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**Consideration of reports: reports submitted by States parties
under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant**

Replies of Rwanda to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report*

[Date received: 17 December 2024]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. General information

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues (E/C.12/RWA/Q/5)

1. Rwanda amended its constitution in 2015 and 2023. Chapter IV of the 2023 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda is dedicated to human rights and freedoms. The chapter covers all sets of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights hence aligning with the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Examples of the rights covered include, protection from discrimination (Art. 16); the right to education (Art. 20); the right to good health (Art. 21); the right to clean environment (Art.22); the right to free choice of employment (Art. 30); the right to form trade unions and employers' associations (Art. 31); the right to collective bargaining (Art. 32); the right to strike (Art. 33); the right to private property (Art. 34); the right to private ownership of land (Art. 35); and the right to activities promoting national culture (Art. 36).

2. Since the last report Rwanda has enacted several laws aligning with the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), including those governing land, labor, public servants, expropriation, environment, air quality, water resources, education, reproductive health, sports, social security, pensions, health insurance, child protection, refugees, and cultural heritage. These laws collectively advance rights to adequate living conditions, education, health, social protection, and cultural participation, reflecting Rwanda's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant.

3. Regarding training, while there has been no dedicated program exclusively focused on the provisions of the Covenant and their justiciability, these provisions are incorporated into Rwanda's domestic legal framework. Judges, lawyers, and law enforcement officials receive ongoing training on the application and interpretation of these laws. Recognizing the importance of targeted training, as highlighted in the State Party report, Rwanda is committed to organizing specific training sessions for these groups during the upcoming implementation period to enhance their understanding and invocation of the Covenant's provisions in judicial and law enforcement contexts.

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

4. The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) in Rwanda is established under Law No. 19/2013 of 25/03/2013, as amended by Law No. 61/2018 of 24/08/2018, and is mandated to promote and protect all categories of human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights, in line with the Covenant and national legislation. Article 5 of the law outlines its promotional role, such as educating the public on human rights, proposing laws consistent with human rights principles, urging timely submission of treaty reports, and collaborating with international and local human rights organizations. Article 6 entrusts the NCHR with protective responsibilities, including monitoring compliance with human rights for vulnerable groups, investigating complaints, visiting detention facilities, and ensuring respect for rights during elections.

5. The NCHR operates independently and in full compliance with the Paris Principles, with its mandate enshrined in Article 42 of the Constitution. Its budget has grown by 31.04% from the 2021–2022 to 2023–2024 fiscal years, reflecting increased financial support for its functions. Annual human rights reports prepared by the NCHR include actionable recommendations, monitored by both Parliament and the Commission to ensure implementation. Additionally, the NCHR collaborates with the OHCHR and other stakeholders to strengthen its activities, some of which are supported financially by the OHCHR office in Kigali.

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

6. Rwanda's 2014 Legal Aid Policy provides the framework for legal aid, prioritizing individuals who cannot afford legal representation or court fees. Access is determined

through a means test, requiring a certificate of indigence from local authorities, and a merit test. While the government bears primary responsibility for legal aid, non-state actors such as Civil Society Organizations and the Rwanda Bar Association (RBA) also play a crucial role.

7. To enhance access, the government has deployed three lawyers in each district, including one dedicated to gender-based violence (GBV) cases. Additionally, all lawyers registered with the RBA must handle pro bono case annually. Certain vulnerable groups, such as GBV victims, children in conflict with the law, persons with disabilities, refugees, and asylum seekers, are prioritized for legal aid, even without meeting financial criteria, as identified through local authority assessments.

8. Legal aid services are provided through multiple channels, including the Rwanda Bar Association, the Legal Aid Forum, and government-supported Access to Justice Bureaus (MAJ) established in all districts. The Legal Aid Policy is currently under review to address gaps and strengthen mechanisms to improve access to justice, particularly for vulnerable populations.

9. In 2022/2023, a total of 26,525 individuals received legal aid services, including 22,279 adults (8,637 males and 13,642 females) and 4,246 minors. In 2023/2024, the total increased to 30,375 individuals, comprising 24,730 adults (8,073 males and 16,657 females) and 5,645 minors.

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

10. The Constitution of Rwanda guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, providing the legal foundation for the protection of human rights defenders. While these rights are protected, limitations may apply in accordance with the law to balance individual freedoms with public order, such as addressing hate speech or incitement to violence, in line with national and international obligations.

11. The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) monitors and investigates human rights violations, including those involving defenders of economic, social, and cultural rights, ensuring they can work without fear of intimidation. The Office of the Ombudsperson also addresses grievances related to reprisals against human rights advocates and whistleblowers.

12. Regarding complaints, investigations, and prosecutions, Rwanda confirms that there have been no prosecutions solely targeting human rights defenders, journalists, or their associates. The government remains committed to ensuring a safe environment for human rights defenders and journalists in line with national and international obligations.

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

13. Rwanda does not have specific legislative measures formally recognizing Indigenous peoples, including the Batwa community. This approach is consistent with the national policy on unity and reconciliation, based on the principle that "We are all Rwandans," which promotes a unified national identity.

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

14. Rwanda has established a legal framework to promote human rights due diligence in business operations and supply chains. Law No. 66/2018 regulates labor, prohibiting child and forced labor while ensuring safe working conditions and occupational health standards. Law No. 76/2018 governs the Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition, and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA), ensuring transparency and compliance with human rights in business practices, including worker and consumer protections. Law No. 48/2018 on the Environment, mandates Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) to address risks to land use, community rights, and environmental sustainability.

15. In the extractive sector, Law No. 58/2018 on Mining, Oil, and Gas, and Law No. 27/2021 on mining and quarry operations ensure responsible resource extraction, respect for land rights, and compensation for displaced communities, promoting transparency in mineral sourcing and preventing human rights abuses such as forced and child labor.

16. The development process for the second phase of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) is currently underway. This new plan will integrate business and human rights components into a comprehensive document. In February 2024, a National Dialogue on the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights was held, followed by a second National Conference on Business and Human Rights in April 2024. Additionally, two studies were commissioned to inform the NHRAP II, with a particular focus on business and human rights. The second study is ongoing, and once completed, the drafting of the NHRAP II will commence.

