of encouraging payment, the law provides for an immediate suspension of the penalty as soon as the sum is duly disbursed (art. 293 of the Criminal Code).

114. Protection committees undertake case studies to assist family courts and the police to enforce payment rulings in such a way as to ensure the best interests of the child.

115. As regard recommendations 51 and 52, the outstanding efforts the Government has made, the legislation it has passed, and the statistics compiled should serve to dispel the Committee's concerns.

(f) Children deprived of a family environment, and alternative care (arts. 20 and 21)

116. The State's obligation to ensure children's right to family care or to alternative care is enshrined in article 80 of the Constitution. The State seeks to achieve the best interests of children in all the actions it takes that affect them. The Children's Code and its implementing regulations envisage a system of alternative family care whereby children of unknown parentage are looked after by being placed with a family that compensates for the loss of their natural family, once it has been verified that the foster family offers the requisite conditions. The Supreme Committee for Alternative Families sends specialists to create a suitable family

environment for children; it also follows up on the families and undertakes awareness-raising activities in the form of educational and training programmes.

117. Act No. 6 of 2015 amends certain provisions of the Children's Code and allows foster families to care for children who were abandoned at birth, starting from the age of "3 months" rather than "2 years". This contributes to the proper and healthy physical and cognitive development of the children concerned.

118. Decree No. 178 of 2016 of the Prime Minister, which amends the implementing regulations of the Children's Code, replaces the phrase "from birth" with the phrase "who are aged over 3 months", which appears in articles 85 and 87 of those regulations, the purpose being to achieve the best interests of the child, particularly foundlings and those of unknown parentage. The text of articles 89, 90, 99 and 102 of the implementing regulations was also replaced by new text, changing the conditions whereby a child can be given into the custody of a foster family. The condition whereby the spouses must have been married for at least five years has been changed to a minimum of three years; and that requirement is waived altogether if one of the two species is shown to be permanently infertile. The requirement that each spouse be at least 25 and not more than 55 has been replaced by a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 60. The age of widows, divorced women and unmarried women who may have custody of children was changed from "at least 45 years of age" to "not less than 30 years of age" if the Committee deems them to be competent.

119. Article 102 of the implementing regulations of the Children's Code has been amended so that social workers now visit foster families "every three months" rather than "every month". Moreover, two articles have been added to the regulations: article 91 bis, which lays down the conditions whereby a child may travel with the foster family (obtaining written consent, registering with the diplomatic mission in the country to which the family travels and notifying any new developments to the Family and Child Department); and article 94 bis, which concerns the formation of the Supreme Committee for Foster Families by decree of the Minister of Social Solidarity.

120. Eager to provide alternative care services for children, the State has taken the following measures:

- Ensuring the welfare of children deprived⁵ of family care through institutions and shelters.⁶ As of 2016, there were 471 institutional homes benefiting 9,739 children and 86 shelters benefiting 1,451 children;
- Social supervision offices inside social welfare institutions oversee the measures ordered by the courts and provide services to persons after they have left the institutions. The offices also undertake research into the social environment of the children who are to appear in court and who have not been placed in an observation home. In addition, they monitor the enforcement of measures ordered by the courts and draft a report for the court concerned, accompanied by an expert opinion as to whether the measures should be lifted, extended or replaced with other measures. Care services continue to be provided, even once the measures have ceased, and persons enrolled in education are given financial assistance, the aim being to improve the living conditions of the target group (children deprived of family care). The number of children cared for by foster families increased from 5,705 in 2009 to 12,000 in 2017;
- In 2014, the Ministry issued model regulations and quality standards for social welfare institutions for children deprived of family care. Also in 2014, the 16439 hotline was opened to receive complaints concerning care homes, and more than 333 care homes in several different governorates underwent an assessment.

⁵ The persons targeted by these initiatives are children at risk who are to appear before the juvenile courts and children against whom a court sentence has been imposed, to be enforced in a natural environment until they reach the age of 18.

⁶ Residential institutions offer shelter, guidance and welfare for children aged between 6 and 18 who have been deprived of family care due to the death of their parents or family breakdown.

(g) Periodic review of the placement of a child (art. 25)

121. The Children's Code envisages a system for the periodic review of the placement of children. The protection committees regularly follow up on the procedures used to implement the measures imposed, the outcome of that implementation and the possibility of changing the measures or lifting them in such a way as to ensure that the child concerned remains, to the extent possible, in the family environment. Children, in fact, are not to be removed from that environment save as a last resort and are to be returned to it as soon as possible, taking account of their best interests (art. 99 bis (a) of the Children's Code).

122. Prosecutors and judges at juvenile courts conduct visits to verify that prisons and social care homes are abiding by their legal obligations. The National Council for Human Rights also conducts visits to verify the extent to which fundamental children's rights safeguards are in place.

123. In the course of 2019, the Public Prosecution Service inspected 57 homes and children's care institutions housing 1,820 children nationwide.

124. As regards recommendations 53 and 54, the efforts made by the State and the statistics provided illustrate the role the Government is playing to promote foster families and the institutions that support them, in order to protect children and advance their best interests.

(h) Moving children abroad illegally and failing to return them

125. The Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure prohibit the abduction of children by a family member and the failure to abide by an order to hand over an infant (art. 292), even if these acts are perpetrated without deception or coercion. Offenders are liable to a term of imprisonment of up to 1 year.

126. Act No. 5 of 2018 amends articles 283, 289 and 290 of the Criminal Code to broaden the scope for criminalization and to address cases of abduction without distinction, thus ensuring that the penalty for child abduction is the same – rigorous imprisonment – irrespective of the child's gender. The sentence can be increased to life imprisonment or even death if the offence is accompanied by sexual intercourse with the abductee or by indecent assault.

(i) Measures to protect the children of female inmates and children who live with their mothers in correction and rehabilitation centres

127. The Prisons Act envisages a legal system that takes due account of a child's best interests, even while still a fetus in the womb of an incarcerated woman. Indeed, the Act stipulates that the mother must be provided with the necessary health care, food and appropriate clothing. Moreover, female inmates have the right to keep their children with them until they reach the age of 4. If the woman does not wish the child to remain with her or if the child reaches that age, the child is handed over to the person who has the right of legal guardianship. If that person refuses or if there is no one to take care of the child, the child is placed in a care home and the incarcerated mother is informed of the child's whereabouts and permitted to see her offspring periodically (art. 20). State and university medical facilities are required to admit inmates referred to them for treatment from correction and rehabilitation centres (art. 33 bis (a)).

128. The community protection department issues birth certificates for children born inside correction and rehabilitation centres. In order to avoid stigmatization, the certificates give no indication of the place of birth. The children are provided with health care, vaccinations and periodic tests as well as with intensive care as required or referral to specialized hospitals.

- In 2013, the Council signed an agreement to cooperate with the Ministry of the Interior in the provision of support to imprisoned mothers and their children.

129. The number of visits children in external institutions can make to their mothers has been increased from one per month to two per month. In May 2019, the President of the

Republic launched a “prisons without debtors” initiative which, thanks to funding of LE 30 million via the Tahya Misr Fund, has led to the release of all female debtors. In all, the debts of more than 6,000 debtors have been settled.

VII. Disability and basic care and health services

(a) Right to survival, growth, health, health services and primary care

130. Under the Constitution, the State is required to achieve a balance between population growth rates and available resources, and to invest in and enhance human energies (art. 41). Every citizen, moreover, has the right to health and to integral health care, and the State undertakes to maintain and preserve public health facilities, to improve their effectiveness and to ensure their just geographical distribution. The State undertakes, furthermore, to allocate a portion of government spending to health and to the establishment of a comprehensive health-care system that covers all Egyptians and treats all maladies. Citizens’ contributions to the system, and any exemption from such contributions, are to be regulated by law on the basis of income. The State is likewise to improve conditions for doctors, nurses’ associations and other health-sector workers, and it oversees all health-care facilities and health-related products, materials and publicity. The State is also to encourage the involvement of the private and charity sectors in the delivery of health-care services. The Children’s Code, as amended, also addresses the subject of health care as it concerns children, in terms of vaccination, immunization, health cards and nutrition (arts. 25–30).

- The State has taken several significant steps to ensure that all Egyptians have health insurance coverage. At the same time, it strives to ensure fairness and the progressive financing of health care in accordance with the Egypt Vision 2030 strategy.
- The Ministry of Health has cooperated with the National Nutrition Institute and UNICEF on a national nutritional programme for children, the provision of iron supplements and folic acid to pregnant women to combat iron deficiency anaemia and reduce birth defects in the nervous system of newborn infants and the supply of vitamin A capsules to mothers in the first four weeks after childbirth.

The Government has made efforts to improve early childcare and health insurance

131. The Ministry of Health provides health care for all children under the age of 5. This has led to a decrease in child mortality from 28 per 1,000 live births in 2008 to 22 per 1,000 live births in 2017.

132. The budget allocated to reducing child mortality due to diarrhoea or pneumonia was increased from 3,200 million in 2015 to 7,200 million in 2017.⁷ (note 62 (a)).

