



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

Initial reports of States parties due in 2009

Egypt* **

[5 February 2010]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

** Annexes can be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.

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I. Introduction

1. The Arab Republic of Egypt is pleased to submit its initial report, covering the period from 2007 to 2009, under article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (“the Optional Protocol”).
2. With reference to its third and fourth combined periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (“the Committee”), which has not yet been considered, the Arab Republic of Egypt affirms the importance that it attaches to children’s issues. A sign of that importance was the establishment of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) in 1989 as the highest authority for coordinating, following up and evaluating national efforts to give effect to the rights of the child as set forth in the Convention and its two Optional Protocols and for planning the programmes required to that end. On 11 March 2009, the Ministry of State for Family and Population, under which NCCM falls, was created, indicating the growing concern of the political leadership to support and empower the family in order to fulfil its role of protecting family members and giving effect to the rights of those members, including children.
3. As a Member of the United Nations since 1945, the Arab Republic of Egypt affirms its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and its efforts to strive constantly for peace among peoples. It has good relations with all neighbouring States and is committed to the implementation of its Peace Treaty with Israel, concluded in 1979. It furthermore enjoys political and social stability and there is no armed conflict on its territory. Neither has any of its children been indicted for war crimes.
4. The Arab Republic of Egypt lies at the heart of a region permeated by war and conflict. It has nonetheless for decades played a pivotal role in the Middle East peace process, to which it has devoted immense human and material resources while also enduring considerable difficulties in that same context, in particular the boycott to which it was long subjected by Arab States. Be that as it may, it chose the road of a lasting and just peace, to which end it pursued and continues to pursue genuine efforts in more than one key area to establish that peace, as will be described in detail in the report.
5. The report focuses on the integrated methodology practised by the Arab Republic of Egypt for protecting children against all types of exploitation in keeping with the perspective of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols, comprising the following key areas: development of the legislative framework and the formulation of integrated policies for giving effect to and protecting child rights; provision of continuous training for personnel working for children’s rights and with children; the organization of community discussions and wide-scale information campaigns to raise public awareness of children’s rights; and the prosecution, trial and punishment of offenders, with use of publicity as a deterrent. Work in these areas is carried out in close cooperation with governmental bodies, civil society organizations and the media, as well as with the participation of children themselves.

II. General measures of implementation

A. Report preparation process

6. The Ministry of State for Family and Population prepared the present report in consultation with the governmental bodies most closely associated with the subject matter

of the Optional Protocol, namely the Ministries of Defence and Military Production, the Interior, and Education.

B. Legal status of the Optional Protocol in domestic law

7. Article 151 of the Egyptian Constitution provides that the President of the Republic shall conclude treaties and communicate them to the People's Assembly, together with suitable clarification, and that they shall acquire the force of law after their conclusion, ratification and publication in accordance with the established procedures. All treaties are consequently applicable in Egypt as soon as the two conditions of ratification by the President of the Republic and publication in the Official Gazette are satisfied, with the result that the concerned State authorities are required to apply and enforce their provisions. Under article 23 of the Civil Code, international treaties have the same effect as the law. The Egyptian judiciary also gives precedence to international treaties over Egyptian domestic legislation in the event of conflict between the two.

8. Egypt has ratified all fundamental international human rights instruments of relevance (see annex 1) and was one of the first States to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child in February 1990. It acceded to its Optional Protocol, without reservations, on 6 February 2007.

C. Implementation of the Optional Protocol throughout the Arab Republic of Egypt

9. The Optional Protocol is implemented throughout the Republic.

Body responsible for coordinating national efforts to give effect to the Optional Protocol

10. The body responsible for coordinating national efforts to give effect to the Optional Protocol is the Ministry of State for Family and Population, which works to that end in cooperation with the relevant ministries, primarily the Ministries of Defence and Military Production (the official body in charge of recruitment into the armed forces), the Interior, Education, and Information, as well as with civil society.

