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**Committee on Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights**

Fourth periodic report submitted by Tunisia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2021*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. Tunisia hereby submits its fourth periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report reviews the measures and actions taken to implement the provisions of the Covenant and follow up on the concluding observations since the examination of its previous national report in 2016.
2. The report was prepared according to the participatory methodology adopted by the National Committee for Coordination, Preparation and Submission of Reports and Follow-up of Recommendations in the field of human rights, in line with the corresponding guidelines.
3. It should be recalled that Tunisia underwent a comprehensive reform process, beginning on 25 July 2021. This report covers a period that included several political milestones, most notably the promulgation of the Constitution of the new republic on 25 July 2022, the organization of legislative elections for the Assembly of the Representatives of the People in its two sessions (December 2022 and January 2023), and the commencement of the Assembly's activities following the election of its committees.
4. The Tunisian State will update its common core document ([HRI/CORE/TUN/2016](#)) once the establishment of the constitutional institutions has been finalized.
5. Tunisia strengthened its engagement in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by submitting its first voluntary report in 2019 and its second in 2020. The reports show how the goals have been integrated into the Development Plan. Tunisia was ranked in first place in Africa in 2020 for its level of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, with a completion rate of 67.1 per cent.
6. Tunisia is eager to ensure that this report should provide an opportunity for constructive and transparent dialogue that will contribute to the strengthening of economic, social and cultural rights.

Methodology for preparing the report

7. The process of preparing this report began with a training workshop on the Covenant and the terms of reference for drafting the national report on 13 December 2022 for the members of the committee and its permanent secretariat, with the support of the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The following consultations were organized:
 - A national consultation on 9 June 2023, with the participation of representatives of independent bodies and civil society from the governorates of Greater Tunis, 10 associations from the governorate of Kasserine, and members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (see the resulting recommendations in Annex 1).
 - Two consultations with children and young people from the governorates of Greater Tunis, in which 25 children and 25 young people participated (see the resulting recommendations in Annexes 2 and 3).

Part I: Strategic framework for the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights

8. The circular on the preparation of the draft Development Plan 2016–2020 was issued on 26 February 2015, followed by the circular of 25 July 2015 setting out the general framework and methodology for the preparation of the Plan. The guidance document for the plan was published in September 2015, based on three main pillars: an analysis of the development situation, a vision for society, and an alternative development model. It also outlines goals, policies and reforms.
9. The guidance document, which was prepared in exceptionally delicate circumstances, was the first of three phases with a view to managing economic and social transformation

over the next five years. It served as the basis for dialogue among stakeholders and as a frame of reference for the Plan.

10. As part of the preparatory work for the Plan, Tunisia adopted an approach that involves the participation of civil society in some consultations at the local level, especially those related to the selection of local projects and management at the regional level. In total, 20,000 people participated in the consultations at the regional and local levels and 6,000 at the central level.

11. In parallel with the preparation of the plan, in January 2016 the Government presented the National Programme for Major Reforms 2016–2020, to be implemented concurrently with the Five-Year Development Plan 2016–2020, of which it also forms an important pillar. The Programme, which includes 80 major structural reforms in all fields, is the main mechanism for the new development model.

12. The Plan is designed to support the economic transition, increase growth rates, promote economic and social inclusion, and enhance sustainability in all its dimensions. Together with the National Programme for Major Reforms 2016–2020, it establishes a new development model capable of revitalizing the economy, improving the indicators of economic efficiency and productivity, creating wealth, and laying the foundations of good governance.

13. The development model provides for the gradual recovery of economic activity over the first two years of the Plan's implementation, followed by an increase in the growth of the Tunisian economy from 2018 onwards.

14. In this context, the following measures have been taken:

- The final version of the draft Water Code has been drawn up with the participation of civil society and is currently being finalized before being discussed by the Council of Ministers and referred to the Assembly of the Representatives of the People.
- Work is under way on drafting a national plan on climate change adaptation for food security.
- A compensation fund for agricultural damage caused by natural disasters has been established.
- Work has begun on the fourth phase of the process of developing the 2050 Water Sector Strategy.

15. While the results obtained during the first two years of the Plan's implementation were generally close to the targets set, a decline in economic performance was registered from 2018 onwards.

16. This is because the implementation of the Plan coincided with external factors, exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the resulting global economic downturn. After concluding an agreement with the International Monetary Fund for the 2016–2020 period, Tunisia managed to keep relative control over financial balances until 2019, but the COVID-19 health crisis forced it to abandon the programme and request exceptional financing under the Fund's Rapid Financing Instrument.

17. Internal factors have also had an impact, including frequent waves of protests accompanied by production disruptions in the extractive sectors (at times to the point of stopping production altogether), such as the events in Kamour in 2017, energy and food shortages, and delays in the implementation of a number of structural reforms in the productive sector, which affected investment and trade, slowed down economic recovery, exacerbated the social situation, worsened fiscal balances, and deepened the structural difficulties in the public finances, as the State budget has had to bear the additional burden of social transfers, compensation, and wage increases, leading to an increase in public debt.

18. The annual growth rate at constant prices between 2016 and 2020 was 1.9 per cent, compared to the 3.3 per cent estimated in the 2016–2020 Plan. The food trade balance coverage rate was 79 per cent compared to the 96 per cent predicted, and agricultural investments amounted to 6,685 million Tunisian dinars (D), with an implementation rate of about 74.8 per cent.

19. Public investment during the period of the Plan (2016–2020) reached D 2,809 million, compared to the predicted D 4,440 million. Investment reached D 653 million in 2021 and was expected to reach D 715.6 million in 2022.

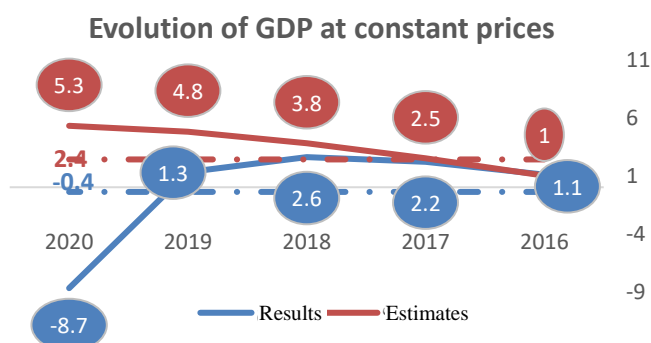
20. The economic growth rate fell to -0.4 per cent between 2016 and 2020, compared to the 3.5 per cent estimated in the five-year Plan. Excluding 2020, the growth rate was 1.8 per cent for 2016–2019, compared to the 3 per cent estimated under the Plan for the same period.

21. 2020 was exceptional year by all standards and saw an unprecedented decline in economic activity, which was reflected in the historically low growth rate (-8.7 per cent), first affecting the export-oriented sectors due to the closure of the borders and then sectors oriented towards the domestic market, such as construction, as a result of lockdown measures.