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues

17. Rwanda is actively addressing climate change through several key frameworks and initiatives. The National Environment and Climate Change Policy (2019) promotes renewable energy, sustainable urban development, and waste management, with impacts on increasing energy access from renewable sources, enhancing urban resilience, and reducing methane emissions. Ministerial Order No. 005/2021 guides the preparation of national climate change reports, while the Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy (GGCRS) 2023 supports climate-resilient agriculture, low-carbon transportation, and climate-smart farming practices. The Climate and Nature Finance Strategy (CNFS) 2024-2030 aims to accelerate green investment and align financial flows with Rwanda's climate goals under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

18. Rwanda's Rwanda Green Fund (FONERWA) mobilizes resources for adaptation and mitigation, and the *Ireme* Invest Facility supports green business growth through private sector collaboration. The National Carbon Market Framework (2023) provides a regulatory structure for carbon credit projects, enabling both public and private sector participation in international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

19. The Government of Rwanda has achieved significant progress in reducing per capita greenhouse gas emissions, driven by low-emission energy sources and sustainable practices in agriculture and forestry. The Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) conducts a climate vulnerability index assessment every five years to inform development planning and adaptation policies. Vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities, are included in adaptation measures through programs like the Social Protection Strategy and Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP).

20. Rwanda has strengthened disaster risk management through the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy (2023) and the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (2019-2024), which integrate climate adaptation into national development plans. The National Disaster Preparedness Plan (2022) outlines strategies to mitigate natural hazards, focusing on infrastructure recovery and community resilience. The Disaster Recovery Checklist incorporates principles like "build back better" and people-centered recovery into rehabilitation processes.

21. Rwanda is implementing the 5th Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA-5), which incorporates inclusive consultations and aims to reduce post-harvest losses through improved storage facilities and mobile dryers. Programs like One Egg per Child and One Cup of Milk per Child aim to combat malnutrition and improve children's health. The Expanded Public Works (ePW) Program targets labor-constrained households, providing accessible employment and alleviating poverty.

22. International partnerships, such as those with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), support climate adaptation and mitigation projects, including funding for resilience-building in rural communities and landscape restoration. Recent agreements, such as the USD 32 million GCF grant for Gicumbi District and USD 33.7 million for climate adaptation in the Eastern Province, reflect Rwanda's commitment to climate action.

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

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

23. According to the EICV5 Survey (2016/2017), 38.2% of households in Rwanda lived below the national poverty line, with 16% in extreme poverty. Poverty rates were higher among female-headed households (17.8%) and particularly de facto female-headed households (20.8%), compared to 15% for male-headed households. Over time, the extreme poverty rate slightly declined, from 39.1% in 2014 to 38.2% in 2017. The 2022 RPHC Non-Monetary Poverty Report found that 30.4% of households lived under the poverty line, including 6.7% in extreme poverty, indicating incremental progress while underscoring persistent challenges. The updated data on the status of poverty will be availed after the EICV 7 is produced.

24. Rwanda has maintained strong economic growth, with GDP growth averaging 7-8% annually before COVID-19. The pandemic caused a contraction of -3.4% in 2020, but GDP rebounded to 10.9% in 2021, 8.2% in 2022, and 8.2% in 2023, reflecting robust recovery efforts. GDP per capita rose from \$728 in 2013 to \$1,040 in 2023, demonstrating continued improvement in living standards. Public debt increased from 27.6% of GDP in 2013 to 73.3% in 2023, driven by development financing needs and COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Rwanda's debt remains sustainable due to its strong management framework.

25. Based on the Tax Statistics in Rwanda FY 2023/2024 Report (7th Edition), Rwanda's tax-to-GDP ratio decreased by 0.4%, from 15.0% in 2022/2023 to 14.6% in 2023/2024, contributing 53.3% to the national budget. Among the revenue sources, profit taxes accounted for 22.6%, VAT contributed 30.6%, PAYE made up 22.0%, excise taxes contributed 11.9%, customs duties added 8.0%, and other taxes made up 4.9%.

26. Based on the tax Statistics in Rwanda FY 2023/2024 Report (7th Edition), total revenue generated from personal tax collected on the incomes of the richest 10 percent of the population, was as follows; in FY2021/22 it stood at 77.1%, in FY 2022/23 it stood at 78.8% and FY2023/24 it stood at 78%.

27. Regarding tax avoidance and tax evasion, Rwanda Revenue Authority reported 3,207 offences were recorded with a value of Rwf 1.7 billion as of FY 2022/23 compared to 3,198 offences with a value of Rwf 2.8 billion recorded in FY 2021/22. The focus was on goods most susceptible to smuggling and use of electronic billing machines (EBM).

28. Other cases suspected to have carried out fraud were forwarded for prosecution since fraud is considered a serious crime under tax jurisdiction.

29. In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22, public expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 33.8%, decreasing to 28.6% in FY 2022/23 and further to 27.8% in FY 2023/24. The higher expenditure in FY 2021/22 was driven by the Government of Rwanda's (GoR) significant investments in large-scale construction projects aimed at providing employment and aiding economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19. Additional factors included substantial investment in the health sector to curb the spread of COVID-19 and social protection interventions, such as direct support to vulnerable citizens.

30. The proportion of the public budget allocated to social spending—comprising social security/protection, food, water, sanitation, housing, health, and education—over the FY 2021/22 to FY 2023/24 period was as follows:

- Education: The budget allocation increased significantly from RWF 476.6 billion in FY 2021/22 to RWF 761.1 billion in FY 2023/24;
- Health: In FY 2021/22, the allocation was RWF 434.2 billion, which decreased to RWF 358.9 billion in FY 2023/24. This reduction reflects the Government's exceptional investment in FY 2021/22 to address the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Agriculture: The budget allocation rose from RWF 165.8 billion in FY 2021/22 to RWF 191.9 billion in FY 2023/24, highlighting the Government's continued focus on food security and rural development.

31. Rwanda implemented significant fiscal measures to address the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. The Economic Recovery Fund (ERF), in two phases, supported businesses in sectors like tourism and hospitality, preserving jobs and operational continuity. The Manufacture and Build to Recover Program (MBRP) provided fiscal incentives to reduce operational costs for manufacturing, agro-processing, and construction. Tax relief measures, including deferrals and penalty waivers, further supported businesses and individuals. Increased healthcare spending enhanced the country's medical infrastructure, while direct support, such as food distributions and subsidies, aided vulnerable populations during lockdowns. Rwanda also secured funding from the IMF's Rapid Credit Facility, stabilizing the economy and supporting recovery.

32. Rwanda has actively engaged with international financial institutions. The Kigali International Financial Centre (KIFC) reform, launched in 2020, aims to position Rwanda as a service-driven economy. Partnerships with the IMF (Policy Coordination Instrument and Resilience and Sustainability Facility) and the World Bank have supported reforms in climate resilience, healthcare, and infrastructure development. Recent agreements include a \$33.7 million climate adaptation project in the Eastern Province and a \$27.9 million Green City Kigali Project funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). In 2023, the IMF approved a 14-month Stand-by Credit Facility (SCF) to address climate-related shocks. Rwanda continues to prioritize concessional loans and attract foreign investment to ensure sustainable debt levels.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

33. Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees protection from discrimination and lists prohibited grounds, including ethnicity, family or descent, clan, skin color, sex, region, social status, religion or belief, opinion, wealth, cultural differences, language, economic status, physical or mental disability, or any other form of discrimination. These acts are punishable by law.