D. Dissemination of the Optional Protocol

11. The Arab Republic of Egypt attaches great importance to raising public awareness of the issues of peace, human rights and the rights of the child. The matter of spreading peace, ending armed conflict by peaceful negotiation and eschewing the use of force is regarded as a crucially important component of national policy. With respect to children, a number of bodies are engaged in concerted efforts to spread a culture of peace, including the Ministries of Education, Culture, Information, Family and Population, Higher Education, and Awqaf, as are civil society organizations, Muslim and Christian institutions (such as al-Azhar and the Coptic Church), universities, scientific establishments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

12. An important civil society endeavour announced in this area by Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, wife of the President of the Republic, was the establishment of the Suzanne

Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement (SMWIPM) in 2003.¹ The first of its kind in the Middle East, SMWIPM strives to instil a spirit of solidarity, fellowship and tolerance among peoples and to achieve lasting peace by expanding the opportunity for women to play their roles and encouraging their participation in the creation and establishment of peace and security.

13. SMWIPM aims to support programmes, organizations and institutions working actively for peace and to attain the following objectives:

- Tackle violence at all levels globally — on a coordinated basis and without discrimination between men and women — and follow up innovative options with a view to increasing effective alternatives to armed conflict and fostering in people a spirit of tolerance
- Strengthen the collective vision of the role of women in formal and informal peace processes
- Secure the involvement of women as effective partners in international policies and measures for peace
- Participate in building a global coalition aimed at fostering strategic allies for peace
- Enhance women's capacities to empower their participation as an important factor of change at all levels

14. SMWIPM works in cooperation with various groups in society, such as decision makers, academic bodies, NGOs, the private sector, the media, scholars and artists. It also has close ties of cooperation with United Nations agencies and peace-related organizations.

15. SMWIPM works through more than one key area, including in particular awareness-raising campaigns designed to promote a culture of peace and its integration into the system of community values (such as tolerance, conciliation, acceptance of others, participation, responsibility and respect).

16. SMWIPM also organizes various national, regional and international events, notably including a regional seminar entitled "*Towards institutionalizing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)*" (Cairo, 2006), organized in cooperation with the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the World Bank.

17. The agenda of the seminar focused on the formulation of national action plans, the creation of a culture of peace through work with young people and the establishment of regional networks concerned with women and peace. The seminar participants addressed a message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, calling for peace and adequate protection for women and children in conflict zones. They also urged him to increase the representation of women in peace processes to a minimum of 25 per cent in conflict and post-conflict areas. They furthermore urged recognition of the importance of engaging young men and women in dialogue and consultation on peace, reconciliation and reconstruction, and of providing physical protection and economic security for women. They similarly urged the Security Council to strengthen and develop the accountability mechanism via monitoring procedures and report-writing mechanisms and the setting of the necessary guidelines/measures. They also called on Member States to speed up the formulation of national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and to build regional and international networks to support these plans.

¹ <http://womenforpeace.bibalex.org/ar/events/index.htm>.

E. Appropriate training

18. The Arab Republic of Egypt successfully raised awareness of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols through the efforts by NCCM over the past 10 years, in which the Minister of State for Family and Population has been intensively involved since she became NCCM Secretary-General and through her membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The tangible success of these efforts promoted a number of achievements, including legislative reform in the field of children's rights, the formulation of strategies for protecting the rights of at-risk groups based on the child-rights perspective, and the implementation of continuous training programmes for personnel working with children and in law enforcement in order to raise their awareness of the relevant international conventions and domestic legislation.

19. The training programmes run by the Ministry of State for Family and Population in cooperation with governmental bodies and civil society organizations were aimed, among others, at the following personnel: male and female judges, solicitors-general, prosecutors, psychological personnel and social workers from family court offices for the settlement of disputes, inspectors from the Office of the Public Prosecutor, court experts, police officers, media professionals and protection committees.

20. The Ministries of Defence and Military Production and the Interior organize regular training programmes. The principles of human and child rights are also taught at the Military College, police colleges and other similar educational institutions.

21. Individuals participating in peacekeeping forces are similarly trained in human and child rights and in the protection of children in time of armed conflict.