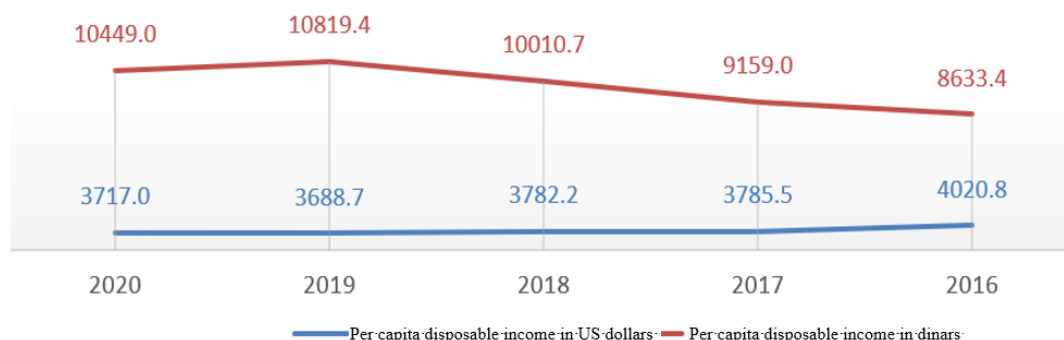
22. According to the results recorded, per capita income during the period of the 2016–2020 Plan nonetheless increased from D 8,633.4 in 2016 to D 10,449 in 2020 (compared to the D 12,220 estimated by the end of the Plan).

23. The exceptional economic situation also affected the labour market, resulting in high unemployment and an increase in precarious work.

24. In view of the above, the preparation of the 2021–2025 five-year plan, which was supposed to be launched in 2022, was initially delayed and then replaced by an “economic recovery and social solidarity” plan for the 2021–2024 period, which included rapid practical measures to stop the haemorrhaging of the public finances and restore the major balances, as well as exceptional measures to save small and medium-sized enterprises and practical steps to reform the governance of public enterprises, reducing their losses and saving them from collapse. There were also social measures for the vulnerable groups most affected by the economic crisis.



25. Since October 2021, urgent reforms have been implemented based on a comprehensive and gradual approach to achieve economic stability in the short term and lay solid foundations for inclusive and sustainable growth in the medium and long term. The 2023–2025 Development Plan and Tunisia Vision 2035 were adopted through a participatory approach involving consultation with various social partners as part of a reform process based on a series of principles and values and with the participation of more than 400 senior officials from the Tunisian administration. The Strategic Vision for Tunisia 2035 was developed as a key stage in the overall development process and a road map to define directions and clarify the future vision by optimizing competencies and energies, reducing disparities, and devising appropriate solutions to remedy the situations described above. In preparing the strategic document, account was taken of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, forward-looking studies and sectoral strategies.



26. Tunisia has strengthened its efforts to encourage private initiative in the field of modern technology through the enactment of Act No. 20 of 17 April 2018 on start-ups. The Act aims to stimulate the creation of projects and the development of start-ups that are based on creativity, innovation and the adoption of new technologies and that achieve high added value and competitiveness at the national and international levels.

27. The Act provides the framework for an integrated government programme called “Start-up Tunisia”. As of June 2023, more than 900 companies have obtained the start-up label and benefited from the associated advantages and incentives.

28. As part of efforts to strengthen the role of the communication technologies sector as a catalyst for economic and social development, the project to prepare the National Strategy for Digital Inclusion, funded by the French Development Agency and launched in January 2023, is being pursued.

29. The Strategy aims to reduce the digital divide, provide all groups of society with the opportunity to use modern technologies, ensure equitable access for all citizens to the Internet, spread digital culture, develop skills in the use of modern technologies, popularize and encourage the use of electronic payment methods, and implement a series of projects related to the development of telecommunications infrastructure and digital services for citizens, such as the national digital identity project.

30. In this context, the following should be recalled:

- The leading role of the information and communications technology and digitization sector in boosting the national economy and achieving sustainable development, as digitization and innovation are part of the drive to promote the green economy.
- The promotion of the use of modern technologies in the fields of the environment and sustainable development, water and waste management, environmental protection, management of energy and renewable energies with a view to further rationalizing the use of resources and developing their production.

31. Based on the circular of 27 July 2020 concerning the preparation of the 2021–2025 Development Plan, options and policies to achieve the development goals were formulated, on the basis of the outcomes of the work of 60 sectoral and regional committees in which all ministries, agencies, professional bodies and representatives of civil society participated, centred around the following areas:

- Global and regional transformations: the aim is to identify the most important global transformations and trends that will characterize development work
- Overall balances: this involves defining the growth model for the period of the Plan
- Major economic and social reforms
- Private investment and improving the business climate through inward and outward investment, public-private partnerships, major projects, and the social and solidarity-based economy
- Sectoral policies for the economic sectors, productive sectors and infrastructure

- Development of human capital and social inclusion, with a focus on the social, educational, training and cultural sectors
- Regional development
- Financing the economy, through the monetary and financial system, the financial market, insurance, public finance and taxation

32. The new Development Plan allocates a total budget of D 38.2 billion for the necessary public investment for the 2023–2025 period to achieve a series of goals, most notably a growth rate of 2.1 per cent, raising the total investment rate in 2025 to 17.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), increasing the share of private investment to 57.6 per cent of total investment by the same year, boosting exports to 45 per cent of GDP, managing the trade deficit and reducing the unemployment rate to 14 per cent in 2025.

33. The Plan also establishes a number of social goals, including combating poverty, strengthening social cohesion, addressing school failure and dropout, supporting employment, promoting the social and solidarity-based economy, and boosting regional development.

34. It should be recalled that Tunisia submitted its first voluntary report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2019 and its second report in 2020. In 2020, Tunisia was ranked in first place in Africa in terms of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, with a completion rate of 67.1 per cent. This report reflects the incorporation of these goals into the country's five-year Development Plan.

Part II: Measures taken to follow up on recommendations

Section 1: Domestic application of the Covenant (paragraphs 8–13 of the concluding observations)

A. Training and awareness-raising on the Covenant

35. Tunisia endeavours to promote a culture of human rights at all levels, both in the education system and among the general public, particularly for law enforcement officials, as indicated in all of its previous reports, including the national report under the universal periodic review ([A/HRC/WG.6/41/TUN/1](#), paras. 49–58) and the periodic report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination ([CERD/C/TUN/20-22](#), paras. 63–68).

36. As part of the reform of the security system, the Ministry of the Interior develops training programmes for its employees to equip them with the necessary skills and familiarize them with the necessary procedures for dealing with human rights issues through training courses that include theoretical and practical lessons at simulation centres, aimed at enhancing the professional competencies and coordination capacity of various stakeholders in this field. The following steps have been taken:

- The incorporation of human rights into the teaching curriculum at all levels of training and the publication and distribution of a human rights handbook containing various international and national instruments on human rights, such as the rights of persons in detention, the rights of victims and ethics in police work.
- The broadcasting of adverts on combating violence against women and violent extremism, the organization of awareness campaigns, and the performance of five simulation exercises involving the joint handling of cases involving women victims of violence, with the participation of the ministries involved on the front line at the central and regional levels, as well as the preparation of a number of procedural guides.

37. In September 2021, the Ministry of Justice organized a training session for district judges from Tunis, Ariana and Ben Arous, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Mnemty association, on Organic Act No. 2018-50 on combating racial discrimination.

38. The Ministry of Justice also organized a series of training sessions on the problems in the implementation of Organic Act No. 58 of 2017 and how to find practical solutions to them, highlighting best practices and recommendations on improving the implementation of the Act. Participants in the training included family judges, public prosecutors responsible for complaints of violence against women, criminal court judges, clerks responsible for receiving complaints of violence against women, family law clerks, and criminal court clerks. The training sessions were held in Sousse, Tabarka, and Djerba three days a week over three weeks (May–June 2023).