34. Rwanda's legal framework includes several laws aimed at combating discrimination and ensuring equality:

- Law No. 47/2001 of 18/12/2001 punishes offenses related to discrimination and sectarianism, addressing general discrimination;
- Law No. 01/2007 of 20/01/2007 on the Protection of Disabled Persons guarantees equal rights for persons with disabilities and prohibits discrimination in employment. It also prescribes penalties for acts of violence or discrimination against disabled persons;
- Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 Regulating Labour prohibits discrimination in employment on grounds such as ethnicity, disability, religion, and gender. It also ensures equal pay for equal work (Art. 9 and 40);
- Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 Determining Offences and Penalties defines the crime of discrimination, outlining penalties for discriminatory acts based on factors like race, ethnicity, gender, and disability (Art. 163);
- Law No. 71/2018 of 31/08/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child guarantees equality and protection for all children, with special provisions for children with specific needs, which do not constitute discrimination (Art. 5).

35. Rwanda's legal provisions ensure victims of discrimination can access remedies. Offenders can face imprisonment (5-7 years) and fines ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandan francs. Additionally, Article 10 of Law No. 027/2019 of 19/09/2019 on Criminal Procedure grants victims the right to pursue civil action for redress.

36. The table below shows number of investigated and prosecuted cases of discrimination.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Investigated cases</i>	<i>Prosecuted cases</i>
2017-2018	178	97
2018-2019	170	100
2019-2020	150	98
2021-2022	181	89
2022-2023	167	98
2023-2024	148	70
Total	994	552

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

37. One of the effective measures implemented in Rwanda to foster national unity and reconciliation is the *Ndi Umunyarwanda* ('I Am Rwandan') Program. This initiative creates a platform for Rwandans to openly discuss the causes and consequences of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and explore the shared identity and values that define being Rwandan. The program emphasizes forgiveness, healing, and moving beyond the divisive ideologies that led to the genocide.

38. While the program does not erase the historical social structures—such as clans and the social groups distinctions that colonial powers institutionalized as rigid ethnic groups to create divisions—it repositions these narratives within the broader framework of national unity. By doing so, *Ndi Umunyarwanda* aims to transcend the divisions rooted in history and strengthen cohesion and trust among all Rwandans. It underscores a collective commitment to building a unified, inclusive nation while preserving individual and historical identities in a manner that supports national harmony.

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

39. Rwanda has implemented robust legal and policy frameworks to combat discrimination and promote equality for persons with disabilities. Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees protection from all forms of discrimination. Key laws include:

- Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offenses and penalties, which defines and sanctions discriminatory acts;
- Law No. 01/2007 of 20/01/2007 on the protection of persons with disabilities, along with its associated Ministerial Orders, which is being updated to align with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
- Ministerial Order No. 007/2016 of 01/03/2016, which provides special accommodation for persons with disabilities in schools;
- Presidential Order No. 128/01 of 03/12/2020, which ensures inclusivity in the recruitment of public servants and induction programs.

40. Policies like the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2018) aim to remove barriers and promote participation in social, economic, and political life. The National Employment Policy (2019) enhances employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, while the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) and the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategic Plan (2018-2024) focus on creating accessible learning environments.

41. Social protection programs, such as the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP), include direct support, adapted public works, and financial services tailored to persons with disabilities, fostering economic independence and reducing vulnerabilities.

42. The Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (2022) highlights key data on persons with disabilities. Disability prevalence increases with age, from 2% among those aged 5 to 20.2% among those 80 and older. It is higher in rural areas (78.4%) than in urban

areas (21.6%). Employment rates among persons with disabilities are lower (30%) compared to 48% for those without disabilities. Educational attainment is also lower, with 34.9% of persons with disabilities lacking formal education compared to 13.9% of non-disabled persons.

43. Efforts to enhance access to health services include collaboration between the Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB) and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities to provide prosthetics through Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI). The National Family Planning and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (FP/ASRH) Strategic Plan (2018–2024) incorporates youth-friendly services for adolescents with disabilities, addressing their specific health needs.

44. Strategic frameworks such as the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017–2024) and NST2 (2024–2029) emphasize mainstreaming disability across sectors, including education, healthcare, social protection, infrastructure, agriculture, sports, and ICT, ensuring inclusion and active participation of persons with disabilities.

45. Rwanda remains committed to advancing inclusivity and equality for persons with disabilities by aligning its policies with international standards and implementing targeted measures across sectors.

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

46. Rwanda refers the Committee to the response provided under paragraph 10, outlining the comprehensive legal framework and measures taken to combat discrimination in all its forms. While no awareness initiatives specifically target groups based on sexual orientation or gender identity, Rwanda has adopted general measures aimed at promoting equality and non-discrimination for the population as a whole.

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

47. Rwanda has recently strengthened its legislative framework to align with global standards on refugee protection and asylum processes. In April 2024, the Law No. 042/2024 of 19/04/2024 governing refugees and applicants for refugee status in Rwanda was adopted in April 2024. This law establishes an Appeal Tribunal under Article 15, granting it legal personality, independence, and administrative and financial autonomy to ensure fairness and transparency in the refugee status determination process. Complementing this, the Presidential Order No. 051/01 of 19/04/2024 governing the Appeal Tribunal for refugees and applicants for refugee status was also adopted.

48. Following the adoption of these laws, other key legislations were revised. The Law No. 041/2024 of 19/04/2024 amending Law No. 30/2018 of 02/06/2018 determining the jurisdiction of courts expanded the jurisdiction of the High Court to hear, at the first instance, claims from applicants for refugee status and refugees contesting decisions by the Appeal Tribunal.

49. Rwanda continues to implement initiatives to ensure the socio-economic inclusion of refugees through projects such as the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Refugees and Host Communities Project (SEIRHCP). Refugees are integrated into the Rwandan education system, with their diplomas recognized to facilitate access to the labor market. Refugees also have the legal right to work, supported by skills development and entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with UNHCR. Article 24 of Law No. 042/2024 recognizes the right of refugees to request Rwandan nationality as part of durable residence solutions.

50. Rwanda returnees, Rwanda has established operational procedures for the reception of returnees to ensure smooth reintegration into Rwandan society. Returnees are provided with a cash grant, cash for food, identity cards, and inclusion in the National Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI). Additionally, returnees receive support for transportation to their respective districts and are integrated into income-generating activities, enabling them to enjoy all rights afforded to Rwandan citizens.