22. A number of training programmes are run in cooperation with UNDP in order to build the human rights capacities of personnel working with children and others. For further details, please refer to the third and fourth combined periodic report submitted to the Committee under article 44, paragraph (b), of the Convention.

23. Information will be provided in subsequent paragraphs on the training organized as part of a civic education project implemented by NCCM and on other training offered by NCCM to refugees.

F. An independent national human rights institution

24. With reference to the Committee's concluding observations on Egypt's second periodic report concerning the establishment of an independent national institution in accordance with the Paris Principles, the National Council for Human Rights was established pursuant to Republican Decree No. 94 of 2003 as a body independent from the executive that reports to the Shura Council. Its mandate includes follow-up of the implementation of human rights conventions and treaties and the submission of proposals and comments to the relevant bodies. It works in coordination and cooperation with the State institutions concerned with human rights and is empowered to receive and handle complaints and refer them to the competent authorities (it has no committee or office for children and women, although it occasionally follows up children's issues in coordination with NCCM and the National Council for Women).

III. Prevention

A. Recruitment

Compulsory recruitment

25. Article 58 of the Egyptian Constitution provides that: “Defence of the homeland and its territory is a sacred duty and recruitment is compulsory in accordance with the law.”² In Egypt, a three-year period of recruitment is compulsory for males aged between 18 and 30 years, pursuant to the National Military Service Act No. 127 of 1980. This period may be reduced on the basis of academic qualifications in the case of certain categories, including graduates from universities and higher institutes, those with intermediate diplomas and above, those who have memorized the Koran and those in trades and professions needed by the armed forces.

Exemption

26. Under the National Military Service Act, anyone medically unfit for military service is permanently exempt, as is an only son whose father is deceased or permanently incapable of earning a living; anyone eligible for recruitment who is the eldest brother or son of a citizen killed in military operations or permanently incapable of earning a living as a result of injuries sustained during such operations; and anyone eligible for recruitment who is the eldest brother or son of an officer, recruit or volunteer who died as a result of service or who is ill or disabled as a result of service such that he is rendered permanently incapable of earning a living.

27. The only son of a living father is temporarily exempt from military service, as is the sole provider for a father incapable of earning a living, the provider for a brother or brothers incapable of earning a living, the sole provider for an unmarried sister or sisters, and anyone eligible for recruitment who is the eldest brother or son of an officer, recruit or volunteer who died as a result of service. Also temporarily exempt from compulsory service is the last brother or the eldest remaining brother, after excluding such brothers as are incapable of earning a living, where two brothers or more have been recruited or called for reserve service.

Deferral of recruitment

28. Recruitment may be deferred during peacetime for regular students and for members studying full-time until such time as they obtain the academic qualifications on account of which their service was deferred. These include students at: secondary schools and their equivalent; al-Azhar secondary and teacher-training institutes and their equivalent; institutes with a post-general secondary study period of two years and their equivalent; institutes, schools and training centres with a post-preparatory study period of five years and their equivalent; institutes with a post-general secondary study period of three years and their equivalent; and faculties of universities in the Arab Republic of Egypt and higher institutes and schools and their equivalent.

29. It is worth mentioning that insofar as the Arab Republic of Egypt is not a party to any armed conflict and in view of its signature of the Peace Treaty with Israel, which is fully respected, Egypt is in a state of peace. The numbers required to perform military service have therefore fallen considerably.

² Website of the Egyptian Government: <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/arabic/laws/default.aspx>.

Voluntary recruitment

30. Voluntary recruitment begins after 16 years of age, with safeguards in place to ensure that such recruitment is genuinely voluntary, that it is carried out with the consent of parents or legal guardians, that those wishing to volunteer are fully informed of the duties involved in military service and that the age of volunteers is verified by reliable proof before applications are accepted, in accordance with the declaration made by the Arab Republic of Egypt on its accession to the Optional Protocol.³

B. Legislative measures

31. The Arab Republic of Egypt affirms its commitment to ensuring a legislative climate protective of the rights of the child. A major achievement in this area was the approval of amendments to the Children's Code No. 12 of 1996, as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008 in June 2008. The Children's Code is seen as a distinctive landmark in the course of Egyptian legislation, not only for its success in accomplishing a high degree of harmonization with the Convention and its two Optional Protocols but also on account of the community participation driven by NCCM. Through that participation, it was possible to coordinate with all those concerned, including children, in drafting essential legislative amendments and promoting relevant international instruments and the culture of child rights.