39. The Higher Institute of the Judiciary also organized:

- A training course entitled “The competence of the family judge in the light of Act No. 58 of 2017”, on 13 May 2022
- A session entitled “Practical difficulties in the application of Organic Act No. 58 of 2017”, in cooperation with the Gafsa Court of Appeal, on 26 October 2021

The session focused on two issues:

- Regional coordination to combat violence against women and children, between law and practice
- Legal assistance and the economic and social inclusion of women victims of violence

40. In the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Reform Support Programme, a number of workshops on gender equality were organized to strengthen capacities in the field of human rights and promote the application of Organic Act No. 58, including the following:

- A first training course in October 2021 with the participation of 18 judicial and administrative officials and the staff of the Public Authority for Prisons and Reform
- A second training session in March 2022 with the participation of 22 senior officials from different parts of the Ministry

The Ministry of Interior also organised training courses attended by judges, as follows:

- A simulation workshop at the National Centre for Continuing Education in November 2022
- A simulation workshop at the National School for Auxiliary Police Officers in Bizerte in November 2022
- A simulation workshop at the National School of the National Guard and Civil Protection in Kairouan in November 2022
- A simulation workshop at the National School of the National Guard in Bir Bou Rekba in December 2022

B. Presentation of certain court decisions illustrating the application of the Covenant

41. The following are some of the rulings issued by the courts in this area:

- **Case No. 125153 (ruling issued on 21 July 2019):** The right to be employed in the public service on equal terms and not to be discriminated against, as provided for in article 6 of the Covenant, was recognized in respect of a trainee customs officer who was prevented from completing training, after passing the national competitive exam, due to a chronic illness that was discovered after the start of the training in emergency circumstances. The court recognized the right to compensation for the material and moral damages resulting from this decision.
- **Summary proceedings No. 7144774 (ruling issued on 11 July 2020):** The summary order recognized both the right of a citizen who died abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic to be buried in the national territory, at the request of her relatives, as a cultural right, and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and thus the right to health enshrined in article 12 of the Covenant. Bearing in mind the provisions of article 4 of the Covenant relating to the

general principles that require States to ensure respect for these rights in the light of developments in the epidemiological situation and whether the body of the deceased can be repatriated without exposing the public to the risks of the spread of the epidemic, it was held that balancing and reconciling two competing rights in an exceptional situation required the administrative court to temporarily prioritize one over the other. The court gave precedence to the right to health of the general public and suspended the citizen's right to be buried in her country of origin, postponing the repatriation of the deceased's remains until the pandemic was over.

- **Summary proceedings No. 714512 (ruling issued on 9 November 2020):** The case concerned the lack of recognition of the right to work in decent conditions and to exercise trade union activity, as provided for in articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Covenant, as a result of the State failing to comply with the legal procedures for the implementation of a collective agreement for the media sector concluded between the Government and the National Union of Tunisian Journalists, which was approved by a ministerial decree published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Tunisia but not accompanied by the text of the said agreement, as required by law for the entry into force of such agreements. Given that this situation had persisted for almost a year and a half without any legal basis, and that the exercise of the rights granted to journalists under the agreement depended on its publication in the Official Gazette, the court ordered the Government to fulfil its legal obligations and publish the text of the agreement in the Official Gazette.

C. Human Rights Commission

42. Organic Act No. 51 of 2018 on the Commission was enacted and the procedures for the establishment of the Commission were launched. Nominations for membership of the board of the Commission were opened, and a list of candidates was published in the Official Gazette on 22 February 2019. A plenary sitting of parliament to elect the members was scheduled for 8 and 9 July 2021, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission has not yet been established in view of the extraordinary measures ordered after 25 July 2021. The High Committee for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which was established in June 2008 and accredited with "B" status, continues to perform its functions.

43. In the fulfilment of its mandate in accordance with article 41 of the Act, the Commission is tasked with establishing standing committees, taking into account in their composition the various areas of human rights, including a committee on economic, social and cultural rights and education and a committee on environmental and development rights.

44. The Commission may also form other committees or working groups or call on any entity or person with relevant expertise.

D. Promulgation of laws related to the Covenant

45. The preamble to the Constitution of 25 July 2022 enshrines the universal principles of human rights and the values of solidarity, respect, and tolerance. Following the declaration of a state of exception on 25 July 2021, Presidential Order No. 117 of 2021¹ authorized the enactment of decrees provided that they did not undermine the human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the national and international legal system, which meant that the preamble and chapters I and II of the Constitution of 2014 must remain unchanged.

46. In the period covered by this report, several laws were passed, including:

- Organic Act No. 2016-61 of 3 August 2016 on preventing and combating trafficking in persons
- Organic Act No. 2017-10 of 7 March 2017 on the reporting of corruption and protection of whistle-blowers

¹ Presidential Order No. 2021-117 of 22 September 2021 concerning exceptional measures.

- Organic Act No. 2017-58 of 11 August 2017 on the elimination of violence against women
- Act No. 2018-46 of 1 August 2018 on the declaration of assets and interests and on combating illicit enrichment and conflicts of interest
- Organic Act No. 2019-15 of 13 February 2019 on the budget
- Act No. 2021-37 of 16 July 2021 regulating domestic work

The following have also been enacted:

- Organic Act No. 2017-59 of 24 August 2017 on the Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Commission
- Organic Act No. 2018-47 of 7 August 2018 on common provisions applicable to independent constitutional bodies
- Organic Act No. 2019-60 of 9 July 2019 on the Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations

E. Asylum bill

47. Tunisia ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol in 1967, as well as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. It has concluded bilateral agreements with several countries to allow citizens of those countries to work in Tunisia and enjoy a number of rights, including social security coverage, residency and freedom of movement.

48. Asylum claims are examined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) according to established criteria.

49. A bill on asylum, prepared in a participatory manner and in accordance with international standards, has been under consideration for some time.

F. Constitutional Court

50. Chapter V of the Constitution of 25 July 2022 provides for the establishment of a Constitutional Court, which, once in place, will be responsible for oversight of the constitutionality of draft laws at the request of the President of the Republic, 30 members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People, or half of the members of the National Council of Regions and Districts. The fact that appeals can be lodged with three different bodies is intended to provide maximum guarantees that laws will not be issued that are inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution and duly ratified international treaties.

51. The Court's rulings are universally binding; if the Court declares unconstitutional a law that has been challenged by an appeal, the law is to be suspended within the limits of the ruling.

52. The process of establishing State institutions, including the Constitutional Court, has been under way since the promulgation of the new Constitution.

Section 2: Taxation policy (paragraph 15 of the concluding observations)

53. Since 2014, Tunisia has undertaken a comprehensive reform of the tax system in terms of legislation and the institutional framework, based on:

- Simplifying the tax system and ensuring tax justice
- Reducing the tax burden on organizations and individuals
- Guaranteeing performance neutrality, boosting taxpayers' confidence and improving their relationship with the tax administration
- Tackling tax evasion and enhancing the transparency of financial transactions

- Modernizing and restructuring the administration and improving its working methods

54. Several measures to implement the tax reform programme have been introduced through the financial laws enacted between 2017 and 2023, in addition to the adoption of other tax-related laws, such as the Act on the Revision of the System of Tax Privileges, aimed primarily at reviewing and rationalizing these privileges with a view to ensuring they are provided to those who deserve them and aligning them with national priorities. These measures include the following.