51. The Government of Rwanda remains committed to ensuring the effective enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights by refugees and asylum seekers. To ensure the registration of children born in refugee camps and hospitals, civil registrar officers have been deployed as mandated by the Ministerial Order No. 001/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Determining the Officer of the Health Facility with Powers of Civil Registrar. This effort has contributed to Rwanda achieving a birth registration rate of 94.3%, as recorded in the 2022 RPHC.

52. These comprehensive measures reflect Rwanda's dedication to upholding international standards, including the principles of *non-refoulement*, access to justice, and socio-economic inclusion, while addressing the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and returnees.

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

53. Rwanda has implemented various measures to address the situation of children living on the streets, focusing on prevention, immediate assistance, and reintegration. The Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) was expanded in 2018 to include cash transfers and public works for vulnerable populations, including street children. The *Ubudehe* Categorization Reform (2020) improved the targeting of vulnerable groups, ensuring equitable access to support services.

54. The National Child Development Agency (NCDA) plays a key role in child protection, providing shelter, education, and reintegration support for orphans and vulnerable children. From 2018 to 2024, under the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program, NCDA supported 7,968 children through household economic strengthening, income-generating activities, and educational assistance, including school feeding and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). During the same period, 2,971 children were reintegrated into families from institutions and rehabilitation centers.

55. The reintegration process was guided by comprehensive case management, which involved assessing the needs of each child and the capacity of families to provide care. This included preparing both the child and the family through counseling, training, and gradual reintroduction. Children were placed in biological, extended, or foster families, and regular follow-ups were conducted to ensure their well-being. To support reintegrated families, the government provided economic empowerment through income-generating activities and facilitated access to social services to alleviate financial pressures.

56. Rwanda has strengthened its legislative framework to combat child exploitation and trafficking, criminalizing these acts while providing healthcare and legal aid to victims. In 2019, the government formalized street vending, creating designated market spaces and offering training and financial support to vendors. The Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) was expanded in 2020 to improve healthcare access for marginalized groups, including street children, and legal aid programs were launched in 2021 to support vulnerable populations.

57. The *Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi* initiative has contributed to addressing root causes of child abandonment by fostering family cohesion and addressing vulnerabilities within communities. Additionally, Rwanda's ratification of ILO Convention 190 in 2020 underscores its commitment to protecting marginalized groups and addressing the socioeconomic drivers of vulnerability. Awareness campaigns by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) have also aimed at reducing stigma against vulnerable populations, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

58. The Government of Rwanda has implemented comprehensive measures to promote women's participation in stable and formal employment and to address gender segregation in professional fields. According to the Rwanda Labour Force Survey 2023 Annual Report, the proportion of women in formal employment increased from 36% in 2018 to 39% in 2023. Similarly, the share of women in non-agricultural paid employment rose from 32.5% in 2019

to 37.7% in 2023. The Revised National Employment Policy (2019) addresses barriers such as limited skills and access to finance, promoting equitable access to resources like land, technology, and entrepreneurship support for women.

59. Rwanda's leadership in gender representation is reflected in its legislative and executive bodies. Women hold 63.75% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 53.8% in the Senate, the highest proportion globally. Female representation extends to the judiciary, with women comprising 46.2% of judges and holding strategic roles across courts, including 33.3% in the Supreme Court and 52% in the Primary Courts.

60. Efforts to reduce gender gaps in male-dominated fields have yielded significant results. In the energy sector, the Rwanda Energy Group (REG) established an apprenticeship program, increasing women's representation in management to 39.6% and technical roles to 32%, compared to 0% and 5%, respectively, before the program. Similarly, in aviation, Akagera Aviation has 27% of women in senior management and increasing representation in technical roles such as maintenance engineering and flight operations.

61. Private sector initiatives have also advanced gender equality. Companies like CIMERWA and REG have earned Gender Equality Seals, reflecting improved work-life balance, reduced gender pay gaps, and higher representation of women in decision-making roles. Under the leadership of the Central Bank, the Women in Finance Foundation coordinates efforts to promote gender equality in financial institutions, with a commitment from women CEOs to advance gender representation.

62. In the security sector, women now constitute 22.9% of the Rwanda National Police (RNP) and 7% of the Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF), with increasing participation in peacekeeping missions and leadership positions. Strategic roles held by women include the Director General of Immigration, the Prosecutor General, and Deputy Commissioner General of Rwanda Correctional Services.

63. To promote gender accountability, the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), in collaboration with the UNDP and Private Sector Federation, launched initiatives addressing low female representation in leadership and decision-making roles. Efforts also include revising job criteria to reduce barriers for women, such as reducing required years of experience for technical and leadership positions in REG.

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

64. The Law No. 71/2024 of 26/06/2024 governing persons and family extended maternity leave from 12 to 16 weeks, providing mothers with additional time to care for newborns and promoting their well-being. Fathers are now entitled to seven days of paternity leave, an increase from the previous four days, fostering greater involvement of fathers in childcare and promoting shared parental responsibilities.

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

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

65. Under the First National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), Rwanda placed significant emphasis on the right to work and economic growth. During NST1, the country achieved an average annual GDP growth rate exceeding 8%. One of the key targets of NST1 was to create 1.5 million off-farm jobs by 2024. By mid-2024, over 1.3 million jobs had been created, reflecting substantial progress towards this goal.

66. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) enrollment rate rose to 42% among upper-secondary students, as reported in the *Education Statistical Yearbook 2022-2023*. This increase highlights efforts to equip young people with practical skills for the labor market.

67. Rwanda also made considerable investments in industrial parks and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), fostering employment opportunities in sectors such as textiles, construction materials, and electronics. Tourism development programs under NST1 indirectly boosted employment in hospitality, transport, and cultural industries.

68. The adoption of Presidential Order No. 128/01 of 03/12/2020 relating to the recruitment of public servants and induction program has further strengthened the regulatory framework supporting employment initiatives (see Article 7(5) and Article 17(2)(3)).

69. The Rwanda Labour Force Survey (RLFS) 2023 Annual Report provides critical insights into the labor market:

- The national unemployment rate stood at 17.2%, with higher rates among females (20.3%) compared to males (14.5%);
- Youth unemployment (ages 16–30) was reported at 20.8%;
- Unemployment was higher in rural areas (18.0%) than in urban areas (15.8%);
- Persons with disabilities experienced an unemployment rate of 18.9%, slightly higher than the overall rate. Furthermore, only 20.3% of working-age persons with disabilities participated in the labor force, compared to 60.3% of those without disabilities.