32. Affirming Egypt's commitment to the international conventions that it has ratified, article 1 of the Children's Code provides that the State shall guarantee, as a minimum, the rights enunciated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international conventions in force in Egypt. This provision confers executive force on domestic law in giving effect to the provisions of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols (see annex 2). The Code also indicates specifically that implementation is governed by the rights designated by the Committee as the four principles of child rights (right to non-discrimination, art. 2; primacy of the best interests of the child, art. 3; right to life, survival and development, art. 6; and right of the child to be heard, art. 12). These principles also govern the interpretation of all provisions of the Code.

33. The Arab Republic of Egypt has interpreted its obligations under the Optional Protocol by explicitly providing in article 7 bis (b) of the Children's Code that: "The State shall guarantee priority to safeguarding the lives of children, to ensuring that they have a healthy and secure upbringing away from armed conflict and to ensuring their non-involvement in military activities. It shall guarantee respect for their rights in states of emergency, disaster, war and armed conflict, and shall take all measures to prosecute and punish anyone who commits a war crime, genocide or a crime against humanity where the victim is a child."

34. In the belief that legislative reform demands an overall view of intertwined issues, the Code provides for the establishment of a new decentralized protection system to strengthen the role and responsibility of local communities (through general protection committees and subcommittees and the General Department for Child Rescue). Protection committees are a social protection mechanism for children at risk of falling victim to any of the issues covered by the Optional Protocol. These committees, for which provision is made under article 97 of the Children's Code, are mandated to formulate and monitor implementation of the general policy for the protection of children at the governorate level, identifying all at-risk cases and intervening as necessary to prevent and deal with such

³ http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en.

cases and follow-up measures taken. They periodically monitor procedures and outcomes of the implementation of child-related measures and may — where necessary — recommend that such measures be reviewed, replaced or discontinued in order to achieve the best interests of the child (see annex 2 for further information on protection committees).

C. Schools and colleges

35. The Egyptian armed forces provide various educational opportunities for recent secondary school graduates through: the Military Technical College; the Military Academy; the Naval College; the Air Defence Academy; the Air Academy; and the Technical Institute.⁴ Enrolment in military sports schools is also a possibility. As to basic technical schools, enrolment is conditional on the completion of a primary education.⁵

36. The Ministry of Defence and Military Production cooperates with the Ministry of Higher Education in developing the academic and training curricula within these educational institutions. One illustration of this is that human rights principles and international humanitarian law, most significantly the four Geneva Conventions, are taught in the colleges and academies of the armed forces.

37. Military schools supervised by the Ministry of Education also exist.

D. Armed groups

38. The law criminalizes the establishment of armed groups outside the armed forces. There are no children in the territory of the Arab Republic of Egypt who belong to armed groups, particularly as the State is not involved in any armed conflicts.

E. Cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross

39. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has maintained a regular presence in Egypt since the Second World War. The ICRC delegation in Egypt concentrates on promoting knowledge of international humanitarian law and its incorporation into national legislation. It contributes to training in international humanitarian law for senior military and civilian officials and promotes its teaching in universities and schools, along with related subjects. It also provides technical and academic support, produces teaching resources and gives help with training trainers, including in the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.⁶

F. Peacekeeping forces

40. In compliance with the rules of international legitimacy, the Arab Republic of Egypt has been a strong part of peacekeeping forces since the 1960s in different areas of the world, particularly Africa, including the Sudan and Darfur, Congo, Somalia, Central Africa,

⁴ Website of the Egyptian armed forces: <http://www.mmc.gov.eg>.