(a) Supporting tax justice and reducing the tax burden on individuals, in particular by:

- Reviewing the income tax schedule, raising the threshold for the first exempted bracket from D 1,500 to D 5,000, redistributing the other brackets and adjusting the tax rates applicable to them to bring them into line with the income level.
- Reviewing deductions for marital status and family expenses, increasing deductions for the head of the household and for the first four dependent children, as well as increasing additional deductions for children with disabilities and dependent parents, with a cap of D 2,000 per year for the deduction of professional expenses for salaried employees.
- Supporting businesses and promoting investment to meet growing demand for jobs.
- Reviewing the value-added tax (VAT) and excise duty brackets, reducing the number of VAT rates from three (7 per cent, 13 per cent and 19 per cent) to two (a reduced rate and a standard rate) with a view to simplifying the system by phasing out the list of products and services subject to the 13 per cent VAT rate and applying the 19 per cent VAT rate to services provided by certain self-employed professionals.

(b) Rationalizing tax benefits

- Tax benefits have been limited to priority sectors such as regional development, agriculture and fisheries, sectors that contribute to the development of technology, investments in innovation and young entrepreneurs.
- Tax compliance is supported by encouraging the integration of the parallel economy and tackling tax evasion by:
 - Improving the digitization of the tax administration to enable the development of databases and enhance tax transparency.
 - Encouraging persons working in the parallel economy to join the formal economy by harmonizing the tax regime for self-employed people with the applicable tax legislation in order to provide them with a simplified tax and social security regime based on the payment of a single contribution covering taxes and social contributions.
 - Combating tax evasion and improving tax collection.

55. As part of efforts to keep pace with global developments in the field of tax policy and to reduce tax evasion, enhance transparency and address illegal tax practices, Tunisia ratified the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting, adopted in Paris in November 2016, pursuant to Decree No. 12 of 2023 and Ordinance No. 2023/225 of 10 March 2023. The Convention will help Tunisia to preserve its tax resources and tackle tax evasion committed by transferring income and profits abroad, which prevents the State from levying taxes on these incomes and profits.

Section 3: Combating corruption (paragraph 17 of the concluding observations)

56. The Anti-Corruption Commission issued its first activity report in 2016 and its last public report in 2018.

57. The Commission developed the first National Anti-Corruption Strategy, covering the period from 2016 to 2020, which was published in December 2016. The Commission developed two-year action plans as part of its follow-up of the implementation of the Strategy.

58. In the same context, the Court of Audit published an executive summary entitled “Institutional Framework for Fighting Corruption”, which included recommendations, categorized by theme, to develop this framework. The summary was published on the Court’s website in February 2021.

59. Government Ordinance No. 1158 of 2016 on the establishment and remit of governance cells provides for the establishment of these cells in most ministries. The governance cells are tasked with ensuring the proper application of the principles of governance and the prevention of corruption and participating in the development of national and sectoral strategies and action plans to promote governance and prevent corruption, as well as ensuring their proper implementation and evaluation. They are also responsible for handling reports of corruption and following up on corruption cases, particularly with regard to the measures taken, the results obtained, relevant statistics, and whether they are the subject of an audit or a monitoring mission.

Section 4: Bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements (paragraph 19 of the concluding observations)

60. Tunisia takes into account the obligations set forth in a number of articles of the Covenant when negotiating and implementing bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements, particularly those related to the right to work (art. 6), the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 11), and the right to health (art. 12).

61. Tunisia has endeavoured to comply with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) aimed at ensuring food security, which include:

- The adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity at the twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022, pursuant to which a WTO work programme on food security was adopted in November 2022.
- The adoption of a decision on a temporary waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights to enable developing countries to produce vaccines to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics, and to expand this waiver to include therapeutics and diagnostics.

62. During WTO negotiations, Tunisia always seeks to defend the establishment of fair and equitable rules for developing countries through the adoption of various mechanisms, such as support for farmers with limited resources and a special safeguard mechanism applicable to imports.

63. Tunisia has also expressed its willingness to adhere to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011. In this context, Tunisia participated in the eleventh United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva in November 2022.

64. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Tunisia is adopting a participatory approach in preparing for implementation of the Guiding Principles and has organized a series of meetings with various stakeholders, including ministries, independent public bodies, civil society organizations, representatives of the academic community, experts, and media institutions. The Office of the Prime Minister is finalizing the procedures for establishing an effective project leadership system in order to launch the consultation and reflection phases on the pillars, objectives and indicators of the National

Plan on Business and Human Rights. The launch of the process of drafting this plan, under the supervision of the Prime Minister, was announced at the end of July 2023.

65. Several public and private sector organizations have also expressed their willingness to engage with this United Nations initiative and have expressed their belief that compliance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights will improve business productivity and facilitate access to foreign markets.

Section 5: Non-discrimination (paragraph 21 of the concluding observations)

66. Article 23 of the Constitution stipulates that all citizens, male and female, have equal rights and duties and are equal before the law without any discrimination.

67. Tunisia has ratified most of the international human rights conventions that contain provisions on combating discrimination, whether direct or indirect.

68. Although there is no specific definition of indirect discrimination in Tunisian law, a legal or legislative text defining or criminalizing it is not required in order to recognize the individual's right to protection from discrimination and to judicial redress. The current legal framework provides sufficient protection against various forms of discrimination, both direct and indirect discrimination, thanks to the broad terms used in the law and the comprehensive provisions of the Constitution, which ensure protection against all forms of discrimination.

69. In this context, reference should be made to Organic Act No. 2018-50 on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, which is one of the most important legislative instruments for harmonizing the national legislative system with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which centres around human rights, the most important principles of which are equality and non-discrimination. Moreover, the Act provides a comprehensive definition of racial discrimination that is consistent with reality and the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Section 6: Regional disparities (paragraph 23 of the concluding observations)

70. The situation in the regions has been characterized by disparities in economic and social growth and access to basic services, especially in terms of economic activity, employment, living conditions, health, education, and transport.

71. Total investment at the regional level during the 2016–2021 period amounted to D 55,341 million: D 17,603 million of the D 28,339 million programmed for the same period (an implementation rate of 62 per cent) and D 37,738 million of the programmed D 45,121 million (an implementation rate of 84 per cent).

72. The following are among the main national projects carried out within the framework of infrastructure development:

- The Djerba seawater desalination plant, with a capacity of 50,000 m³/day, is operational.
- Seawater desalination projects with a total production capacity of more than 200,000 m³/day have been launched in Gabès, Sousse and Sfax.
- The construction of two water transfer stations in Béja and Bizerte to supply about 240,000 inhabitants has begun.
- Drinking water has been supplied to 676 schools out of a total of 859 planned, and sanitation projects have been implemented for 584 schools out of a total of 892 planned.
- Some 574,000 clients in urban and rural areas have been connected to the electricity grid out of a total 550,000 planned.

- The construction of Mornaguia power plant and the first phase of the Radès power plant has been completed.
- The project to supply the governorate of Sidi Bouzid with natural gas, at an estimated cost of D 40 million, was launched in July 2018.
- In the water sector, the drinking water supply rate by the end of 2020 was 98.4 per cent.
- In the electricity and gas sectors, the main achievements during the 2016–2020 period were the connection of 574,000 urban and rural clients to the electricity grid out of the 550,000 planned; the installation of electronic meters using advanced technology for some high-, medium- and low-voltage customers for irrigation purposes; the rehabilitation of distribution networks in sensitive areas to improve the service provided to clients and avoid power cuts; and the connection of about 180,000 households to the gas grid out of the 300,000 planned. The project to provide natural gas to the town of Sbeitla in Kasserine governorate has also begun.