70. Labour underutilization, a broader concept encompassing unemployment, time-related underemployment, and the potential labor force, remained significant. The composite measure of labor underutilization (LU4) was 54.4%, with a higher prevalence among females (60.9%) compared to males (47.7%), and in rural areas (59.7%) compared to urban areas (43.1%).

71. Youth labor dynamics revealed that unemployment rates increased with higher levels of education. While the unemployment rate was 17.3% for youth with no education, it rose to 30% for those with secondary education. Labor underutilization, however, was highest among youth with no education (57.8%) and those with only primary education (55.4%).

72. Rwanda remains committed to addressing these challenges through targeted employment strategies, continued investment in education and skills development, and strengthened labor market policies.

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

73. The Rwanda Labour Force Survey (RLFS) 2023 Annual Report highlights variations in informal employment rates over recent years. Informal employment constituted 89.8% of total employment in 2018, increased to 91.3% in 2022, and declined slightly to 90.3% in 2023.

74. Income disparities persist between urban and rural areas. Urban areas report higher incomes compared to rural areas, with urban males earning the highest and rural females the lowest. The median income across all groups was 2,706,093 Rwandan Francs, while the mean income was 24,970 Rwandan Francs.

75. Regarding youth and young populations (ages 16–30), RLFS 2023 provides a comprehensive analysis by sex, residence, and participation in subsistence agriculture:

- The total youth population was 3,495,825, comprising 1,692,395 males and 1,803,429 females. Of this population, 1,171,723 resided in urban areas, while 2,324,102 lived in rural areas;
- A significant proportion of rural youth (891,741) engaged in subsistence agriculture, compared to 2,604,083 who did not.

76. Disparities in labor force participation and employment opportunities between rural and urban areas are evident:

- Among youth aged 16–24, 852,018 were employed, with 280,042 in urban areas and 571,976 in rural areas. Participation in subsistence agriculture was higher in rural areas (196,410);
- For youth aged 16–30, total employment was 1,555,238, including 561,477 in urban areas and 993,761 in rural areas. Subsistence agriculture involved 380,126 youth, while 1,175,112 were engaged in other forms of employment;
- Unemployment remains a challenge, particularly among rural youth and females:
- For youth aged 16–24, unemployment was recorded at 254,880, with 177,735 in rural areas and 77,145 in urban areas. Among this group, 93,107 participated in subsistence agriculture, while 161,773 did not;
- Among youth aged 16–30, unemployment totaled 408,701, with rural areas accounting for 249,173 and urban areas for 159,524.

77. Youth outside the labor force constitute a significant proportion, particularly in rural areas and among females:

- Among those aged 16–24, 1,266,810 youth were outside the labor force, with 687,382 females compared to 579,428 males. Of this total, 868,598 resided in rural areas and 398,312 in urban areas;
- For youth aged 16–30, the figure was 1,531,868, with rural areas accounting for 1,058,304 and urban areas for 473,582.

78. In response to these challenges, Rwanda has undertaken targeted measures to transition workers from informal to formal employment. These include creating cooperatives to address informality in the agriculture sector, developing skills through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and fostering industrialization through investments in Special Economic Zones and industrial parks.

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

79. The inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in employment is supported by Presidential Order No. 128/01 of 03/12/2020, concerning the recruitment of public servants and induction programs. This Order contains specific provisions aimed at promoting inclusivity. Article 7, paragraph 5, and Article 17, paragraph 2 (3), stipulate that in cases where candidates achieve the same score for a job position, priority is given to candidates with disabilities.

80. Rwanda has adopted several measures to ensure vocational training opportunities and skills development for PWDs, including:

- The National Policy of Persons with Disabilities, which outlines strategies to enhance the inclusion of PWDs in economic and social activities;
- The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategic Plan, which focuses on equipping learners with disabilities with skills to enhance their employability.

81. During the 2022/23 fiscal year, 620 learners with disabilities were enrolled in various vocational training programs, demonstrating the State's commitment to their empowerment.

82. The Committee is also respectfully referred to relevant sections of these replies where matters concerning efforts to combat discrimination and enhance the inclusion of PWDs, particularly in areas such as education and access to services, have been addressed. These efforts should be considered in conjunction with the measures outlined under this paragraph to provide a comprehensive view of Rwanda's approach to addressing the challenges faced by PWDs.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

83. The consideration of a ministerial order to determine the minimum wage is ongoing. Discussions include examining its potential scope to address various branches of economic activities, including those involving informal economy workers.

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

84. Rwanda's Ministerial Order No. 02/MIFOTRA/22 of 30/08/2022 on Occupational Health and Safety, Employees' and Employers' Organisations, Child Employment, Employment of a Foreigner, the Child and Circumstantial Leave provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of workers across all sectors, including the informal economy. The policy sets standards to ensure occupational safety and health for all workers, without discrimination, and ensures that the provisions apply equally to both formal and informal sectors.

85. The Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB) has implemented several initiatives to promote awareness of workers' rights, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Through public campaigns, RSSB seeks to raise awareness of the rights of all workers, ensuring they are not excluded from employment opportunities. These efforts also emphasize the importance of employers adhering to the legal framework that guarantees equal access to employment for all individuals, regardless of their disability status.

86. Access to social security in Rwanda is directly linked to employment, and the legal framework ensures non-discriminatory access once individuals are employed. Both formal and informal sector workers benefit from equal rights under the law. Specifically, workers in the informal economy are entitled to the same protections, including access to social security, as those in the formal sector. This guarantees that all workers, including those in vulnerable or informal sectors, enjoy the rights to social protection and just work conditions.

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

87. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, specifically in Article 30(2), which guarantees that all individuals, without discrimination, have the right to equal pay for equal work. This principle is further reinforced in Law No. 66/2018 of 30th August 2018, regulating labor in Rwanda, where Article 9 mandates that employers must provide equal pay for work of equal value, prohibiting any form of discrimination in salary practices.

88. Rwanda is committed to ensuring the collection and availability of the relevant data on complaints related to violations of this principle, including sex-disaggregated data and the proportion of cases in which compensation was provided, and will include this information in future reports.

Reply to paragraph 24 of the list of issues

89. The Government of Rwanda has taken concrete measures to ensure domestic workers' right to just and favourable working conditions. Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labour in Rwanda, under Article 2(6), protects informal sector workers, including domestic workers, by guaranteeing their rights to occupational health and safety, salary, leave, social security, protection against discrimination, and freedom to form trade unions.

90. Additionally, Ministerial Order No. 02/MIFOTRA/23 of 01/08/2023 prohibits domestic work for children, further safeguarding their rights. The labour mobility framework also restricts domestic work under certain circumstances to prevent exploitation. These protections are reinforced through systematic labour inspections to monitor compliance with labour standards and address violations, particularly in informal employment sectors.