133. Children under the age of 6 have been included in the health insurance system, whereas before the system did not admit children before the age of enrolment in basic education.

134. The number of primary health care facilities increased from 4,805 in 2008 to 5,414 in 2018, with 80 per cent of the total (4,318) being in rural areas. The number of doctors was 900.71 in 2015, as compared to 491.51 in 2008. Also in 2015, there were 267.93 hospital beds. By 2013, there were 2,500 family health units, as compared to 1,658 in 2008.

135. Maternal mortality fell to 43.6 per 100,000 live births in 2017 as did miscarriages among newly pregnant women, which stood at 9.8 per cent in 2014. In 2014, 91.5 per cent of childbirths took place with the assistance of a medical provider and 86.7 per cent in a health-care facility, while 75.8 per cent of women were inoculated against tetanus.

⁷ Deaths of children under 5 due to diarrhoea fell from 9.7 per 1,000 live births in 1995 to 1.1 per 1,000 live births in 2017, while deaths of children under 5 due to pneumonia fell from 12 per 1,000 live births in 1995 to 5.9 per 1,000 live births in 2017.

Early childcare

136. The State has adopted a programme to encourage and protect breastfeeding and a mother- and child-friendly hospitals initiative, and it has acted to rationalize the use of baby formula milk. As of 2014, 93.3 per cent of infants aged between 0 and 6 months were breastfed. Of them, only 39.7 per cent were exclusively breastfed.

137. Egypt is moving towards achieving vaccination rates of up to 100 per cent.⁸

Health insurance

138. The Universal Health Insurance Act was issued in January 2018. Under the Act, the health insurance umbrella will gradually cover all citizens, with the State bearing the costs for persons unable to do so for themselves.

139. Health insurance services within schools focus on preventive health. As regards recommendations 62 and 63, the Government is continuing to take significant action to protect and promote children's health-related rights.

Adolescent health

140. Indicators emerging from a survey of young people conducted in 2009 and in 2014 show that the percentage of children aged between 13 and 18 who suffered an accident or injury during the year preceding the survey fell from 17.1 per cent in 2009 to 14.2 per cent in 2014. Moreover, the proportion of children aged between 15 and 18 suffering from a respiratory disorder fell by more than half, from 15.7 per cent in 2009 to 6.9 per cent in 2014. The rate of child marriage also fell, from 7.4 per cent in 2008 to 5.7 per cent in 2014. The indicators also reflect nutritional patterns among adolescents, showing a decrease in 2014 with respect to 2009 in the percentage of children aged between 13 and 18 who do not consume soft drinks or eat fast food.

141. The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Egyptian Family Health Society, issued a pre-university-level health education document, which contained certain health awareness principles to be included in school curricula and activities in 2014.

142. As regards recommendations 64 and 65, the initiatives described above well illustrate the progress made towards protecting and promoting health care for adolescents.

Cooperation with the United Nations system

United Nations Population Fund

143. Since July 2014, the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has established 12 health centres for young persons and adolescents in a number of governorates. The initiative, which aims to improve the health of that category and to limit the negative impact of certain high-risk forms of behaviour, envisages workshops for service providers, a guide to health services for young people and adolescents, and a manual of diagnostic and treatment procedures.

144. The range of the "reproductive health" programme, which is implemented in cooperation with UNFPA and others, has been expanded from 10 to 18 governorates. Through the programme, more than 1,295 seminars were convened between 2008 and 2015, to teach 29,050 students of both sexes about reproductive health, child marriage, customary marriage, consanguineous marriage and the prevention and treatment of AIDS. Several recreational summer camps were organized for around 600 students and 150 mobile psychiatric clinics were set up. In addition, 250 panel discussions and a number of meetings and workshops were held to educate students' parents – 6,250 in all – about issues associated with adolescence. A website on adolescent health was launched in 2011 in coordination with

⁸ According to 2014 statistics, around 92 per cent of children in the age group 18–29 months have been vaccinated against all major diseases; 99.1 per cent have been vaccinated against tuberculosis; around 97 per cent have received the recommended three doses of the triple vaccination and polio; 95.8 per cent have been vaccinated for measles, and 94.9 per cent have received all three doses of the hepatitis B vaccine.

the Kenana Community/Yom Jadid portal, containing more than 400 articles, pictures and academic materials related to adolescent issues.

UNICEF

145. UNICEF contributes to the provision of basic health services for children at units in several governorates. It does so via its Integrated Perinatal and Child Health and Nutrition programme, information systems, a breastfeeding programme and educational messaging. UNICEF also supports a number of maternity hospitals, helping them to implement international standards for child-friendly hospitals and to apply the Integrated Perinatal and Child Health and Nutrition programme.

146. As regards recommendations 64 and 65, the initiatives described above well illustrate the progress made towards protecting and promoting health care for adolescents.

(b) Children with disabilities (art. 23)

147. Protection and promotion for the rights of children with disabilities is guaranteed under the Constitution, which also envisages their habilitation and integration into society, the adaptation of public facilities and the public environment, and the pursuit of children's best interest in all matters that concern them (arts. 80 and 81).

148. Persons with Disabilities Act No. 10 of 2018 envisages obligations and principles that the State is required to uphold in pursuit of the best interests of children with disabilities. The State must, then, respect the evolving capacities of such children, their right to maintain their identity and to express their opinions freely on all matters that affect them. Due regard is to be paid to those opinions, depending on the age and maturity of the children concerned, on an equal footing with their peers. In addition, children with disabilities are to be provided with information and assistance in how to exercise that right, as appropriate to their disability and their age. Such children, moreover, are to be encouraged to participate in the formulation of policies and programmes on issues that affect them. The Act lays particular emphasis on the health and education of children with disabilities, and on their involvement in cultural, mediatic, sporting and recreational activities, and it envisions an upgrading of services to facilitate their access to tourist sites as well as the creation of special artistic festivals for them.

Measures put in place by the State to protect and promote the rights and freedoms of children with disabilities and their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms, and steps taken to achieve their best interests

149. The rights of children with disabilities have been included in all aspects of the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood 2018–2030.

150. The Minister of Social Solidarity issued Decree No. 29 of 2008 under which families with one or more children with intellectual disabilities receive a monthly cash allowance.

151. A number of community-based rehabilitation projects have been implemented; therapeutic services (both pharmaceutical and surgical) have been made available, children have been given habilitation sessions and assistive devices have been provided through the State-funded treatment system.

152. The implementing regulations of the Children's Code stipulate that medical examinations on children should include the necessary analyses; in particular an analysis of the thyroid gland during the first week of birth to detect intellectual disability or genetic metabolic disfunctions. Children with disabilities are then admitted to special education schools and classes.

153. Children with disabilities are integrated into the summer programmes of public libraries. There are specialized libraries such as the Taha Hussein Library for the Blind in Cairo and another inside the Bibliotheca Alexandrina equipped with the latest modern technologies.

154. Under Decree No. 224 of 2015 of the Minister of Education concerning accident insurance for students, students in special education one-room schools or in girl-friendly schools, persons who have overcome illiteracy and persons with disabilities are exempted from the insurance premiums.

155. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Solidarity cooperated with a civil society organization to establish the first kindergarten for hearing impaired children in Luxor.

156. The Ministry of Communications has provided 130 tablet devices to students with hearing, visual and intellectual disabilities in Ghardaqa. The tablets have been equipped with assistive, educational and recreational software as a way of using technology to help persons with disabilities progress in their education. Training on the use of the tablets has also been provided.

157. Special committees for the education of persons with disabilities have been created, while students with disabilities receive educational care at special education schools. Barriers facing students with dual disabilities, cerebral palsy or Down syndrome have been removed by applying medical procedures just once – when the student concerned first enrolls in school – rather than repeating the procedures annually.

Raising awareness about the rights of children with disabilities

158. In this connection, a number of activities took place in 2018, including the following:

- A segment dedicated to persons with disabilities was included as part of the World Youth Forum, attended by more than 5,000 young people of both sexes, including some with disabilities, from different countries of the world;
- The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated under the theme of “Diversly able”;
- Rahma Khaled was appointed as the first female presenter with disabilities;
- Through the helpline, free complementary services have been provided to children with disabilities with a view to educating families about issues affecting such children; in addition, a programme had been launched in cooperation with UNICEF to run awareness-raising campaigns about the “HAYAT Project” while, in cooperation with the European Union, campaigns are being rolled out in several governorates to raise community awareness about the importance of integrating persons with disabilities;
- A network of civil associations had been formed to provide medical counselling and guidance on information technology to children with disabilities and their families, at the same time, a programme has been run on the constitutional rights of children, especially those with disabilities.