⁵ Child Soldiers Global Report 2008.

⁶ Website of the International Committee of the Red Cross: <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/egypt?opendocument>.

Angola, Mauritania, Liberia, Rwanda and the Comoros islands.⁷ Egypt is also part of the peacekeeping forces in Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Georgia.⁸

G. Children at risk

41. The Arab Republic of Egypt, embodied in the Ministry of State for Family and Population through NCCM, ranks children at risk as a top priority and has successfully established an integrated mechanism for dealing with issues relating to such children. Accordingly, in addition to the aforementioned amendments to the Children's Code, which includes an entire article defining children at risk, namely article 96 (see annex 2), it announced an array of national policies and programmes aimed at catering to the contrasting (social, economic, educational, health, geographical and other) circumstances of Egyptian children.

42. Key policies and programmes implemented during the reporting period are described in detail in Egypt's third and fourth combined periodic report and in its initial report on measures taken to implement the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, both of which have been submitted to the Committee but have yet to be considered.

National Child Rights Observatory

43. Established with a budget of over 16 million Egyptian pounds (LE) by NCCM, in partnership with Italian Cooperation, UNICEF and the Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC), the National Child Rights Observatory serves as a mechanism for collecting data on and monitoring the situation of children, including the main problems that they encounter.

Draft national strategy for family empowerment

Programme to combat violence against children

44. This programme seeks to operationalize the provisions of the Children's Code by training personnel working to give effect to child rights, improving services provided for at-risk children by governmental bodies and NGOs and enhancing the level of protection offered. The programme is implemented by NCCM, with financing from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Programme to reduce poverty and promote the legal rights of children and young people

45. Implemented by NCCM in collaboration with the World Bank and with financing from Italian Cooperation, the programme aims to ensure the right to identity as a gateway to the exercise of all economic, social and political rights insofar as the possession of official papers is a vital means of empowerment for children and young people. The project sensitizes the target groups to the importance of obtaining those papers (such as birth certificates, personal identity cards, etc.) and makes it possible for them to acquire them. Focusing on seven governorates in acute need of this type of intervention, one of its major successes has been to enable 120,000 beneficiaries to obtain official papers and access basic services.

⁷ <http://www.paw.ypteam.com/peacekeepingforces.php>.

⁸ <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/757/op132.htm>.

The Aflatoun programme to disseminate a culture of children's rights and provide social and financial education

46. The programme spreads awareness of the Convention through an appealing technique based on conducting literary and artistic activities in a lively interactive framework. Targeted to reach 300,000 children, in particular those from marginalized groups, it is being implemented in 450 schools by NCCM, in cooperation with the Aflatoun base in Amsterdam.

47. Additional to this are the policies and programmes implemented prior to the reporting period, namely:

- The National Plan for Combating Violence against Children (2006)
- The National Strategy and Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labour (2006)
- The National Strategy for the Protection of Young People against Drugs (2005)
- The National Strategy for the Protection, Rehabilitation and Integration of Street Children (2003)

Children-at-risk programme⁹

48. Targeted at five categories of children at risk (street children, child labourers, children with disabilities, girls likely to be or already circumcised and children outside education), the programme was implemented under NCCM supervision, in cooperation with the European Union, with a budget of 20 million euros. Through the programme, a number of NGOs implemented projects in the most disadvantaged governorates with the aim of improving the quality of life for children at risk and promoting their right to life, survival and development.

H. Measures taken to raise awareness of the Optional Protocol

Efforts to include peace education as a subject in the school curricula

49. NCCM runs a civic education project aimed at sensitizing children and young people to the importance of democratic practice and rational governance by discussing and affirming the following:

- The value of peace and the harmful effects of armed conflict
- The need to reject extremism and violence as a means of expression and give precedence to the principle of dialogue based on respect for diverse views
- Human rights principles and the rights of all individuals, irrespective of gender, politics, religion or ethnicity
- Freedom of expression and political pluralism
- The need to foster the concept of individual and collective security
- The importance of openness to different cultures
- The need to promote a culture of fairness, mutual understanding and tolerance

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/case-studies/egypt_children-at-risk_en.pdf.