73. The following are the main regional and local projects carried out within the framework of infrastructure development:

- The continued implementation of the first generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas continued, and the completion of 81 projects in 114 neighbourhoods across all governorates during the 2016–2020 period.
- The approved addition of 28 new projects in 35 neighbourhoods to the programme, together with a second generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas.
- Implementation of the Special Social Housing Programme, which contributes to social inclusion, combating poverty and promoting human development, especially in priority areas and border and mountainous regions that are not covered by any other housing programme; as of the end of 2021, 6,100 families had benefited from this programme.
- The rehabilitation of certain working-class neighbourhoods and the curb of the spread of informal constructions, particularly near newly established industrial zones, such as El Bokri in Ariana governorate and El Fejja in Manouba governorate, by creating new organized residential neighbourhoods and connecting them to various public networks.
- The continued expansion, upgrading and rehabilitation of 19 dilapidated wastewater treatment stations.

74. As part of the Regional Development Programme, the following results have been achieved:

- Completing about 1,874 kilometres of roads and paths.
- Supplying drinking water to approximately 51,000 families in urban and rural areas.
- Connecting 2,077 households to the electricity supply network.
- Renovating 8,000 housing units for disadvantaged and low-income families.
- Providing grants to about 12,000 young people to start new projects, supplement project financing plans, or contribute to the capital of completed projects.

75. As part of the Integrated Development Programme, the following results have been achieved:

- The completion of 3,784 individual projects, which created 8,531 jobs, including 928 for higher education graduates.
- The provision of training to 4,933 beneficiaries (out of a total of 7,624 planned) in various fields, mainly traditional industries and agriculture.

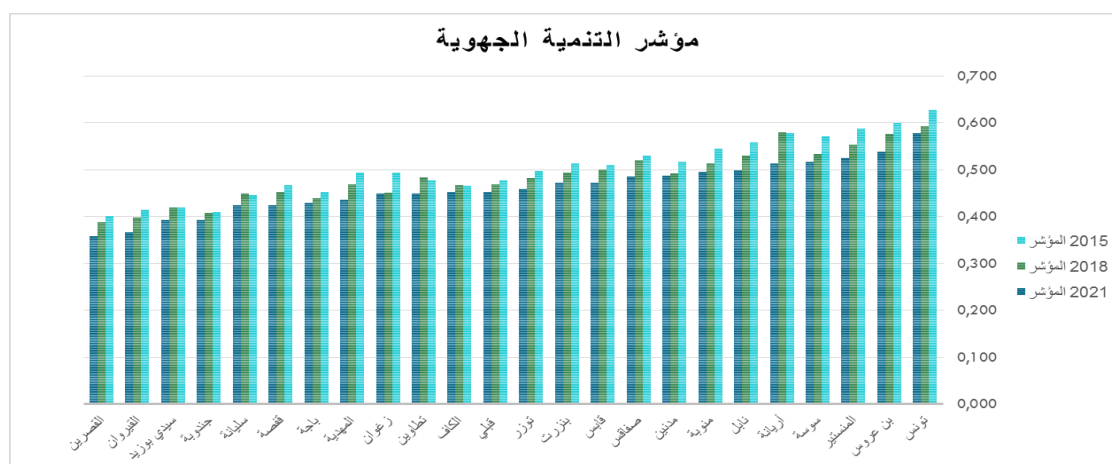
- The completion or near completion of 979 out of a total of 981 planned collective facilities, comprising 291 productive infrastructure facilities, 527 basic infrastructure facilities, and 161 collective facilities.

76. Despite the progress made, the objectives of reducing the deficiencies and disparities between and within regions and improving the living conditions of their inhabitants have not been fully achieved, as shown by the regional development index, a synthetic measure that covers socioeconomic dimensions, calculated on the basis of data containing nearly 100 variables processed using statistical techniques to obtain 35 variables grouped into four areas: welfare requirements, sociodemographic situation, human capital, and the labour market. The index was used to allocate funding under the 2016–2020 Development Plan, applying the principle of positive discrimination for less developed regions as a special measure aimed at introducing more fairness and transparency.

77. The table below shows the evolution of the regional development index from 2015 to 2021:

Regional development index	2015	2018	2021
National average	0.502%	0.484%	0.462%
Highest development index	0.628%	0.593%	0.578%
Lowest development index	0.402%	0.389%	0.359%
Difference between the highest and lowest index	23%	20%	22%

78. The 2021 regional development index confirmed the continued imbalance between regions, with the governorates in the interior of the country lagging the furthest behind. There was a significant decline in the index in 2021 compared to 2018. The national average dropped from 0.484 per cent in 2018 to 0.462 per cent in 2021, while the gap between the highest and lowest indexes increased. The target of a 30 per cent reduction in the gap between the highest and lowest regional development rates set out in the 2016–2020 plan was not achieved, as the reduction achieved was of just 3 per cent.



79. Despite the relative stability in the ranking of the governorates in first and last place, all governorates recorded a decline in the regional development index, including Kasserine (-7.8 per cent), Kebili (-7.7 per cent), Béja (-7.3 per cent), and Tozeur (-7.1 per cent). This is due to several internal and external factors that have had a negative impact, despite the efforts made by the State in terms of developing basic infrastructure, providing equipment and improving health services in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

80. Per capita GDP was D 7,943 at the national level; it was above the national average in the Greater Tunis region (D 11,780) and the Centre-East region (D 7,952), while it remained below the national average in the South-East (D 6,797), South-West (D 6,507), North-West (D 5,503) and Centre-West (D 4,472) regions.

81. A comparison of the poverty rate by region with per capita GDP shows that the eastern coast has the highest share of GDP and the lowest poverty rate, due to the concentration of productive activity in this area, while the predominantly agricultural inland regions are the poorest, as illustrated by the graph below.

82. Communication technology coverage has been extended throughout the country, as shown in the table below:

Percentage of the population covered by the 3G network	2016	2022
	96.2%	99.78%
Percentage of the population covered by the 4G network	2016	2022
	78.8%	98.71%
Mobile phone penetration rate	2020	2022
	126.3%	134.7%
Households with Internet via mobile network	2020	2022
	76.4%	89.3%
Households with Internet via fixed network	2020	2022
	41%	50.2%
Households with landline telephone	2020	2022
	44.6%	51.3%

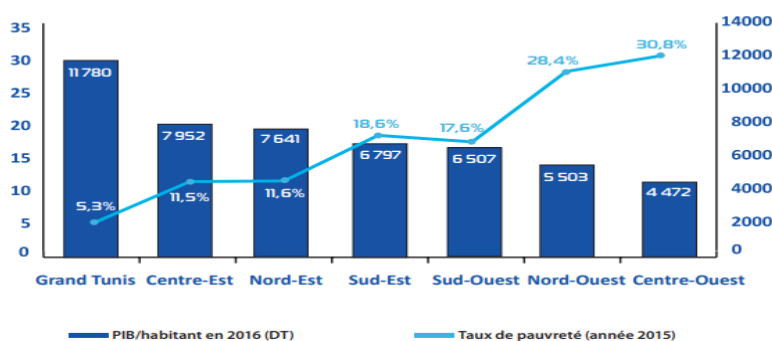
83. With regard to efforts to open up isolated areas and strengthen transport and mobility services in the inland regions, the main achievements are as follows:

- The continuation of the rehabilitation of the Tunis-Kasserine railway line (D 10 million)
- The renovation and modernization of the intercity railway (D 64 million)
- Investment in building, upgrading and expanding technical inspection centres and road transportation stations in various governorates (D 26 million)
- The renewal and upgrading of the fleet of national and regional road transport companies (D 393 million)
- The renewal and upgrading of the individual transport fleet: taxis, *louages* (collective minibus taxis), rural transport, private mass transit companies (D 832 million)

84. The Ministry of Equipment and Housing has worked to achieve sustainable, balanced and inclusive development in the regions through:

- Programmes to open up the inland regions through a network of rural roads to improve the mobility of citizens and facilitate access to healthcare, educational and economic facilities, thereby contributing to reducing the school dropout rate, improving health and healthcare service indicators and achieving economic integration.