Prevention and habilitation services

- A programme for the early detection of thyroid hormone deficiency has been launched as one of a number of initiatives intended to reduce intellectual disability among newborns; around 94 per cent of newborn infants were screened under the programme nationwide in 2017;
- Additional tests for diseases that cause intellectual disability are conducted, such as metabolic disfunctions and phenylketonuria, as well as endocrine diseases like adrenal hyperplasia. Affected children are kept under observation and given the nutrients they require to avoid intellectual disability;
- Two hundred and sixty-eight centres have been opened in different governorates with clinics that run early screening programmes for hearing disabilities, affected children are provided with nutritional products that are fully subsidized and distributed by the Ministry;
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity has a comprehensive system of habilitation services for children with disabilities; it issues cards that identify the holders and give them access to a large range of services; the Ministry has also opened a unit to develop the

communication skills of persons with disabilities and it provides a monthly allowance to students who are blind;

- Children with disabilities under the age of 8 are provided with medical and psychiatric care inside kindergartens; such children are offered early testing and behavioural modification and well as cultural, artistic, sports and recreational programmes;
- Fees for initial medical examinations of children with disabilities have been reduced by around 40 per cent to LE 25, which covers all tests and analyses; medical examinations are provided by all medical committees.

Assistive and therapeutic services

- In 2014, 7,692 assistive devices were distributed to children at a cost of LE 2,162,020, while 41,008 devices were provided for students at a cost of LE 3,054,962.

159. As regards recommendations 61 and 62, Persons with Disabilities Act No. 10 of 2018 address all aspects and forms of disability, and it contains a precise definition, which is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, the efforts made by the Government, in coordination with other stakeholders and civil society organizations, demonstrate the tangible progress that has been made in the health, educational and habilitation services that help to protect and promote the rights of children with disabilities and achieve their best interests.

(c) Standard of living

160. In 2015/16, the poverty rate was 27.8 per cent in Egypt as a whole, with a maximum of 36.1 per cent in the rural areas of Upper Egypt. The Government has rolled out a body of measures to address this state of affairs, including:

- Tackling the problem of unemployment by providing job opportunities for young graduates, notably through a project to employ young graduates in the field of mobile marketing outlets and services;
- The Informal Settlements Development Fund dedicates particular attention to a number of health, social, educational and cultural factors affecting to children in such settlements. Budget allocations for the development of the settlements have been increased.⁹ A national project for the development of 250 villages is part of an initiative aimed at the economic empowerment of women; in that context, a project for the economic empowerment of female breadwinners in Manshiyat Naser has been rolled out; it involves opening new sales outlets for women and supplying them with refrigerators, food products, drinks and other items necessary to render the outlets operational.

Water and sanitation

- Twenty-three sanitation projects were implemented in the financial year 2015/16. They affected 112 villages at a cost of LE 4.5 billion. A number of sanitation projects were also rolled out in the financial year 2016/17, at a cost of LE 6.4 billion;
- UNICEF has cooperated with the Holding Company for Water and Waste Water, other water companies at the governorate level and a civil society organization to launch the “Water for life” initiative, which aims to provide safe water to disadvantaged families in rural areas in four governorates of Upper Egypt. In all, 14,200 families have been provided with running water. The programme also uses a revolving fund mechanism to provide sewerage connections in the governorate of Sohag, thanks to which 40 households have been connected to the public sewage

⁹ LE 600 million was allocated from the State budget in 2014/15 for the development of informal settlements while, in the budget of 2015/16, the allocation for the development of informal settlements reached LE 1.2 billion; i.e., a 100 per cent increase. In 2016/17, the cost of developing informal settlements reached LE 3.5 billion (a 300 per cent increase) (citizen budget 2017/18). In the years 2016 and 2017, development work was carried out in 57 insecure areas in different governorates.

network. Forty-three persons from water companies and local councils in the governorate of Al-Minya have received training how to administer and maintain the renewable fund mechanism;

- The Ministry of Social Solidarity rolled out its “Decent housing” initiative in 2017. The initiative aims to improve sanitary and environmental conditions for poor families registered in the “Solidarity and Dignity” database through the provision of sanitation and clean drinking water, as well as infrastructural improvements and renovations to make their homes safe and decent places to live. Total funding amounted to LE 500 million.

161. As regards recommendations 72 and 73, the efforts made by the Government, as described above, have led to a progressive and tangible improvement of services and facilities for the protection and promotion of children’s rights and welfare.

(d) Social security and childcare services and facilities

162. The State takes measures to ensure that citizens, including children, are covered by social security. Those measures include the following:

- Food subsidies through ration cards and bread allowances;¹⁰
- Social security allowances are paid out to orphans, widows, divorced women, incapacitated persons and the families of persons who have been imprisoned for 3 years or more;
- Child allowances: a total of LE 70 million was allocated in the 2017/18 budget, which has benefited 55,000 recipients;
- Monthly social assistance is given to pregnant women, infants, persons who are ill, families without a breadwinner, families of persons who have been imprisoned for between 2 months and 10 years and children with intellectual disabilities;
- Disaster and calamity assistance is provided in the event of death or serious injury, while other forms of assistance are available in the event of loss of life and property;
- The first phase of the “Solidarity and Dignity” programme¹¹ was run in 2016 in the poorest areas of three governorates. The total amount disbursed under the programme, from its inception until November 2015, was LE 301,175, which benefited around 166,000 families;
- Between 2006 and 2011, 3,249,975 newborns were added to the subsidized ration card system. Eight million newborns were added in 2018. Under the draft budget for 2016/17, allocations to subsidize food commodities rose to LE 41.1 million, as compared to LE 37.7 million in 2015/16.

VIII. Education, leisure and cultural activities

(a) Right to education and to professional and vocational training

163. The Constitution stipulates that education is a right for all citizens. The goal of education is to build the Egyptian character and preserve national identity, and the State

¹⁰ In 2015/16, 88.6 per cent of all Egyptian households benefited from the ration-card system. In 2017, the Government increased per capita support under the ration cards by 140 per cent, from LE 21 to LE 50 (about \$2.8) per month.

¹¹ The “Solidarity” programme is aimed at families with children aged 0–18 who are covered under primary health care programmes for children and mothers in State-run health centres and units, and whose children are enrolled in schools with an attendance rate of not less than 80 per cent. The “Dignity” programme is intended for groups who are unable to undertake productive work, such as older persons (65 and over), persons with a disability that prevents them from working and orphans who have lost both parents or who have lost their father and whose mother has remarried.

undertakes to ensure that those goals are reflected in school curricula and in the mechanisms of education, which is to be delivered in line with global quality standards (art. 19). Education is compulsory until the end of the secondary level or its equivalent, and the State guarantees its availability free of charge at all levels in State educational institutions, in accordance with the law.

164. The Ministry of Education provides vocational education and training as a means of preparing and qualifying people for jobs that require non-academic manual and practical activities and that are closely related to a particular profession or craft. The Ministry of the Workforce offers the following vocational education programmes:

- A vocational coaching programme that is intended to provide persons who dropped out of basic education with training in the professional skills required by the labour market. A total of 2,650 persons enrolled in the programme between 2009/10 and 2014/15;
- A basic training programme that is aimed at children who have passed (or failed) their middle-school certificate, who are trained in technical skills required by the labour market. A total of 271 persons have enrolled in this programme;
- A vocational apprenticeship programme seeks to recruit young apprentices for posts in both public- and private-sector facilities. A total of 18,860 persons enrolled in the programme between 2009/10 and 2014/15.

Providing all children with the opportunity to enrol in different stages of education

165. As a percentage of total expenditure on education, financial allocations for pre-university education at all levels increased from 66.7 per cent in 2012/13 to 69.6 per cent in 2016/17.

166. The country has made significant progress in expanding educational opportunities at the pre-university level. This has been achieved thanks to a national school-building programme and the offer of different types of flexible education such as one-room schools, girls' schools run by the Ministry of Education and training institutions that, although not part of the Ministry of Education or Al-Azhar, nonetheless provide systematic and formal education.

Early childhood development

167. The Government expanded its kindergarten programme so that, by 2015/16, there was a total of 35,625 kindergartens. Overall enrolment rates for kindergarten education reached around 33.2 per cent in 2015/16, as compared to around 24 per cent in 2009/10. The Ministry of Social Solidarity is currently implementing its "Childhood development" project, with funding of LE 250 million, which aims to deliver high-quality education to children in the 4–6 age bracket, in cooperation with other ministries and stakeholders.

Increasing overall enrolment rates in kindergarten

168. The Government rolled out a project for improving early childhood education in the period 2005–2014. The project, which involved the Ministry of Education and the World Bank, aimed to provide quality education with a view to improving the readiness of children – particularly disadvantaged children – to attend school. This was achieved by creating 820 kindergarten classrooms, renewing and repairing 523 existing kindergartens belonging to charitable groups, supplying educational materials to 1,762 kindergartens and training 35,000 teachers on national standards and the new kindergarten curriculum. Steps were also taken to encourage families to enrol their children in kindergarten, in which regard certain governorates in poor and marginalized areas acted to reduce school fees.

169. The low gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education is due to a number of challenges, such as limited awareness among parents about the importance of that stage of schooling for their children and a lack of kindergarten teachers particularly those with specialized university-level qualifications. The Ministry of Education is seeking to address this issue in its strategic plan 2014–2030.