50. As part of this project, a series of training courses was held for school principals, social workers and teachers in the governorates of Cairo and North and South Sinai on the concepts of civic education, citizenship, child rights and the culture of peace. Various citizenship and child-rights clubs were set up in schools as student activity groups aimed at priming students in the culture of peace, self-reliance and acceptance of others.

51. Training in those concepts was also targeted at workers in the youth parliaments of the National Council for Youth, compilers and presenters of children's radio and television programmes, a group of journalists and youth officers from various political parties.

52. For its part, the Ministry of Education incorporated the subject of peace into its curricula, together with other concepts promoting the values of citizenship and belonging (such as rights and duties, the law and democracy, children's rights, women's rights, tolerance, acceptance of others' opinions, community participation, political party life and right of citizenship). Peace is also among the topics that crops up most in school activities and examinations in such subject areas as drawing, free expression, geography, Arabic language and religious instruction in Islam and Christianity.

Role of NGOs, the media and the private sector

53. A number of entities work cooperatively to raise awareness of the importance of peace insofar as dissemination of the culture of peace is a responsibility to be shouldered by all, notwithstanding differences of belief, culture, religion, race and social background.

54. In this context, the earlier mentioned SMWIPM — which is an NGO — plays a leading role. In 2007, for instance, it launched an initiative to disseminate the culture of peace through use of the Internet, taking advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) and Internet tools in order to spread the culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue among peoples at the global level and not simply in Egypt. This is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the private sector, and through concerted international efforts to end the phenomenon of violence afflicting communities and tackle the causes of war and injustice. The initiative won international appreciation during the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) TELECOM WORLD exhibition and forum in October 2009.¹⁰

55. SMWIPM also organizes a lecture series under the title of "*Peace matters*", to which are invited international personalities with a prominent role in disseminating the culture of peace, such as the President of Finland and the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

56. Believing that young people have the overriding capacity to change the face of the world, which continues to suffer from prejudice and fear, SMWIPM has set up a youth committee tasked with empowering young people to support peace initiatives, use the language of peace and strengthen intercultural understanding and tolerance in order to turn them into a positive element for social change and thus construct a more peaceful society for individuals, the community and the world as a whole.

57. Another NGO, the Integrated Care Society, the Governing Board of which is chaired by Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, also organized a meeting in September 2009 on the culture of peace. The meeting focused on the importance of the culture of peace, together with acceptance of others, diversity, democracy, negotiation, conflict resolution, assistance and volunteering, for the development of national sentiment and belonging in young people.

¹⁰ Website of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology: <http://www.mcit.gov.eg/ar/NewsDetails.aspx?id=MF4pglpwd64>.

IV. Prohibition

58. Egyptian legislation is in keeping with the Convention and its two Optional Protocols, as already mentioned, and endeavours to protect children against all forms of exploitation, including involvement in armed conflict. As to compulsory recruitment, it is not permitted — pursuant to the National Military Service Act — before 18 years of age.

59. It is worth mentioning in addition that the Arab Republic of Egypt has signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and ratified Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and 1977. It has also acceded to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 (1999) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

60. With respect to the extradition of suspects, it is conditional under the Code of Criminal Procedure on the existence of a valid treaty between the requesting State and the Arab Republic of Egypt.

61. Concerning the possession or procurement of arms, article 6 of the Egyptian Arms and Ammunition Act provides that no licence for the procurement or possession of arms may be granted to anyone under 21 years of age. Through the Ministry of the Interior, the Government is clearly endeavouring to ensure implementation of the law, with enforcement actively monitored.

V. Protection, recovery and reintegration

62. The Arab Republic of Egypt is committed to protecting the right of child victims and witnesses. Article 116 bis (d) of the Children's Code provides that child victims and witnesses, at all stages of arrest, investigation, trial and enforcement, shall have the right to be heard, to be treated with dignity and compassion, and to be afforded full respect for their physical, mental and moral integrity, together with the right to protection, health, social and legal assistance, rehabilitation and social integration, in accordance with the United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

63. With regard to training, the Arab Republic of Egypt is concerned to enhance the capacities of all personnel involved with children and working to give effect to the Children's Code, as set forth in paragraphs 17 and 18, to which end it allocates a substantial amount of financial resources.