Reply to paragraph 25 of the list of issues

91. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees the right to form trade unions and employers' associations under Article 31, while Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda, in Article 83, explicitly provides for employees' right to freedom of association.

92. To safeguard these rights, Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general, under Article 163, criminalizes acts of discrimination, including those targeting union members, and prescribes corresponding penalties.

93. Workers with disabilities are entitled to exercise their union rights on an equal basis with other workers, and measures are in place to ensure their full participation without barriers.

94. The right to strike is established under Chapter 9 of Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda, subject to procedural requirements designed to balance the rights of employees with the broader interests of employers and society. These provisions ensure strikes are conducted lawfully while preserving public order and economic stability.

Reply to paragraph 26 of the list of issues

95. In 2024, the number of pension contributing members reached 814,945 while members enrolled in the Medical Insurance scheme (RAMA) was 701,845. The coverage rate for CBHI was 87.9% and the membership for the Maternity Leave Benefit scheme stood at 806,830. Ejoheza had 3,244,483 active members.

96. RSSB has conducted Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) inspections in collaboration with other government officials to establish accessible pathways for persons with disabilities, ensuring their smooth integration into the workforce. RSSB has designated a focal person to address the needs of the National Council of Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, some high-cost medical services are authorized by a medical advisor as they arise, and as capacity allows, the range of service provided continues to be expand.

Reply to paragraph 27 of the list of issues

97. Prevention Measures: Rwanda has integrated GBV prevention into school Health Clubs, fostering discussions on anti-GBV interventions. The Men Engage Strategy emphasizes the critical role of men in preventing GBV, promoting their active involvement in societal change.

98. Coordination Mechanisms: The National Steering Committee on GBV provides strategic direction, meeting bi-annually to monitor policy implementation. The National Gender and Family Cluster, with four sub-clusters, ensures coordination, meeting quarterly, while IOSC coordination meetings are held at district, provincial, and hospital levels.

99. Response Mechanisms: IOSC services have been extended to 48 centers nationwide, complemented by four shelters. Health Centers now have GBV focal persons, and each district hosts an Access to Justice Office (AJO) with staff focused on GBV. Several national and international organizations, including civil society and faith-based groups, provide comprehensive support to GBV victims. Regular GBV clinics are also conducted for reporting and quick response.

100. Reintegration: The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, in collaboration with stakeholders, has developed guidelines for the community reintegration of GBV victims. Funds are allocated to districts to support victim reintegration efforts.

101. Data on Gender-Based Violence: According to the last Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2019-202) Among women aged 15-49, 37% have experienced physical violence, and 23% have faced sexual violence. For men, these figures are 30% and 6%, respectively. Spousal violence affects 46% of ever-married women and 18% of ever-married men. Injury rates from spousal violence are 41% among women and 39% among men. Despite these

issues, 40% of women and 38% of men have never sought help for violence experienced, with neighbors and family being the most common sources of support.

102. The table below shows number of GBV cases investigated and prosecuted.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Investigated cases</i>	<i>Prosecuted cases</i>
2017-2018	4592	2863
2018-2019	5563	3840
2019-2020	6223	4473
2020-2021	9414	5673
2021-2022	9481	4941
2022-2023	9956	4865
2023-2024	8169	3741
Total	53398	30396

103. Rwanda remains committed to strengthening its response mechanisms and reducing the prevalence of GBV through coordinated efforts and continued engagement.

Reply to paragraph 28 of the list of issues

104. The Government of Rwanda has previously refuted the allegations contained in the report of the mapping exercise upon its publication and has consistently reiterated this position, which has already been made public.

Reply to paragraph 29 of the list of issues

105. Legislative Framework: Rwanda's Labour Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 and the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child of 2016 prohibit child labour, setting the minimum employment age at 16 and allowing only light work for children aged 13–15 under strict conditions.

106. Mechanisms and Interventions: Child labour prevention is supported by village-level child protection committees and 27,102 *Inshuti z'Umuryango* volunteers, who monitor and resolve cases. The *National Child Development Agency (NCDA)* ensures compliance and works with the private sector to impose sanctions on employers violating child labour laws. Inspections target high-risk sectors such as mining and agriculture.

107. Efforts include the 2022 national child protection case management framework and the deployment of social workers and psychologists in districts to coordinate services. Birth registration coverage rose from 67% in 2017 to 94% in 2022, aided by automatic registration at health facilities.

108. Progress and Monitoring: Significant progress has been made in reducing child labour and reintegrating children into schools and families. Plans are underway for a new national child labour survey, with ongoing efforts to enforce compliance and sanction offenders.

Reply to paragraph 30 of the list of issues

109. Rwanda has taken significant steps to strengthen its legal and institutional framework to combat trafficking in persons:

- The enactment of Law N° 51/2018 of 13/08/2018 Relating to the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation of Others established comprehensive legal provisions to address human trafficking;
- The Prime Minister's Order N° 019/03 of 29/08/2021 defines the organ responsible for providing the necessary means for the repatriation of trafficking victims;

- The Ministerial Order N° 013/MOJ/AG/21 of 29/08/2021 outlines additional support measures for victims of trafficking in persons.

110. Coordination efforts have been enhanced through the Interagency Technical Committee on Counter Human Trafficking, which facilitates collaboration among key stakeholders.

111. From 2018 to 2022, cases of trafficking in persons were investigated and prosecuted, as outlined in the table below

Table 1

Investigated and prosecuted cases of human trafficking

<i>Year</i>	<i>Investigated cases</i>	<i>Prosecuted cases</i>
2017-2018	86	53
2018-2019	39	11
2019-2020	29	16
2020-2021	10	4
2021-2022	10	1
2022-2023	10	6
2023-2024	7	3
Total	191	94

Reply to paragraph 31 of the list of issues

112. Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family has been repealed and replaced with updated legislation to enhance birth registration processes. The Law No. 71/2024 of 26/06/2024 governing persons and family provides a comprehensive legal framework for civil registration. Additionally, the Ministerial Order No. 001/07.01 of 27/07/2020 designates health facility officers as Civil Registrars, enabling on-site birth registration and certification at health facilities.

113. Furthermore, Law No. 029/2023 of 14/06/2023 governing population registration within the National Single Digital Identity System integrates population registration into a streamlined digital system. This ensures improved efficiency and accessibility for all citizens.

114. These reforms collectively allow birth registration and certification to take place at health facilities, significantly reducing distance and time constraints for families and improving access to registration services, particularly in rural areas.

Reply to paragraph 32 of the list of issues

115. Data from the 2019/20 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey (RDHS) indicates that 33% of children under five are stunted, with 9% severely stunted. One percent are wasted, and less than 1% are severely wasted. Additionally, 8% of children are underweight, with 1% being severely underweight, while 6% are overweight.