Narrowing the educational gap between children in urban and rural areas

170. Indicators show that the percentage of children aged between 4 and 17 who have not enrolled in any stage of pre-university education is 10.3 per cent and 11.8 per cent in rural and urban areas, respectively. Educational services provided to students in rural and urban areas have improved somewhat, with an increase in the number of schools, improvements in the enrolment rate for girls, which reached more than 47 per cent, and the absence of any significant difference in class size between urban and rural areas at all educational levels.

Efforts made by the State to continue to provide free education

171. Ministerial Decrees Nos. 349 and 366 of 2015, which set the school fees for 2015/16, envisage the possibility of paying in instalments at all levels of schooling. They also include provision for exemptions for students in special schools or in community education, the children of female heads of household or divorced women, the children of persons who are blind, families who benefit from social security allowances, children whose father has died and children of persons who have recently been released from prison and are unable to pay the fees. The exemption is granted following a study into the social circumstances of the child concerned.

Raising enrolment and reducing dropout in basic education

172. The State – through the Ministry of Education or the Al-Azhar institutes – provides basic education (primary and middle school) for every child. Net enrolment rates in primary and middle school stood at 94.2 per cent and 82.5 per cent, respectively, in 2016/17.

Achieving full capacity in basic education

173. A national database of persons who have dropped out of school has been created.

174. A number of programmes have been implemented to reduce the dropout rate in primary education. These take the form of workshops and training courses for those responsible for the educational process. They also focus on motivating children by using active learning methods in the classroom, and on training on how to deal with children at risk of dropping out.

Raising enrolment rates in different forms of secondary education

175. Enrolment in secondary education of all kinds (general, technical and Al-Azhar) rose from 74 per cent in 2012/13 to 78.4 per cent in 2016/17. Data indicates that around 114,000 children aged between 14 and 17 dropped out of secondary education, the majority being girls. Enrolment rates for students in technical secondary education are greater than those for general secondary education, although the gap between the two rates decreased in the period between 2009/10 and 2016/17.

Actions and policies to improve enrolment rates

176. Egypt and the World Bank signed a loan agreement worth \$50 million for the implementation of a project to improve secondary education 2001–2012. Part of the project was a plan to achieve a 50-50 balance in student admissions between general secondary education and technical secondary education, which involved converting 205 commercial secondary schools into general secondary schools and equipping them with modern science laboratories, as well as upgrading 750 general secondary schools, training teachers in modern teaching methods, including e-learning, and training administrators in decision-making and problem solving.

177. The creation of State-run secondary schools for languages has been expanded. In addition, the Nile Schools offer a high-quality system of education for the middle stratum of society in a way that does not affect equality of educational opportunity. Japanese schools and schools offering science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses have also been established.

(b) Objectives and quality of education (art. 29)

178. The Government has taken steps to improve outcomes in technical education.

(i) It has developed a programme to qualify and prepare young people to join the labour market by

- Promoting technical education and introducing new areas of expertise, in line with the requirements of the labour market;
- Rolling out the “school in the factory” initiative whereby a factory is set up inside each technical-industrial school as a way of providing training with a view to employment and producing qualified personnel. As of 2014, there were 17 such schools;
- The “school in the factory” initiative envisions the establishment of 15 factories to produce electronic devices (tablets) and 6 factories for the recycling of wood and paper. Agreement has been reached to set up a further 6 factories to produce solar energy and energy-saving lamps, as well as 2 more for the production of electronic devices.

(ii) It has developed a training and employment programme, in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Save the Children International and IOM. The programme involves the development of a number of technical schools and the training of teachers on educational methodologies and school administration. It also envisages an online portal called “Egyptian portal for technical education” which includes youth employment services

179. The Girls’ Education Initiative (recommendation 75 (d)) has led to a number of important achievements:

- The expansion in girls’ education includes initiatives such as “societal schools” and “small schools” as well as in the “new schools” initiative of the Ministry of Education, which consists in 70 schools that comprise 770 classrooms and 170 multi-level classrooms, serving 30,000 girls. The number of “societal schools” increased to 5,313 in 2014/15, as compared to 4,828 in 2009/10. Enrolment in community education rose, with around 107,000 students in 2014/15, which represents an average annual increase of 3.2 per cent between 2009/10 and 2014/15. Enrolment rates for girls in community education schools in 2014/15 were around 77 per cent and 52.5 per cent, respectively, as compared to 87.7 per cent and 47.2 per cent in 2009/10;
- Egypt has made improvements in access to education for both boys and girls, and it has closed the gender gap in net enrolment rates. In 2016/17, the gender gap decreased to (2.2 per cent females) while increasing at the middle-school stage (5.4 per cent females).

Girl-friendly schools have been expanded and 1,167 such schools have been built and put into operation, as compared to 1,047 in 2012 (a completion rate of 110.7 per cent). A total of 29,006 students of both sexes have been enrolled, 2,300 facilitators and 150 supervisors have been trained, and 7,783 students graduated from the sixth grade of primary school between 2009 and 2011.

Monitoring and assessment

180. A questionnaire for the evaluation of community education schools has been prepared and field visits have been conducted to 10 per cent of all the schools in the governorates.

181. Capacity-building workshops have been held for community education mentors and facilitators, thanks to cooperation between the Ministry of Education and a number of international bodies.

Eradicating illiteracy

182. To this end, the Government has adopted a decentralized system in order to reach out to townships and villages, and it seeks to promote the involvement of civil society. The focus is on eradicating illiteracy among women and younger people and on consolidating literacy once acquired, to ensure that people do not relapse into illiteracy. In that connection, various opportunities for continuing education are made available, such as computers and microenterprises, and an advanced informatic system for planning and monitoring performance has been put in place, with an estimated investment of LE 200 million.

183. Data from the Adult Education Agency indicates that around 200,000 children under the age of 18 were enrolled in the illiteracy eradication programmes between 2009/10 and 2013/14. Of them, 84,000 (41.6 per cent) became literate and, of the latter group, 13 per cent went on to enrol in middle school.

184. In 2013, the Agency signed protocols with two civil society institutions for the purpose of eradicating illiteracy among 10,000 persons in 20 governorates, within a time span of four months. The Agency also helped to open literacy classes in four governorates (Giza, Al-Fayyum, Al-Qalyubiyah, Alexandria) in 2014.

Curriculum development

185. The Ministry of Education has developed a new kindergarten curriculum called “I have the right to play, learn and invent”.¹²

186. Forty existing textbooks have been reviewed and a further 21 new volumes compiled for all levels of schooling. In addition, a reference manual on values, ethics and citizenship has been drafted, likewise intended for all academic levels, as well as a document on educational activities of different kinds. A technology module has been introduced into the middle-school curriculum as well as a module on computer and library research at all stages of general education.

Improving the school environment

187. School facilities such as libraries, playgrounds, toilets, science laboratories and health clinics have been provided. Efforts have also been made to provide appropriate classroom conditions to help ensure a healthy and comfortable learning environment for students.

188. Educational equipment and technology have been provided by the Project Support and Financing Fund, which has supplied computer laboratories to 400 schools. Also, a technological development centre has been set up in Sohag. This system is being rolled out in 15 governorates for around 200,000 students and 20,000 teachers in 5,800 classes. At the same time, 2,150 computer laboratories for basic education have been set up and equipped.

189. Secondary schools for students with high levels of achievement in science and technology have been set up to nurture the talents of gifted youngsters.

190. A protocol of cooperation has been signed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Communications to transform 27 commercial schools into “IT schools”, to provide broadband in 1,000 State-run schools and to work together to develop the Ministry’s online portal, which includes a link to the Egyptian portal for technical education as a way of maintaining communication with the educational directorates.

191. In 2014, the Ministry of Communications launched its “online dictionary” of unified Egyptian sign language. The dictionary, which serves the needs of 15,000 students who are deaf or hard of hearing, has been circulated to the schools frequented by those students.

192. An initiative to promote technological development in schools frequented by students with disabilities was launched in December 2013. Its purpose was to equip 1,000 schools

¹² The curriculum includes various social, cognitive and linguistic activities that are intended to meet the needs of integrated and ordinary children, in accordance with their different requirements and abilities, and without discrimination. Guides and other documentation have been prepared to help teachers and mentors improve the education they offer to children. Specifically, a manual has been drafted to guide kindergarten teachers on integration and on an inclusive school environment.

with information and communications technology tools, applications and specialized software to serve the needs of students with disabilities.

School-based reform and educational accreditation

193. The Egyptian Sustainable Development Plan 2030 envisages a number of programmes intended to promote the educational process. These include a programme for the rehabilitation of existing schools, which has investments estimated at LE 1,694 million. In addition, a technological development programme with estimated investments of LE 536 million aims to equip 14,174 primary schools, 900 middle schools, and 430 secondary schools with computer laboratories, to create 10,025 high-tech classrooms in secondary schools and to open 20 schools for high achievers.