64. Concerning the guarantee of protection of a child's identity and assurance of confidentiality, article 116 bis (b) of the Children's Code prescribes the penalty of a fine of not less than LE 10,000 and not more than LE 50,000 for any person who through any of the media disseminates or publicizes any information, data, drawings or images pertaining to the identity of a child who has come into contact with the authorities concerned with children at risk or in conflict with the law.

65. With respect to remedies, article 98 bis of the Children's Code affirms that any person knowing that a child is at risk must provide such immediate assistance as he is able in order to prevent or eliminate the risk to the child. Remedies available to children and their relatives in the event that their rights are violated include recourse to the following entities: the police, law enforcement authorities, family court offices for the settlement of disputes, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, public prosecution offices for family affairs and the various types and levels of court, in addition to the National Council for Human Rights, the Child Helpline 16000 and the NCCM Family Advice Line 16021.

66. The Arab Republic of Egypt provides substantial assistance to child victims of armed conflict (in conflict areas including the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon and

Darfur). With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, history shows Egypt to have made formidable efforts to prevent war, establish peace and help victims, particularly children, ever since the conflict broke out. Aware of the difficulty of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and in the context of assuming its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people, Egypt responded to the suffering of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip in coping with the burden of occupation by stepping up its humanitarian assistance during the periods of disaster in order to help child victims of the armed conflict and Israeli attacks to which we refer here, in particular the incursion against Gaza (December to January 2009). Egypt also took in over 2,000 wounded and provided medical care facilities,¹¹ bearing the enormous costs involved in treating and rehabilitating victims, including children and adults injured by use of the internationally proscribed white phosphorus.

67. The Arab Republic of Egypt is regarded as the country to have provided most assistance during the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, ranging from over 1,650 tons of food aid to medical instruments, equipment and essentials, food items and intensive-care ambulances. It is worth mentioning that Egyptian humanitarian assistance poured in from villages and hamlets, with individuals, NGOs and the private sector joining in and coordination provided by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.¹² Egypt also facilitated the delivery of international assistance to victims across its territory.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

68. As stated in the third and fourth combined periodic report of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt stood at 35,657 in 2007, including 18,000 refugees, 31.5 per cent of whom were children under 17 years of age. Sudanese constituted the vast majority of refugees, followed by Somalis and Ethiopians. In 2009, according to data of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees stood at 97,861, most of them from the Sudan, followed by Iraqis and Somalis.¹³

69. In 2007, the number of asylum-seekers amounted to some 17,000, of whom 29 per cent were children. The vast majority were similarly Sudanese, whereas Somalis amounted to no more than 1.1 per cent. In 2009, UNHCR data recorded 14,680 asylum-seekers, most of them from the Sudan, followed by Eritreans and Ethiopians.¹⁴

70. Owing to the rise in the total number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt, the UNHCR budget increased for 2009, 2010 and 2011. In 2009, \$10,528,259 was spent, whereas \$14,073,888 is earmarked for 2010 and \$14,083,900 for 2011.¹⁵

71. Concerning services and programmes provided by the Arab Republic of Egypt for refugee children, a programme for the protection and integration of refugees in the areas where they live was implemented in 2004 by NCCM, in conjunction with UNHCR and NGOs. The programme aimed to determine the situation of refugee children and mothers in their areas of residence and to integrate refugee families, young people and children into the communities to which they were transferred, using development activities elaborated on the basis of the needs of refugees, Egyptians and local communities in the Kilo 4.5 slum area east of Nasr City in the governorate of Cairo.

¹¹ Website of the Egypt State Information Service: <http://www2.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Pub/egypt/113300000000000014.htm>.