· PIB/habitant (DT) en 2016 et taux de pauvreté par région (%)



- Strengthening the road network, which comprises about 20,000 kilometres of numbered roads, of which 84 per cent are paved, and a network of 58,300 kilometres of rural roads, of which 45 per cent are paved, according to figures from 31 December 2022. The first part of the programme, involving the upgrading of 912 kilometres of rural roads in 22 governorates, was launched in 2021.

85. The quantitative targets for 2035 are as follows:

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Current length (km)</i>	<i>Projected length by 2035</i>
Motorways	671	1 325
Dual carriageways	700	2 000
Roads in the road network of major cities	870	1 800
Upgrading and development of the road network (width >7 meters)	11 000	20 000
Reinforcement of the road network (asphalt concrete)	7 850	14 000
Rural roads	26 000	30 000

86. To achieve these objectives, work is focused on the following areas:

- Improving connectivity by facilitating road users' access to the basic road network and making it easier for all road users, in all regions, to reach a motorway or dual carriageway over a distance of less than 60 kilometres
- Reducing the isolation of rural areas
- Constructing dual carriageways to link inland cities with the major economic centres on the coast
- Developing rural roads to make dispersed communities accessible
- Ensuring regular maintenance of the road network throughout the country

Section 7: Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (paragraph 25 of the concluding observations)

87. The Criminal Code is being reviewed by a committee set up for this purpose at the Ministry of Justice, which has yet to submit its final report. With regard to the application of article 230 of the Criminal Code, it should be noted that, the medical examination provided for under this article remains optional and is conducted only with the consent of the suspect. By giving consent to undergo a medical examination to the criminal investigation officer, the suspect does not forfeit the right to refuse to be examined when he or she is brought before the doctor, who is required under the Code of Medical Ethics to respect the person's wishes. The entire procedure must be carried out under the supervision of and in constant coordination with the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

88. Tunisia wishes to recall that it voted in favour of the 2019 Human Rights Council resolution on the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Independent Expert conducted a working visit to Tunisia from 8 to 18 June 2021 in the framework of the open invitation that Tunisia has extended to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council since 2011 and submitted his visit report.

89. With regard to the provision of training to law enforcement officials on the need to respect diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, it should be noted that these officials deal with all citizens without discrimination or targeting, within the framework of the law, bearing in mind that national legislation enshrines and guarantees rights, freedoms and respect for bodily integrity, including the right of every individual to be protected from all forms of stigmatization, discrimination and violence.

Section 8: Equal rights between men and women (paragraph 27 of the concluding observations)

90. Tunisia seeks to harmonize national legislation with the requirements of the Constitution² and with international human rights standards. Considerable progress has been made in this regard, including the enactment of several new laws to promote women's rights (paras. 46 and 47 of this report). In addition, several national and sectoral strategies have been developed, foremost among them the National Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming, which has been translated into sectoral programmes (see national report [CEDAW/C/TUN/7](#) (paras. 44–45) and the national report submitted under the universal periodic review [A/HRC/WG.6/41/TUN/1](#) (paras. 125–139)).

91. A national committee to harmonize human rights-related legal texts with the Constitution and international conventions ratified by Tunisia has been established in the Prime Minister's Office pursuant to a government ordinance of 24 December 2019. The committee has mapped out all the discriminatory legal provisions that need to be amended, including those related to women's rights.

92. Parliamentary committees have been set up in the Assembly of the Representatives of the People that was formed following the elections in December 2022 and January 2023 with a view to strengthening legislative work in line with the State's commitments.

93. The Tunisian State participated in the review of its report before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in February 2023, and a follow-up plan for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, including those of a legislative nature, will be developed.

Section 9: Right to work (paragraph 29 of the concluding observations)

(a) Measures to support the employment of women from vulnerable groups

94. As part of efforts to support women's right to work in decent conditions and their access to the labour market, the Ministry for Women:

- Developed and implemented "Raida" (Pioneer) 2016–2020, the National Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, with the aim of reducing the unemployment rate among women and girls with a low or medium level of education or with a higher degree, developing their skills and facilitating their transition from the informal to the formal sector and their access to markets. The Programme, which had a budget of D 40 million, resulted in the creation of 4,463 women's projects.

Following an evaluation of that Programme, launched "Raidet" (Pioneers), the National Programme for Women's Entrepreneurship and Gender-Sensitive Investing, in March 2022, with the aim of supporting women and girls to access economic investments with high job creation potential or high added value and creating a pool of women entrepreneurs. As of May 2023, D 20 million has been allocated to fund 2,043 micro-, small- and medium-sized projects.

- Set up 32 women's development groups in rural areas since 2020, which have benefited 907 women, with an estimated budget of D 1.34 million. The aim is to support the self-employment of women and girls in rural areas, helping them to move from informal to formal employment and integrating them into the entire production

² Article 23: All citizens, male and female, have equal rights and duties and are equal before the law without any discrimination.

Article 51: The State undertakes to protect the acquired rights of women and seeks to support and promote them.

The State shall guarantee equal opportunities for men and women in the exercise of different responsibilities in all sectors.

The State shall seek to achieve equal representation of women and men in elected councils.

The State shall take measures to eliminate violence against women.

process, from obtaining raw materials to marketing their products and promoting them in major commercial centres under partnership agreements.

- Implemented the Programme for the Economic Empowerment of Families in Special Situations, which aims to improve the living conditions of families and reduce school dropout and poverty by providing support and follow-up before and after the project. Between 2012 and 2023, 2,250 families in special situations were given access to livelihoods, for a total budget of D 13.525 million.
- Implemented the project for the economic empowerment of mothers of children at risk of school dropout and girls who are out of school in rural areas (2017–2023) to empower them economically and socially and boost economic mobility, especially in priority areas. With funds totalling D 3.6 million, the project has provided access to livelihoods for 916 mothers of children at risk of dropping out of school.
- Launched the “Samida” (Resilient) National Programme for the Economic Empowerment of Women Victims of Domestic Violence, which has an estimated budget of D 1 million, with the aim of providing women victims with livelihood resources to support their financial independence, increase their chances of inclusion in the labour market and protect them from various forms of vulnerability;
- Launched the Decent Work for Young People and Women project in 2018 in the governorates of Kairouan, Zaghouan, Tunis and Manouba, in cooperation with the International Labour Office (ILO). It aims to create jobs and job opportunities for young people and women by developing value chains, fostering entrepreneurship, improving public services in the field of employment and supporting vocational training to boost the employment prospects of young people, especially those who have not been able to continue their education. Seventy-nine young men and women were able to create and finance their projects worth a total of D 600,000 in the traditional clothing sector in Manouba and in the alternative tourism sector in Kairouan and Zaghouan, with an estimated employment capacity of 160 jobs.
- Launched the project to support rural women in entrepreneurship in 2019 in the governorates of Nabeul and Sfax in cooperation with the ILO. It aims to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in rural areas and the level of income they generate. Three hundred women in Sfax and Nabeul received training in entrepreneurship and life skills, and 200 women, 100 in each of the two governorates, were selected for in-depth entrepreneurship training in order to start preparing business plans for their projects.