194. The national “Teachers First” project was launched in 2016 by the Specialized Council for Education and Scientific Research, which is part of the Office of the President of the Republic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the “Imagine Education” consulting company.

International cooperation in the field of education

195. With reference to the Committee’s recommendation 75 (g), the State has worked with other stakeholders and donors to implement a number of projects aimed at:

(a) Increasing the enrolment rate and providing alternative educational opportunities for children who have been unable to attend education through

- Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the World Bank to implement the project for improving early childhood education which was mentioned earlier;
- The building of community education schools, which was expanded under a protocol between the Ministry of Education and UNICEF for the creation of 120 societal schools in the governorates of Assiut, Sohag and Qena, at a rate of 30 schools per year over 4 years from 2013 to 2016. The protocol also envisaged the opening of 30 societal schools in the governorates of Assiut and Sohag and the building of a further 16 schools in cooperation with civil society organizations;
- A protocol of cooperation signed with the United Arab Emirates to create 8,456 classrooms in around 600 new schools at an estimated cost of LE 2.2 billion;
- A protocol with UNICEF to enhance cooperation in supporting kindergarten-level education, integration into primary education and the development of school curricula. A total of LE 15 million was allocated to this process;
- A protocol between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of International Cooperation to cooperate on a project to enhance children’s access to education, with funding of €30 million from the European Union.

(c) Education on human rights and civic education (art. 31)

196. The Ministry of Education has issued a reference guide on how to address global issues and life skills in school curricula. The guide addresses children’s rights, human rights, women, citizenship, tolerance, peace and other important topics. Since 2013/14, the Ministry has also been issuing books on citizenship education for secondary schools.

197. The National Centre for Child Culture has organized several events aimed at supporting children’s rights, especially the right to knowledge, to creativity and to self-expression (a description of the Centre’s activities is attached).

198. As regards recommendations 74 and 75, the details given above describe some of the progress being made to address the challenges involved.

(d) Rest, play, recreation and cultural and artistic activities

199. Children's rights to culture, play and recreation are enshrined in articles 48, 82 and 84 of the Constitution. The Government is seeking to create a supportive environment to enable children to exercise those rights by providing cultural and recreational services for young people, such as clubs, parks, libraries and youth parliaments. In addition to this, programmes and projects to develop culture and sports have been integrated into the Egyptian Sustainable Development Plan 2030. These include "houses of culture" for children, which have been set up at the governorate level with investments estimated at LE 45 million. In all, around LE 800 million was invested in youth and sports services in the fiscal year 2016/17, which went towards the establishment of model youth centres, schools for gifted athletes in the governorates, sports clubs for persons with disabilities, specialized sports centres and other facilities.

200. The Ministry of Social Solidarity has set up youth clubs to provide social care for children aged between 6 and 15. It has also created parks where children and their families can indulge in recreational and sporting activities, and it has established libraries to develop the skills and abilities of children aged 6–15.

201. A team participated in the Special Olympics International, winning three gold medals and one silver. At the Special Olympics held in Ismailia in 2010, a team won eight gold medals and one silver.

IX. Special protection measures

202. Special protection measures are a fundamental element of children's rights as they are a way to ensure comprehensive social development, which is one of the sustainable development goals that the government is striving to achieve. Responses to the Committee's recommendations 76 to 88 and details about action taken in that regard are given below.

(a) Refugee children

203. Under the Constitution, political asylum may be granted to any foreigner who suffers persecution for defending the interests of peoples, human rights or peace and justice. The Constitution also prohibits the extradition of political refugees (art. 91). According to a 1954 agreement between the Government of Egypt and UNHCR, the UNHCR office in Cairo is to issue a yellow card which, bearing the Government's stamp of approval, serves as evidence that the holder has applied to UNHCR for refugee status. The status of foreigners inside Egypt is also governed by a number of laws, including Act No. 89 of 1960, as amended by Act No. 88 of 2005, article 16 of which stipulates: "All foreigners residing in the Arab Republic of Egypt are required to be in possession of a residency permit and must leave the country when that permit expires."

204. Egypt has acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. Furthermore, article 96 of the Children's Code states: "Children are considered to be at risk if they are in a situation that threatens the integrity of the upbringing to which they are entitled. Acting under that provision, the competent authorities are to treat asylum-seeking children as children at risk and refer them to child protection committees for them to take the requisite action envisaged under the Act." The Council, in cooperation with the competent national bodies, has developed a procedural guide concerning protection and assistance for asylum-seeking and refugee children and child victims of migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

205. As a consequence of the intensity of wars and political conflicts, the volume of refugees seeking shelter in Egypt is increasing while, for its part, the Government guarantees refugees and asylum-seekers freedom of housing and movement. Currently, there are around 250,000 refugees and asylum-seekers of 55 different nationalities registered with UNHCR, in addition to some 5 million persons who have fled armed conflicts in neighbouring States and who have not claimed refugee status due to the ease with which they are able to integrate into Egyptian society. In fact, such persons are not isolated in camps, and they enjoy the same

basic services that are available to Egyptian citizens, free of charge. In 2018, 12 centres were set up to provide services to refugees and migrants in the governorates. The total number of refugee students stands at 71,851, not including Syrians, who enrol in State-run schools on an equal footing with Egyptian citizens.

Procedural measures to protect the rights of refugee children

206. Civil society associations play an important role with refugee children, running developmental activities, providing educational services and offering material assistance. They also provide psychological support, life-skills training and assistance for families, such as violence reduction programmes for Egyptian children and children of migrants and refugees, and their families.

Education

207. A total of 87,696 migrant and refugee students of all nationalities are registered with the Ministry of Education as being enrolled in State-run or private schools. Syrian, Yemeni and Palestinian students are exempted from tuition fees.

Health

208. The State has helped Syrian children access health services and psychosocial assistance by providing support to 87 primary health units in areas where Syrian refugees are concentrated in large numbers. Two national polio vaccination campaigns have also included Syrian refugees.

(b) Children in conflict with the law

209. In reply to recommendation 86 (a) and recommendation 87 (a) to (e) and (h), the State has taken a body of measures to improve the child justice system, as explained below.

Legislative amendments

210. The Constitution places an obligation on the State to set up a special judicial system for child victims and witnesses, and it stipulates that children may not be held criminally accountable or detained, save in accordance with the law. It also envisages the provision of legal aid, the detention of children in appropriate facilities separate from adults and respect for children's best interests in all measures that concern them.

211. The Children's Code stipulates that the Public Prosecution Service has the jurisdiction to deal with the children at risk who are referred to it by child protection committees and other competent bodies.

Efforts by the executive and the judiciary to improve the child justice system

212. The Ministry of Justice has established one child-friendly court and allocated headquarters for another. It is also working to establish further courts in the governorates, to train and build the capacity of judges in juvenile courts and to create a curriculum for the formation of all persons who work in the field of child justice.

213. The Ministry of the Interior has allocated separate facilities for the detention of children, in accordance with their age. Juveniles may not be detained or imprisoned with adults, and juveniles facing criminal charges are transported in specially equipped vehicles separately from adults. The Ministry's own oversight bodies monitor the implementation of these policies and the extent of compliance on the part of other agencies within the Ministry, pursuant to article 112 of the Children's Code.

214. Before accused children are brought before the investigating authorities, police social workers examine the circumstances that caused them to fall into delinquency. Cooperating with State agencies, the social workers then seek solutions to the children's problems. The outcomes of the social workers' perquisitions remain at the disposal of investigators throughout the trial.

215. Between 2016 and 2019, the Ministry of the Interior ran 15 training courses on the humane treatment of children, attended by 309 officials.

216. Coordinating with other stakeholders, the Ministry of Justice seeks to implement constitutional and legislative texts and the international treaties in force in Egypt to protect and provide legal assistance to children involved in the criminal justice system, be they offenders, victims, witnesses or persons at risk. Under Decree No. 6496 of 2008 of the Minister of Justice, no account is to be given to any assessment of child's age, in the absence of official documents, save as estimated in a report issued by the Department of Forensic Medicine and its branches in university hospitals and public hospitals.

217. In line with article 25 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, special criminal chambers have been established in courts of appeal to hear cases of human trafficking.

218. The Public Prosecution Service has formed a committee to communicate and coordinate with the Council's helpline to ensure that any difficulties the Council encounters while following up on investigations can be ironed out.

219. The children's courts have handed down numerous rulings in which children in conflict with the law have been sentenced to non-custodial penalties. The children's courts and the child protection subcommittees coordinate with one another vis-à-vis children at risk, while court presidents conduct visits to observation homes and social welfare institutions to ensure that they are carrying out their duties in accordance with article 134 of the Children's Code.

Cooperation with foreign child justice authorities

220. The Ministry of Justice signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to cooperate in matters related to juvenile criminal justice and the protection of child victims and witnesses. Under the protocol, the two sides are to exchange experts and academics at the national and international levels. The Ministry has also cooperated with the International Federation Terre des Hommes to develop a procedural guide on non-custodial penalties for children in conflict with the law, identify obstacles to the use of such penalties and propose solutions.