116. Breastfeeding practices remain widespread, with 99% of children born within two years of the survey being breastfed at some point. However, only 22% of children aged 6–23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet, highlighting a significant gap in dietary adequacy. Anemia affects 37% of children aged 6–59 months, posing a major public health concern. Similarly, 13% of women aged 15–49 are anemic, with 6% classified as thin (BMI below 18.5) and 26% overweight or obese (BMI 25 or higher), reflecting a dual burden of malnutrition among women.

117. Although specific data on the nutritional status of historically marginalized groups is unavailable, the government prioritizes food accessibility and affordability through the National Agriculture Policy. This policy promotes increased food production via improved farming practices, subsidies, irrigation, and mechanization. Additionally, regular market

surveys by MINICOM and NISR help regulate staple food prices and address food security challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Reply to paragraph 33 of the list of issues

118. Rwanda has implemented specific measures to alleviate poverty, particularly among vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, children, youth, women, and rural populations. Key initiatives include the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) and other social assistance programs designed to provide financial and material support to most vulnerable households.

119. For persons with disabilities, the government facilitates access to bank credit and microfinance through cooperative structures. Once cooperatives gain legal personality, members are linked to financial institutions, such as the Business Development Fund (BDF) and Umurenge Saccos, to support their projects. Additionally, capacity-building programs train persons with disabilities and provide technical and financial support to enhance their economic inclusion.

120. According to the 2022 Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC2022), the population aged five years and above in Rwanda totals 11,537,994, comprising 5,572,058 males and 5,965,936 females. Among this group, 391,729 individuals (3.4%) are identified as having disabilities, with a slightly higher prevalence in females (3.6%) compared to males (3.1%).

121. Disability prevalence rates differ between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, with a population of 3,807,210, the prevalence is 3.6% (3.3% for males and 3.9% for females). In rural areas, with a population of 7,730,783, the prevalence is 3.3% (3.0% for males and 3.5% for females).

Reply to paragraph 34 of the list of issues

122. Over the past seven years, significant efforts have been made to implement the right to adequate housing under the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1). During this period, 87 modern settlements were developed, benefiting 14,547 families. Additionally, the Government revised master plans in Kigali City to ensure proper land use and urban planning.

123. Special attention has been given to vulnerable survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. As part of these efforts, 4,252 individuals were provided with newly built houses, while others received assistance for the repair of their homes.

124. In terms of legal and regulatory frameworks, Presidential Order No. 076/01 of 09/12/2022 governs the Rwanda Housing Authority, which plays a central role in overseeing housing development. Furthermore, Regulation No. 14 (2013) on real estate investment trusts and Guidelines No. 21 of 05/07/2016 governing the development of real estate investment trusts have been adopted to foster investment in affordable housing and ensure a sustainable housing market.

Reply to paragraph 35 of the list of issues

125. As per the expropriation law, communities are first consulted before implementing a project and thereafter compensation is done considering people affected by projects (PAPs). Particularly on Integrated Development Programme consultations have been made and PAPs are always compensated before the project commences.

126. An integrated National Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan was developed to guide long term Planning for Water Supply and Sanitation. Projects for Increasing Access to water and Sanitation services were Identified. The Masterplan also highlights investments required to increase access to water and sanitation services.

127. The Water and Sanitation Strategic Plan (2018-2024) was developed to guide efforts in ensuring sustainable access to clean water and improved sanitation across the country.

Current situation: according to the RPHC 2022, in general 82.3% of Rwandan HH have access to improved drinking water sources while 72.1% of households use unshared improved toilet facilities.

Reply to paragraph 36 of the list of issues

128. Rwanda has developed a comprehensive framework to enhance access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services. The Water and Sanitation Strategic Plan (2018-2024) serves as a guiding document for ensuring sustainable access to clean water and improved sanitation nationwide. According to the 2022 Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC), 82.3% of households have access to improved drinking water sources, while 72.1% use unshared improved toilet facilities.

129. Efforts to ensure affordability are supported by the Tiered Pricing System, introduced in the 2010s and continuously adjusted to reflect economic conditions and evolving water demand. This system helps ensure that vulnerable populations are not deprived of access to a minimum amount of drinking water. Investments in water infrastructure, including public standpipes, began in the early 2000s and have been consistently expanded in rural and low-income areas.

130. Recent initiatives to further improve water and sanitation include the Rwanda Global Waters Strategy Plan (2022-2027) and the Water Aid Rwanda Program Strategy (2023-2028), which were launched to strengthen access to water and sanitation services across the country, particularly for rural and underserved populations.

Reply to paragraph 37 of the list of issues

131. Rwanda has implemented several measures to ensure the accessibility and affordability of health care services. The *Mutuelles de Santé* scheme provides affordable health insurance, particularly benefiting rural populations, by reducing financial barriers to primary health care. Innovative healthcare delivery methods, such as the use of drones for medical supplies and test samples and the introduction of telemedicine services, have further improved healthcare access and efficiency.

132. To regulate and enhance the quality of healthcare services, *Law No. 003/2018 of 09/02/2018* established the Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority, defining its mission, organization, and functions. Addressing substance abuse, *Prime Minister's Order No. 113/03 of 19/06/2015* created an inter-ministerial committee tasked with combating the illicit use of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursors, providing a framework for harm reduction initiatives.

133. Rwanda has also strengthened healthcare provisions for persons in detention through the enactment of *Law N° 021/2022 of 29/09/2022* governing Rwanda Correctional Service. Section Two of this law guarantees the right to healthcare for persons in detention, with Article 40 specifically outlining the right to medical care.

Reply to paragraph 38 of the list of issues

134. Rwanda has made significant progress in reducing maternal and child mortality. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) stood at 203 per 100,000 live births in 2020, reflecting a slower decline in recent years. Antenatal care coverage is high, with 98% of women aged 15-49 receiving care from skilled providers during pregnancy for their most recent birth, and 47% completing at least four visits. Additionally, 93% of live births occurred in health facilities, and 94% were assisted by skilled providers. Postnatal care coverage is substantial, with 70% of women and 75% of infants receiving checks within the first two days after birth.

135. The *National Family Planning and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategic Plan (2018-2024)* guides Rwanda's efforts to strengthen reproductive health services. The 2019/20 RDHS reported a contraceptive prevalence rate of 64% among married women and 48% among sexually active unmarried women. The unmet need for family

planning remains higher among sexually active unmarried women (37%) than married women (14%), requiring targeted interventions. To address contraceptive discontinuation—affecting 30% of women—efforts focus on enhancing counseling and support.