(b) Combating occupational segregation and wage-fixing

95. In addition to the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the legislation in force, Tunisia has ratified all relevant international conventions, including the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). The principle of non-discrimination in employment, which includes equal pay for men and women for the same work, has been recognized. The framework collective agreement also includes provisions on equality between men and women in terms of job opportunities, promotion, and pay. Article 6 of Organic Act No. 58 of 2017 on combating violence against women stipulates that the State must take all necessary measures to eliminate all discriminatory practices against women, especially in relation to wages.

96. When conducting inspection visits to businesses in the private sector, labour inspectors verify the occupational status of each worker and the corresponding salaries and benefits, for both men and women, on the basis of seniority, in order to ensure that there is no discrimination in the company. When the inspectors identify violations of the law, they draft reports and submit them to the court for a ruling on the violation of workers' rights. Failing to pay the approved legal wage to a male or female worker is a punishable offence.

97. In the public sector, equal pay for women and men is guaranteed under the General Regulations governing the Personnel of the State, Local Authorities and Public Administrative Establishments. Article 13 of the Regulations establishes that civil servants

have the right, after completing their work, to a salary and several other benefits, without any associated considerations.

(c) Representation of women in decision-making positions

98. In the current Government, as of the end of April 2024, 9 of the 26 cabinet members (35 per cent), both ministers and secretaries of state, are women. For the first time, women have served as Prime Minister (October 2021–July 2023), head of the General Secretariat of the Government (2021–2022), and head of the Prime Minister’s Office (since November 2023). The Ministry of Justice frequently has women judges at the helm, and women are represented in technical ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Equipment and Housing, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Planning, the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Transport.

99. Women make up 37 per cent of the civil service, and this figure increases to 46 per cent if the staff of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence are excluded. Women occupy 35.8 per cent of professional posts in the civil service, as outlined below (2020 statistics):

- 25 per cent of general directors
- 30.1 per cent of directors
- 33.8 per cent of assistant directors
- 40.2 per cent of heads of service

100. The National Plan for Gender Mainstreaming has a special focus on promoting women’s participation in political life and public affairs, while the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security includes a section on women’s participation in maintaining peace, resolving conflicts and countering terrorism.

101. The Prime Minister issued Circular No. 31 (2018), which provides that the principle of parity must be observed in relation to appointments and senior positions. To reinforce this point, the Prime Minister issued another circular in 2019 stipulating that a male and female candidate must be nominated for every position in government, in the civil service or in decision-making bodies.

102. Within the framework of these regulations, a set of scientific indicators has been developed on the basis of a series of studies, such as the one carried out by the Office of the Prime Minister in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on women in decision-making positions in the civil service, and the studies carried out by the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women. These have led to the introduction of practical mechanisms in this area, such as:

- A monitoring and follow-up mechanism on the role of Tunisian women in management positions in the public sector
- The National Committee to Promote Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Local Governance

Section 10: Unemployment (paragraph 31 of the concluding observations)

103. The unemployment rate increased by 0.9 per cent between 2016 and the first quarter of 2023, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics, as shown in the following table:

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	First quarter of 2023
Men	12.4	12.4	12.5	12.3	15.2	15.4	13.1	13.9
Women	23.5	22.6	22.7	22.4	25	23.6	20.5	21.2
Total	15.6	15.3	15.4	15.3	18	17.9	15.3	16.1

(a) **Employment and promotion of private enterprise**

104. The legislative and regulatory framework for employment, private enterprise and vocational training has been strengthened to cover all groups, especially young people, women, persons with disabilities and the least developed regions in accordance with articles 13, 18, 46 and 54 of the Constitution.

105. Several laws and regulations have been issued, most importantly:

- Act No. 2020-30 of 30 June 2020 on the social and solidarity-based economy
- Decree No. 2020-33 of 10 June 2020 concerning the entrepreneurial system, amended by the Finance Act of 2023
- Decree No. 15 of 2022 concerning grassroots business enterprises and Presidential Order No. 498 of 2022 ratifying the model statutes for local private companies and regional private companies and the creation of a line of credit under article 29 of the Finance Act for the granting of loans on preferential terms during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023. A budget of D 20 million was allocated to the National Employment Fund to this end.
- Articles 18 and 19 of the 2023 Finance Act:
 - Article 18 on supporting the financing of microenterprises for the benefit of higher education graduates increases the maximum amount granted by the Tunisian Solidarity Bank for individual loans from D 150,000 to D 200,000 through an additional allocation of D 20 million from the National Fund for Employment to the Bank.
 - Article 19 of the 2023 Finance Act, on supporting the financing of projects in the framework of economic empowerment of vulnerable and low-income groups, provides for the establishment of a line of credit for these groups, to be allocated for the issuance of interest-free loans of a maximum of D 5,000 per loan to finance activities in all economic fields from January 1 to 31 December 2023. A budget of D 10 million was allocated to the National Employment Fund for this purpose.
- Act No. 41 of 2016 on the employment of persons with disabilities, amending Act No. 83 of 2005
- Decree No. 461 of 2023, amending and supplementing Government Order No. 542 of 2019 regulating the programmes of the National Employment Fund and the conditions and modalities for accessing them, in the context of urgent reforms to active employment programmes
- Decree No. 542 of 2019 regulating the programmes of the National Employment Fund and the criteria for accessing them, as revised on two occasions to target its interventions towards developing the qualifications and skills of jobseekers.

106. In addition to the legal framework, the following have been adopted:

- The National Strategy for Private Enterprise (22 December 2016)
- The National Strategy for Foreign Employment and Migration
- The National Employment Strategy 2030 (19 July 2019)

107. At the operational level, projects and programmes worth an estimated D 2,945 million have been put in place, categorized according to a number of specific objectives, as outlined below.

1. Improving the employability of different types of jobseekers and upgrading their skills in line with the requirements of the labour market

108. The Young People and Employability project was launched in April 2017, in cooperation with the ILO offices in the governorates of Béja, Jendouba, Siliana and Kef. During this phase:

- 4,800 jobseekers have received life skills training and 1,000 jobseekers have received support to develop their professional projects.
- A virtual e-coaching platform has been set up to provide support to jobseekers.
- Eight jobseekers' clubs have been established in the governorates involved in the "Fursati" (My Opportunity) project.

109. A project to support and train young people and enhance their employment prospects was launched in 2019 for a period of four years in the governorates of Tunis, Ariana, Zaghouan and Nabeul. It is expected to involve 20,000 jobseekers registered with employment offices and 1,000 representatives from the employment sector, social partners and others. As of December 2022, approximately 3,200 jobseekers, about 80 per cent of them women, and 440 representatives of the employment sector and social partners, had participated in the project.

110. Programmes to improve employability have been implemented and strengthened: a total of about 910,000 beneficiaries, of whom 70 per cent are women, were involved in the programme between 2016 and June 2023.

111. The rehabilitation and reintegration programme for children leaving detention centres is part of the framework to support vulnerable groups and integrate them into the economy. The programme, which is primarily targeted at children under the age of 18, benefited 307 young people in that age group from 2016 to 2019. In 2020, the manual of procedures for the disposal of the funds allocated to this programme was updated, with the participation of all the ministries and institutions concerned.