221. As regards recommendations 86 and 87, the State is working to modernize and renovate its correctional and rehabilitation institutions and to establish facilities for children's courts that meet the appropriate standards.

Military justice

222. The military judiciary is a constitutional body envisaged in article 204 of the Constitution, which defines its jurisdiction in precise terms. The body is regulated by Military Justice Act No. 25 of 199, as amended. Military judges must fulfil the conditions set forth in the Judicial Authority Act, promulgated by Act No. 46 of 1972. They are independent and are subject to no authority other than that of the law (art. 3), they cannot be dismissed and they perform the same duties as those stipulated in the Judicial Authority Act for ordinary judges and members of the Public Prosecution Service.

223. According to the Military Justice Act (art. 10), the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Code are applicable to all matters not envisioned in the Act itself. Moreover, the Code of Criminal Procedure, as applied by ordinary courts, is applicable to court proceedings and hearings in respect of which no special provision is made in the Act (art. 76 bis). The Act also sets forth the channels for appealing rulings handed down by courts of different levels.

(c) Children in street situations (homeless children)

Legislation

224. The right of every child to a name and identification papers is enshrined in article 80 of the Constitution. The same provision stipulates children's right to free compulsory vaccination, health care, care from a family or foster family, basic nutrition, safe

accommodation, religious education and emotional and cognitive development. The Government is required to ensure the welfare of children and to protect them from all forms of violence, abuse, ill-treatment and sexual and commercial exploitation. Moreover, each child has the right to early education in a children's centre up to the age of 6.

225. The Tahya Misr Fund was established under Decree-Law No. 84 of 2014. One of its purposes is to reduce the phenomenon of children in street situations (homeless children) and child beggars.

226. Article 96 of the Children's Code stipulates that children are considered to be at risk if they are in situations that threaten the integrity of the upbringing to which they are entitled. Those situations, which are listed in the text of the article, include that of children who do not have a stable place of residence or who usually sleep on the streets or in other locations not intended as places in which to reside or spend the night. The Act also explains how that category of children is to be dealt with via the child protection committees. A procedural guide has been issued concerning the operation of those committees and how they are to cooperate with the competent authorities.

Measures

227. The State has taken measures to prevent children from becoming homeless and to provide protection and social assistance to those who already are in that situation:

- The Council conducted a survey of homeless children in 2009, the results of which showed a total of 5,299 such children in Cairo alone, 3,474 boys and 620 girls;
- A national strategy for homeless children has been launched that aims to change society's view of children in street situations so that they are seen not as criminals but as victims of circumstances for which they are not responsible. The strategy is also working to qualify specialized personnel, to establish a comprehensive database on street children and to mobilize resources to fund programmes for the protection, care and rehabilitation of homeless children;
- A national plan for the reintegration of homeless children aims to address the problem from its root causes and to capitalize on the role of stakeholders, in line with the strategy;
- Sports and cultural events have been organized for the inmates of institutions for homeless children, alongside students from schools and universities, and agreements have been reached with 15 youth centres for them to take in homeless children;
- Between 2009 and 2012, in cooperation with the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, capacity-building was offered to personnel working in 33 social defence institutions and teams of trainers was formed in 17 governorates. At a nationwide level, 15 workshops were held to train 330 social workers and psychologists, 33 directors of institutions and staff in hospitals run by the Ministry of Health.

228. A programme being run by the Ministry of Social Solidarity also seeks to tackle the phenomenon of homelessness among children, promote their socioeconomic empowerment and reintegrate them into society. Its aim is to protect 80 per cent of such children by providing them with subsistence and rehabilitation services and to integrate 60 per cent of them into a "family and social care homes" initiative. A monitoring mechanism has been developed and infrastructure created to increase the capacity of 6 social welfare institutions, while 17 teams have been created that operate on the streets via mobile social units. The capacities of a further 21 social welfare institutions have been increased. Homeless children are given free medical tests and treatment for hepatitis C, and an observatory has been created to monitor changes in the phenomenon of homelessness. Effective coordination with the helpline is assured thanks to an integrated referral system, while a unit for the employment of homeless children has been set up inside the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

Education

229. The Ministry of Education has decreed fee and subscription exemptions for students in one-room schools, societal schools and girl-friendly schools, as well as for children in difficult circumstances, and it has exempted them from age requirements when enrolling in middle schools.

230. The Ministry of Education and UNICEF signed a protocol to cooperate in the creation of 120 societal schools in a number of governorates, at a rate of 30 schools per year over 4 years from 2013 to 2016.

(d) Economic exploitation

231. The Children's Code prohibits the employment of children in jobs that might endanger their health, safety or morals and, in particular, in the worst forms of child labour. The provisions regulating the employment of children are contained in the implementing regulations of the Code, which stipulate the obligations incumbent on employers and list the professions in which the employment of children is prohibited outright. Under article 137 of the implementing regulations, employment bureaux are required to monitor employers to ensure that they fulfil their child-employment obligations, in line with the Code, particularly vis-à-vis working hours, humane treatment and the absence of any physical or mental abuse.

232. Egypt duly respects the international treaties it has ratified, including the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

233. According to Trade Unions Act No. 2013 of 2017, members of trade union organizations are required to be at least 15 years of age when they make their application to join. Under Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010, the exploitation of children is considered to be a form of human trafficking. The Act stipulates, moreover, that persons responsible for forced labour or servitude are to face more severe penalties if the victim is a child.

Capacity-building to protect children against economic exploitation

234. In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education, the Council ran 6 workshops in the period 2014–2015 to train and build the capacity of 200 persons working with children in community education schools and in rural advisory centres.

Initiatives to combat the worst forms of child labour

235. Between 2006 and 2010, the Ministry of the Workforce managed to integrate 4,300 child workers into the educational system and to remove 4,366 children from the worst forms of labour. In addition, it protected 7,319 children who were at risk of entering the labour market and reinstated 236 working children who had dropped out of school.

236. The Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Migration signed a protocol with the World Food Programme (WFP) to run a project to combat the worst forms of child labour. The project aims to contribute to eradicating child labour by targeting 5,000 families and 16,000 children in five governorates. Its chief focus is to provide educational services to 8,000 children.

237. Thanks to a project to combat dangerous forms of child labour in the agricultural sector "implemented by the Ministry of Manpower in cooperation with WFP and ILO – 8,000 children have been protected against joining the labour market and helped to enrol in formal schooling, while 5,000 working children have been integrated into societal schools.

Vocational apprenticeship programmes

238. Between 2009 and 2018, training courses were carried out in 5,359 facilities, 4,026 apprenticeships were opened and 3,934 persons enrolled in vocational apprenticeship programmes.

Action by regulators to eliminate child labour

239. The Ministry of the Workforce conducts unannounced inspection visits to facilities where children work, in order to monitor working hours and weekly rest periods, and it takes legal action in cases where employed children are found to be under the legal age or the conditions regulating child labour are not being fulfilled. A total of 10,368 inspections to 9,000 establishments were conducted in the period 2010–2018.

240. The Ministry of the Workforce runs intensive campaigns to combat child labour and protect children in the quarry and brick-production sector. If children under the age of 15 are found to be working, the authorities apply article 64 of the Children's Code, and if any other violations are discovered, the protection committees are informed so that they can take appropriate action. In all, 79,612 children received protection, while the Ministry also organized 1,742 seminars which benefited 7,506 children.

241. Egyptian legislators have established a legal system that includes provision for apprenticeship contracts whereby children can learn their father's profession while respecting the health and safety standards envisaged in the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003).

242. As regards recommendations 78 and 79, the State is continuing its efforts to combat child labour and the economic exploitation of children, notably via the Ministry of the Workforce's plan to eradicate the worst forms of child labour and its inspection campaigns to facilities where children are employed.

(e) Use of children in illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (art. 33)

Efforts made by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood

243. The Council runs a programme to protect persons under 18 against smoking and drug use, which has trained 3,600 young people in 50 schools and 40 youth centres. The Council has also organized 20 awareness-raising seminars in schools for students and parents, as well as other seminars in youth centres and for families in villages and settlements where there is no youth centre.

244. Efforts made by the Fund to Combat and Treat Addiction.

245. The Fund develops and implements public policies to combat and treat addiction. It also promotes the development of legislation and the creation of a knowledge base on the issue of drugs, and it is supporting the introduction of an antismoking and anti-drug use module into the school curriculum. In 2012, the Fund produced a training manual to protect young people against smoking and drugs, which is implemented and administered by young persons themselves, without external guidance.

(f) Protection of child witnesses and victims of crime

246. Article 60 of the Constitution stipulates: "The human body is inviolable, and any assault, defilement or mutilation thereof is an offence punishable by law." The law recognizes a series of rights intended to protect child victims and witnesses by granting them benefits that take the form of exception to all or some general procedural rules. These include protecting children from distress and ensuring their security and safety when a crime is reported, investigated and brought to trial; their right to health care and to social and legal protection and assistance; and their reintegration into society, in line with the United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime. In order to provide even greater protection for children, the law requires anyone who knows that a child is at risk immediately to provide that infant with all possible assistance to avoid or eliminate the danger (arts. 98 bis and 116 bis of the Children's Code).