¹² Website of the Egypt State Information Service: <http://www2.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Pub/egypt/113300000000000014.htm>.

¹³ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486356>.

¹⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486356>.

¹⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486356>.

72. The project conducted a needs assessment of these communities, which was then used as a basis for elaborating and implementing a procedural plan of action covering such areas as security and awareness-raising on important legal topics. In the field of education, schools were provided for the area and essential educational supplies paid for in the case of children from families on low or limited income. In the field of health, a health structure and a referral system were put in place for refugees and advanced medical centres were established in the area. In the economic field, NGOs and governmental bodies were encouraged to provide small development projects for enabling young people to set up income-generating projects. Family training centres were also created and job opportunities provided for women.

73. The project's main achievements included:

- Holding seminars and training courses for refugees in order to raise their awareness of and acquaint them with available services and ensure that children receive their due rights
- Setting up nurseries for Sudanese and Egyptian children, providing job opportunities for young Sudanese and Egyptian girls, training class facilitators and introducing literacy classes
- Establishing a women's health centre at the Haganah medical centre with a view to increasing communication among Sudanese and Egyptian women and girls, offering the benefit of special free-of-charge services, ensuring that children are inoculated against basic diseases, in particular poliomyelitis and tuberculosis, checking that Sudanese children are registered at birth, and providing an information network in order to determine the frequency of visits to the medical centre and the state of health of Egyptians and Sudanese alike
- Raising awareness of adolescent health issues and female-related problems, such as the high maternal mortality rate, circumcision and its harmful psychological effects on young girls, and the problem of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and sexually transmitted diseases
- Implementing programmes to protect the environment in the project areas and enlisting young Egyptians and refugees to help with street cleaning
- Providing cultural and leisure services and joint trips for Egyptian and refugee children in order to promote cooperation and respect for others
- Establishing a local executive committee composed of key members of both the Egyptian and the refugee community, in particular Sudanese, as well as representatives of international bodies and donors, for the purpose of assessing the impact of programmes and projects implemented in these areas on local community members and monitoring implementation
- Forming an advisory council that convenes every three months to provide advice and support to the project coordinating committee, which endeavours to deliver health services, either free of charge or at a cost of LE 1, to all refugee mothers and children in government-run health centres and to involve refugees and Egyptians in all activities in order to increase opportunities for communication

VI. International assistance and cooperation

74. The Arab Republic of Egypt participated fully in the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children and in the meeting held in conjunction with the session to address the issue of children and armed conflict in Africa. Egypt has hosted

several conferences on the rights of children in armed conflict in the Middle East region, Africa and the world as a whole. A session on children and armed conflict in Africa was also included as part of the three Middle East and North Africa regional consultations for the United Nations study on violence against children, which were hosted by Egypt in Cairo in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Although this topic was not directly addressed in the study, it attracted interest owing to the eruption of the situation in the region and the linkage between the two issues. It should be said that the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict participated in the meeting sessions for this reason. Egypt highlighted the importance of coordination between the Secretary-General's Special Representative on violence against children and his Special Representative for children and armed conflict.

75. Through the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism and punishment of those responsible for the recruitment of child soldiers, Egypt also plays an active role in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children in armed conflict and the action plan developed in that context.

VII. Conclusion

76. This report presents some of the Egyptian efforts made to tackle the offences covered by the Optional Protocol. Although neither the Arab Republic of Egypt nor any of its children is involved in any armed conflict, it has made significant efforts on the basis of its obligations under the Optional Protocol, despite limited financial resources. Notwithstanding their significance, however, these efforts have failed to produce the degree of rehabilitation and reintegration as hoped for hundreds of thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants received by Egypt on its territory, who include child victims of armed aggression in the countries from which they relocated.

77. The Arab Republic of Egypt is aware that it must not only continue these efforts but also double them, as well as mobilize the financial and human resources needed for their success. The Egyptian Government looks forward to a positive and constructive dialogue with the Committee and to the Committee's concluding observations, which will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening Egypt's efforts to protect every child on its territory against the offences covered by the Optional Protocol.