136. Rwanda integrates sexual and reproductive health education into school curricula, providing adolescents with knowledge on puberty, reproductive rights, contraceptive methods, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Schools are encouraged to offer life skills education to foster informed and responsible health behaviors. These efforts are further supported by collaborations with international partners such as UNICEF and UNFPA.

137. To strengthen maternal healthcare, Rwanda has focused on capacity-building for healthcare providers. In 2023, UNFPA Rwanda, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, provided midwifery scholarships to 50 students, who began training at the Ruli Higher Institute for Health. Rwanda also hosted the International Confederation of Midwives Regional Conference for Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean in September 2024, demonstrating its commitment to advancing maternal healthcare.

138. Article 125 of the 2018 Law Governing Penalties and Offenses in Rwanda and an implementing Ministerial Order establish the legal framework for safe and legal abortion, permitting terminations under specific circumstances. These provisions safeguard women's reproductive rights while outlining penalties for illegal abortions performed by unqualified individuals.

Reply to paragraph 39 of the list of issues

139. Rwanda has implemented measures to improve school enrolment and reduce dropout rates, particularly for disadvantaged groups. In 2022, 22,500 new classrooms were built, and school electrification and pre-primary education were expanded. A school feeding policy was introduced to support student welfare, alongside sex education and targeted messaging to encourage attendance. Teacher numbers increased from 100,016 in 2022 to 110,460 in 2023.

140. By 2023, internet connectivity was available in 73.2% of secondary schools and 77.7% of TVET schools. Enrolment for 2022/23 totaled 4,456,419 learners (50.4% female), with gross enrolment rising from 72.4% in 2022 to 79.6% in 2023, and net enrolment increasing from 45.6% to 53.3%.

141. Completion rates were 50.3% for females and 45.1% for males in primary schools, 21.6% for females and 19.5% for males in lower secondary, and 17.5% for females and 16.6% for males in upper secondary. Dropout rates decreased to 5.5% in primary schools and 7.5% in secondary schools.

142. In 2022/23, 40,342 students with disabilities were enrolled (0.9%), including 224 in higher education. General higher education enrolments totaled 106,129, and polytechnics had 13,587 learners.

143. The Government of Rwanda notes the absence of statistical data on the group referred to as marginalized people (Batwa).

Reply to paragraph 40 of the list of issues

144. Rwanda has made significant progress in ensuring access to quality, inclusive education for children and young persons with disabilities. In 2023, the number of classrooms equipped to teach students with disabilities increased by 3,301, bringing the total to 3,344 classrooms. This expansion is part of ongoing efforts to create accessible infrastructure for all learners.

145. To further enhance inclusive education, the Government has prioritized teacher training. In 2023, a total of 4,898 teachers were trained in pre-primary education, 45,875 in primary education, and 24,353 in general and professional secondary education. Additionally, 1,317 teachers in TVET were trained. The training of teaching staff in special

needs and inclusive education reached a total of 14,675, with 7,320 males and 7,355 females trained in the 2022/23 period.

Reply to paragraph 41 of the list of issues

146. Rwanda remains committed to fostering national cohesion and ensuring that all individuals and communities enjoy full participation in cultural life. The National Unity and Reconciliation Policy promotes national cohesion under the motto “*We are all Rwandans*”, emphasizing shared identity, mutual respect, and inclusivity.

147. The Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy (RCHA), a non-commercial public institution established in 2020, plays a central role in safeguarding and promoting Rwanda’s culture and the *Ikinyarwanda* language. It was formed by merging three former institutions: The Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture, the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda, and Rwanda Archives and Library Services.

148. The RCHA is tasked with collecting, preserving, and exhibiting cultural, natural, and historical heritage, as well as acquiring, managing, and processing national archives and documents for public access. It conducts research on Rwanda’s culture, heritage sites, and archives, and publishes findings to promote cultural knowledge. The Academy further promotes artistic creation, literature, and crafts, and encourages the private sector to explore opportunities within the cultural and heritage sectors to boost the national economy.

149. It also ensures the proper use of *Ikinyarwanda*, preserves local dialects, and enriches the language for use across various fields. The RCHA supports the establishment of museums, archives, and libraries, manages records, promotes reading and writing, and works to recover cultural and natural heritage objects unlawfully exported or held abroad.

150. The Government of Rwanda has taken significant measures to promote tolerance and mutual understanding through various initiatives. The Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE) promotes unity and civic engagement and leads programs that strengthen tolerance and reconciliation among citizens. National citizen forums, such as the Umushyikirano Dialogue, provide inclusive platforms for diverse groups to engage in discussions on cultural inclusivity, mutual understanding, and national development. These platforms enhance opportunities for all citizens to contribute to cultural life.

151. Efforts have also been made to ensure that sports facilities and competitions are accessible to persons with disabilities, particularly children and youth. The Ministry of Sports actively promotes gender equity and facilitates the participation of persons with disabilities in different sports activities. It encourages the practice of mass sports for all categories of the population and ensures inclusivity across sports programs.

152. Policies such as the Sector Strategic Plan for Sports and Culture (2017/2018–2023/2024) and the School Sports Policy have been adopted to promote broad participation in sports, including for children and youth with disabilities.

Reply to paragraph 42 of the list of issues

153. The Government of Rwanda has undertaken significant measures to address inequalities in access to and use of digital technology, particularly focusing on marginalized and disadvantaged populations. The National Digital Inclusion Strategy, developed in 2022, ensures that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, can access, adopt, and effectively utilize Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). To oversee its implementation, the National Digital Inclusion Council was established.

154. To enhance digital connectivity, the Government, in partnership with telecommunications companies such as MTN, has provided smartphones to citizens at affordable prices, expanding access to digital tools nationwide. There has also been a substantial expansion of broadband internet connectivity in schools, including rural and hard-to-reach areas. By 2023, over 70% of secondary schools were connected to high-speed internet.

155. In the education sector, the Smart Education Policy, launched in 2016, promotes the use of digital tools and platforms in teaching and learning, aiming to build a knowledge-based economy. Through this initiative, significant progress has been achieved in the provision of digital devices to schools. Access to computers in primary schools increased from 69% in 2017 to 98.7% in 2023, while for secondary schools, it rose from 84% in 2017 to 99.7% in 2023, as reported under the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) implementation status.

156. The Government has further supported digital access by providing computers on loan to university and polytechnic institute students to facilitate their learning. Programs such as One Laptop per Child (OLPC) have enabled the distribution of over 265,000 laptops to students across the country. Additionally, in 2023, the Ministries of ICT and Education partnered with a provider of solar-based solutions to connect schools to both the internet and solar power, ensuring digital connectivity in underserved areas.