247. Crimes the pursuit of which requires the submission of a complaint can be reported by the person who has guardianship over the victim if the latter is under the age of 15 or has a mental disability. If the offence in question was against property, the report may be filed by the guardian or custodian. If the interests of the victim conflict with those of the

representative or if the victim does not have a representative, that role is taken by the Public Prosecution Service. The same principles apply to compensation as, if the person who suffered harm as the result of an offence lacks legal capacity and has no legal representative, the court hearing the criminal case may, at the request of the Public Prosecution Service, appoint a representative to claim civil rights on the victim's behalf. In no case does this entail the victim's responsibility for legal expenses (arts. 5, 6 and 252 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

X. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

248. The Arab Republic of Egypt attaches great importance to raising public awareness about issues of peace, human rights and the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. The promotion of peace, the ending of armed conflicts through peaceful negotiations and the non-use of force are vital elements that lie at the core of national policy. In that connection, the report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict addresses the following issues:

(i) Status of the Protocol in Egyptian legislation

249. Egypt acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict under Presidential Decree No. 105 of 2002. All the provisions of the Protocol thus became part of national law, as per the Constitution.

250. On 6 February 2007, the Arab Republic of Egypt issued a declaration regarding article 3 (2) of the Protocol, which concerns the minimum age for conscription or voluntary recruitment into the armed forces. The declaration states that the minimum age for conscription into the armed forces is 18 and the minimum age for voluntary recruitment is 16, in accordance with regulations set forth in the law.

251. National Military Service Act No. 127 of 1980, as amended, stipulates that conscription into military service applies to males aged between 18 and 30. The Act, which regulates both conscription and voluntary recruitment, stipulates that conscription is to be postponed in the case of students at any stage of their education and that the voluntary recruitment of persons who have not yet attained the age for conscription requires the approval of their parent or guardian. The Act envisages imprisonment and/or a fine for anyone violating its provisions.

252. As concerns recommendations 5 and 6, the enactment of the provisions contained in the Protocol are guaranteed under the relevant law.

(ii) Conscription, voluntary recruitment and the prohibition of children's involvement in hostilities

253. According to the Constitution, anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child. The National Military Service Act stipulates that conscription applies to all Egyptian males who have reached the age of 18. Thus, the Act is consistent with the Constitution in its definition of the age of a child.

254. Article 7 bis (b) of the Children's Code and article 11 of the implementing regulations of the Code both underscore – in line with the country's international obligations – the importance of ensuring a proper upbringing for children, away from armed conflicts; the need to ensure that they are not involved in combat operations; and respect for their rights in situations of war and armed hostility. These provisions act as a guarantee that children under the age of 18 will not be directly involved in combat operations. Moreover, current laws prohibit the conscription of anyone under the age of 18. The Act cites the child protection committees and subcommittees and the General Department for Child Rescue as the mechanisms for protecting children at risk of falling victim to any of the situations covered

by the Optional Protocol. Penalties for anyone who endangers a child's life or security are envisaged under articles 96 and 97 of the Children's Code, as amended.

255. The National Military Service Act envisages an integrated legal and administrative system to regulate conscription in coordination with all educational institutions in the State. In fact, regular students in full-time education can postpone their conscription until they have obtained their academic qualifications. The Act also envisages the circumstances in which persons can be exempted from conscription altogether.

256. Legislation and laws have defined the age requirements for service in the armed forces in such a way as to exclude children under the legal age from involvement in combat operations or hostilities. The activities of that category of recruits, in fact, are limited to the study of academic, cultural and behavioural subjects and to the acquisition of scientific and professional skills and to disciplinary training that will qualify them to enter military life once they are no longer children. National Military Service Act No. 127 of 1980 was amended by Act No. 152 of 2009, which concerns voluntary military service for any male individual who has reached the age for conscription but who has not been called up or is exempt. The amendment also concerns persons who have not reached the age of conscription, who can volunteer to serve in the armed forces on condition that their desire to join up is genuine and arises from their own free will after having been informed of what voluntary military service entails; that the parent or guardian give their approval; that the age of the volunteer can be established by official documentation (identity card or birth certificate); and that they pass a medical examination. This is consistent with the aforementioned declaration of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The activities of such recruits are limited to training, and they do not participate in military operations.

257. As regards recommendations 15–18 and 23–26, the aforementioned legislation and administrative provisions duly prohibit and criminalize the matters of concern to the Committee.

(iii) Military sports schools

258. A body of rules governs enrolment in military sports schools, which are affiliated to the Ministry of Education and subject to the same conditions as those applied in other State-run schools. The role of the armed forces is limited to training the students in order to develop their sporting talents, and the students are not involved in any kind of combat operation. Enrolment in the schools is by the free and independent will of the youngsters concerned, with the approval of their parents or legal guardians, and no penalty is enforced if they do not wish to enrol. No training in the use of firearms is imparted.

259. As regards recommendations 7–8 and 19–20, the information provided demonstrates how the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defence coordinate to ensure compliance with the Optional Protocol, and how the Ministry of Defence strives to ensure the real and effective implementation of the Protocol in its military aspects and procedures.

(iv) Military courts

260. According to article 204 the Constitution, the military judiciary constitutes an independent judicial body that has exclusive authority to adjudicate all offences that involve the armed forces, their officers, enlisted personnel and persons of equivalent status. Civilians may be tried before military courts only for offences that constitute a direct assault against military installations, camps belonging to the armed forces or other similar facilities; against military zones or designated border areas; against military equipment, vehicles, arms or ammunition; against military documentation or secrets; against military public assets; or against military factories. This also covers recruitment-related offences or offences that constitute a direct assault against officers or enlisted personnel for the performance of their duties. The jurisdiction of the military courts is set forth in the Code of Military Justice (Act No. 25 of 1966), as amended by Act No. 16 of 2007.

261. In the exercise of their legal functions, the military criminal courts apply to children all the legal safeguards envisaged in the Children's Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure and calculate the penalties they inflict in line with current law. Penalties are enforced inside special facilities for children, in line with instructions issued by the Prisons Department of the Ministry of the Interior. Moreover, the military criminal courts apply special jurisdictional rules when dealing with children, and they have no jurisdiction to examine offences imputed to a child if the court finds that the youngster in question is under 15, or that he or she is over 15 but committed the offence alone.

262. As regards recommendations 29 and 30, the explanations provided show how military courts abide by the jurisdictional rules enshrined in law. In many cases involving accused children, in fact, the courts have ruled that they do not have jurisdiction and have referred to matter to the Public Prosecution Service for it to exercise its own jurisdiction.

(v) Training

263. Efforts made by the Government in this connection include the following:

- The National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, which is part of the Ministry of Justice, works alongside the Red Cross to train judges and members of the Public Prosecution Service on international humanitarian law;
- On 19 and 20 September 2018, the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, under the auspices of the Minister of Justice, organized a conference of Arab governmental experts on international humanitarian law. The conference reviewed the efforts made by Arab States, including Egypt, in apply the rules and principles of international humanitarian law that serve to protect civilians, particularly children, from the consequences and impact of war; that prevent their involvement in armed conflict; and that protect them when under military occupation. The conference produced a set of recommendations concerning the enforcement of the law and led to coordination among stakeholders to ensure those recommendations are applied;
- The Ministry of Defence teaches officers and enlisted personnel of the armed forces about international humanitarian law, at various stages of their training in educational units and facilities. It also sends them to participate in training courses at home and abroad;
- A unified reference manual on international humanitarian law has been compiled in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross, and is being applied by the armed forces;
- Armed forces personnel involved in peacekeeping duties receive training on international humanitarian law in the context of peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, as per the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Training programmes related to the application of the rules of international humanitarian law are reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure the effectiveness of the means and mechanisms used;
- Officers in the armed forces receive training at courses organized by UNHCR;
- The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood receives support in its efforts to implement the Optional Protocol; at the same time, there is a systematic push to increase awareness, education and training on the Protocol at all levels of the State;
- Increased material and financial resources have been made available to promote international and regional cooperation to implement and raise awareness about the Protocol.

264. As regards recommendations 10 and 11, the efforts made by the Government, as detailed above, demonstrate the coordination and cooperation taking place at the national and international levels to disseminate a culture of international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols.

XI. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

265. Egypt acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography under Presidential Decree No. 104 of 2002.

266. The offences contemplated in the Optional Protocol are also set forth in article 291 of the Criminal Code, which envisages penalties for “anyone who sells or purchases children or offers them for sale; who delivers, receives or transports children who are in a condition of slavery; who exploits children sexually or commercially; or who uses them in forced labour other unlawful purposes, even if the offence is committed abroad.”

267. Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010 includes the offence of trafficking in children. The Act stipulates that the subsistence of the offence is not limited to the use of the means envisaged in the Act, but also includes numerous alternative means whereby the offence of trafficking or exploitation may be perpetrated. Moreover, no account is to be taken of the consent of the victims, their guardians or the persons responsible for them (arts. 2, 3, 6 (6)).

268. As regards recommendations 10 and 11 and the absence of a definition of certain offences in the law, thanks to the legislation mentioned above definitions of the offences envisaged in the Protocol have, under the Constitution and the law, been incorporated into Egyptian legislation and are therefore applicable and enforceable.

(a) Data

169. In 2014, the Council conducted a study into problems in society, human trafficking and the issues faced by adolescents. In 2011, the Council drafted a national plan to combat trafficking in children, which included measures to prevent, protect against and prosecute the offence. This plan, which was then incorporated into State plans at the national level, included:

- Establishing a central database to monitor child trafficking offences;
- Establishing a regional shelter for the rehabilitation of girl victims and providing recovery services in cooperation with the National Bank Hospital;
- Establishing a regional shelter to take in and rehabilitate boy victims;
- Rolling out mechanisms via which to report instances of human trafficking and child marriage, in cooperation with the Public Prosecution Service and the Ministry of the Interior;
- Providing legal support to victims;
- Establishing a specialized library and website for researchers at www.child-trafficking.org;
- Creating a Facebook page to link with civil society associations.

270. The National Centre for Social and Criminal Research has conducted a number of studies into trafficking in children, child prostitution and child pornography, identifying the causes of such phenomena and finding ways to tackle them.

271. As regards recommendations 10, 11 and 35–40, the Council has coordinated with other stakeholders and civil society organizations to gather data and conduct studies on the crimes described in the Optional Protocol.

(b) General measures of implementation

272. Under article 80 of the Constitution, the Government is required to protect children against all forms of violence, abuse, ill-treatment and sexual and commercial exploitation.

273. The Children's Code lists the cases in which children in the family, at school, in care institutions or elsewhere might be exposed to risks of immoral acts, pornography, commercial exploitation, harassment or sexual exploitation. The Criminal Code was amended by Act No. 5 of 2018 with more severe penalties now being envisaged for abducting children or exposing them to the risk of trafficking or exploitation or loss of limb or life.

274. A plan of action to combat child pornography and prostitution – which is a comprehensive initiative that addresses the matters covered by the Optional Protocol – has been incorporated into the national plan of action to combat human trafficking and into the new 10-year child protection plan.

275. The Council and the Ministry of the Interior signed a protocol in 2017 with a view to increasing cooperation and coordination on the protection and welfare of children and mothers. The protocol underscores the protection of their rights and seeks to guard against all forms of exploitation and violence. It also aims to build capacity among police officials, particularly as concerns human trafficking and violence, and to train prison staff; it includes provision for seminars for female prisoners on protecting children against violence and disseminating knowledge about the Convention, the Optional Protocol and the amended Children's Act.

276. As regards recommendations 12, 13, 14 and 15, thanks to cooperation and coordination between the Council and the relevant ministries, efforts are being made to come up with a comprehensive plan that addresses the issues covered in the Protocol.

(c) Preventive measures

277. The State guarantees the right of children to benefit from a body of preventive measures and from protection against all forms of violence, harm, sexual abuse etc. Moreover, all institutions that operate in the field of childcare are required to implement preventive measures against any harm that might befall children (arts. 4 (a) and 10 (2) of the implementing regulations of the amended Children's Act).

Efforts made by the Government

278. The Ministry of the Interior is committed to combating all criminal activities by adults aimed at corrupting, exploiting and endangering children. Perpetrators are brought to trial and child victims are offered treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation.

279. The actions of the Ministry of the Interior to combat prostitution-related offences cover three areas:

- Work in the field: Periodic campaigns to monitor this category of offence, including scrutiny of pornographic websites and Internet pages where children are being exploited;
- Training: Courses for police officials involved in combating this category of offence to explain the applicable legal framework and the most up-to-date intervention strategies;
- Developing security practices: Training officers who possess the skills necessary to monitor such offences, particularly using modern technology, arresting perpetrators and setting up offices of the Department for the Protection of Public Morals in governorates throughout the country.
- Between December 2015 and February 2017, the National Council for Human Rights – in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for Child Culture and UNICEF – organized training courses in schools to disseminate the Convention and the Optional Protocol and to educate children about their rights;

- The Council's anti-human trafficking unit organized training courses for teachers and other personnel who work with non-Egyptian children, particularly Sudanese and Somalis. Several activities were carried out with the children themselves with the aim of educating parents on how to interact with their children and to avoid trafficking or recruitment into domestic work.

280. As regards recommendations 16–19, 25 and 26, thanks to cooperation and coordination between the Council and the relevant ministries, efforts are being made to come up with a comprehensive plan that addresses the issues covered in the Protocol.

(d) Prohibition and related matters

281. Article 89 of the Constitution prohibits slavery and all forms of oppression and exploitation, as well as sex trafficking and other forms of human trafficking.

282. Articles 90–92 of the Children's Code and article 176 of its implementing regulations prohibit children from attending sexually provocative cinema screenings and similar public places, and set forth the penalties for any violation of those provisions. Article 170 of the implementing regulations prohibits books or publications that arouse the basest instincts of children, that might give rise to behaviour that is contrary to exalted religious values and principles or that might encourage deviation, such as material aimed purely at sexual arousal or that celebrates aberration or sexual deviancy.

283. Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010 provides for the confiscation of all funds, assets, means of transport and instruments obtained from or used in the commission of offences (art. 13).

284. Act No. 50 of 2014, which amends the Criminal Code, stipulates that anyone who, in a public or private setting, commits actions or makes suggestions or insinuations of a sexual or pornographic nature – be it by gesture word or any other means – is liable to the penalties envisaged in article 306 bis (a) and (b) of the Code. The act is considered to be one of sexual harassment if the offender intends to obtain gratification of a sexual nature from the victim and the penalty is increased when the circumstances specified in the Act are met. Article 116 bis of the Children's Code, as amended, prohibits the use of technology or other means to disseminate pornographic works in which children are exploited in pornographic acts, or offered for sale.

285. As regards recommendations Nos. 22–24 and 27–34, the relevant legal texts clearly address the offences contemplated under the Protocol and envisage the concomitant penalties.

(e) Protecting victims' rights

286. Under the Children's Code (art. 116 bis (d)), anyone who knows that a child is at risk must immediately provide that infant with all possible assistance to avoid or eliminate the danger (art. 98 bis). Moreover, at every stage of the arrest, investigation, trial and enforcement of sentence, child victims and witnesses have the right to be heard; to be treated with dignity and compassion; to respect for their physical, mental and moral well-being; to protection; to health and social care and legal assistance; and to rehabilitation and reintegration into society, in line with the United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

287. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act includes provisions that guarantee protection for victims and witnesses; their right to legal assistance; their avoidance of any criminal or civil liability; their accommodation in shelters; the provision of welfare, education, training and rehabilitation programmes for victims; and the establishment of a fund to provide financial assistance to victims who have suffered harm (arts. 21–27).

(f) Efforts made by the Government

288. In this connection, the Council operates on three fronts:

- Blocking sources and reducing demand for exploitative services by breaking the wall of silence and raising awareness about child trafficking offences;
- Protection and rehabilitation;
- Prosecution, law enforcement and treaties.
- The Council coordinates with government agencies and other stakeholders on the legal and security aspects of case management;
- An initiative regarding “domestic workers in the context of combating human trafficking” has been rolled out thanks to coordination between the anti-human trafficking unit and the Ministry of the Workforce; its aim is to harmonize legislation, propose mechanisms and protect domestic workers’ rights;
- Interviews and screening take place as part of a national screening mechanism to inform victims of their legal and administrative rights and to determine the extent to which they wish to submit reports to the authorities. Brochures to raise awareness about shelter services for victims are produced in cooperation with IOM;
- Training on involvement in and the management of small business is provided to victims in the governorate of Giza;
- Training courses are held to combat and prevent child marriage, which is described as a form of sexual exploitation the perpetrators of which are to be held accountable;
- The unit has coordinated with IOM to produce guidelines and recommendations on assistance to trafficking victims;
- A campaign has been launched to reduce the demand for exploitative services, which includes promotional and awareness-raising activities aimed at preventing child trafficking;
- An anti-child trafficking training manual was issued in 2013 thanks to cooperation between the unit and UNICEF.

289. As regards recommendations 35–40, the relevant legal texts, the efforts made by the Government and the strengthened capacity of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood show how the rights of child victims and witnesses are protected and promoted, while also upholding their best interests.

(g) International assistance and cooperation

290. The Government continues to strengthen mechanisms and procedures to promote regional and international cooperation on the Optional Protocol. In that regard:

- It encourages cooperation between the Council, governmental and non-governmental bodies and international organizations to combat such offences; the organizations involved include IOM, Catholic Relief Services, UNICEF and the European Union.
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