112. Specialized intervention and mentoring for persons with disabilities: between 2018 and 2022, 1,069 persons with disabilities, including 386 women and 115 higher education graduates, were integrated into the labour market.

113. The special joint Disability and Employment programme aims to integrate 500 persons with disabilities into working life in the provinces of Gafsa, Gabès and Ben Arous. Under this programme:

- Support grants have been awarded to 657 persons with disabilities, which covered language training courses, funding for business activities, transportation expenses, and workstation adaptation to help them realize their professional projects.

The programme enabled:

- The recruitment of 305 jobseekers with disabilities in the private sector, 86 of them women; entrepreneurship training for 54 persons, 38 per cent of whom were women; and the financing of 15 projects.
- The provision of personalized support to 461 persons with disabilities, including 164 women; the production of Braille leaflets for jobseekers with visual impairments on active employment programmes; and the organization of an accelerated sign language training course for employment counsellors and professionals involved in the employment of persons with disabilities in Ben Arous governorate.
- The organization of the first employment fair for persons with disabilities on 21 June 2023 and the creation of 400 jobs.
- The conclusion of a partnership agreement between the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work and the Tunisian Association for Development with a view to organizing additional training on information and communication technologies to improve the employability of jobseekers and facilitate their integration into companies in the information and communication technologies sector in the governorates of Siliana and Béja. A total of 1,000 higher education graduates, many

of them graduates of higher institutes of technological studies, and 460 young people, both girls and boys, benefited from this training in 2019 and 2020.

Identifying employment opportunities and supporting the economy's capacity to create decent jobs

114. National Strategy for Private Enterprise: In line with the objectives for the 2016–2020 period, especially those related to stimulating private enterprise, the roll-out of the new programmes included in the Strategy's implementation plan (2019–2021) began in 2019, notably the Génération+ programme, which aims to facilitate access to public tenders for small businesses.

115. Between 2016 and 2020, 198 microenterprises were created in the field of road signage, traffic barriers, road surface marking, road and verge cleaning, waterworks maintenance and road repair. In addition, 21 environmental projects were created. Moreover, 93 companies involved in the maintenance and upkeep of schools and the operation and maintenance of IT equipment and networks received funding.

116. As part of the New Generation of Entrepreneurs and Municipalities programme, implementation has begun of the agreements concluded at local level as part of the partnership agreement between the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment and the municipalities for the creation of microenterprises to be tasked with providing municipal services in a number of areas. These agreements provide for the creation of 76 small businesses and around 400 jobs.

117. Supporting the transition to a green economy: The Bizerte Green Careers Platform project was launched in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in North Africa and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank. A total of approximately 1,050 young people have received mentoring, 629 have been placed in green jobs, 71 projects employing 225 young people have been launched, and the capacities of 350 national and regional partners have been strengthened.

118. Financing the creation of microenterprises and projects: Between 2016 and 2020, the Tunisian Solidarity Bank granted 61,000 loans worth D 800 million, of which D 523.4 million were repaid, which enabled the creation of 101,500 jobs.

119. Financing activities through microcredit: Between 2016 and 2020, microcredit associations granted a total of 263,874 microloans for an estimated amount of D 475,281,000, of which D 314,500,000 were repaid.

120. Implementation of support programmes for micro-entrepreneurs through training in private enterprise and entrepreneurship: Between 2016 and 2023, about 75,000 potential entrepreneurs participated in entrepreneurship development courses to learn about project management methods, identifying those best suited to their needs, and how to prepare a business plan for their projects, through various support mechanisms.

121. The Developing Organizations and Mechanisms for the Social and Solidarity-based Economy (PROMESS) project was launched in June 2016 and implemented over four years in cooperation with the ILO in the governorates of Siliana, Kef, Jendouba and Béja. As part of this project, a support manual for social and solidarity-based economy projects was developed and 90 facilitators were trained. In addition, 32 social and solidarity-based economy projects were launched, with an average of 8 projects per governorate and per 25 delegations, resulting in the creation of 300 direct jobs and 3,000 indirect jobs.

122. Implementation of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy Act: Pilot projects to create businesses continue to be carried out. To that end, the following measures have been taken:

- Eleven solidarity-based organizations have been set up in Ariana governorate, resulting in the creation of 47 jobs, 53% per cent of which are occupied by women.
- Pursuant to Decree No. 21 of 2021 on the Finance Act of 2022, the National Employment Agency has introduced a line of credit for social and solidarity-based enterprises, with an allocation of D 30 million over three years, to be managed by the Tunisian Solidarity Bank for the granting of loans to finance or develop projects:

- Under the Act, social and solidarity-based enterprises can receive a grant to encourage solidarity-based enterprise of D 20,000 during their first year in business, as well as a support grant of D 200 per partner, up to a maximum of D 800, for a maximum of 12 months.
- The amount of investment was increased to D 300,000, including working capital, for social and solidarity-based enterprises.
- A new generation of solidarity-based enterprises was established, based on a reimagining of local and regional development: community businesses.

123. The Employment Promotion in Rural Areas project: Implemented in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in Mahdia, Kairouan, Tozeur and Kebili. As part of this project, an incentive programme for the creation of social and solidarity-based enterprises and the development of value chains was rolled out in the governorates of Kebili and Tozeur in cooperation with the Inter-professional Group for Grains, which has enabled women jobseekers who are skilled in sewing to create microenterprises to make mosquito nets. During the first phase of the incentive programme, 40 microenterprises with an estimated employment capacity of about 200 jobs were set up in the governorates of Kebili and Tozeur for an estimated investment of D 700,000.

124. The Joud Nefzawa project in the governorate of Kebili under the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD): In the framework of the partnership between the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work and the NGO Humanity & Inclusion, this project, funded by the European Union, was launched in 2018. In this context, a study on value chains in the governorate of Kebili was conducted and five associations were selected to participate in a series of training courses to enable them to participate in the development of participatory and inclusive local development plans in the region and the establishment of business incubators. The project funded 29 individual projects, 20 group projects and 14 project extensions.

125. A project to support Tunisian young people through entrepreneurship in the social and solidarity-based economy was launched in 2019 in Ariana governorate in cooperation with the ILO. It targets jobseekers between the ages of 18 and 35 and aims to create 10 or more solidarity-based projects and 80 jobs, in addition to developing the knowledge and skills of the beneficiary groups and regional stakeholders. A total of 181 beneficiaries were selected to participate in a training course to create business plans for their projects.

126. The capacity of companies to create jobs has been supported and promising and renewable sectors have been encouraged through the implementation of the employment support programmes, most notably the “Dignity Contract” programme. As part of efforts to encourage the private sector to recruit higher education graduates, 71,933 dignity contracts were concluded between 2016 and 2023, more specifically between the launch of the programme in 2017 and the end of June 2023. Under these contracts, the State covers 50 per cent of the salary paid, up to a limit of D 400 per month, in addition to social contributions, for a period of two years.

Strengthening the role of the regions in designing and implementing regional and local projects and initiatives to promote employment and create projects

127. The “Moubadiroun” (Entrepreneurs) youth economic inclusion project benefits young people between the ages of 18 and 35 from disadvantaged or low-income families, young offenders and former inmates, mothers who have no family support, persons with disabilities, workers in the informal sector, and young people who have been unemployed for more than three years, and targets 5,200 beneficiaries. Another component was added to the project following the COVID-19 pandemic to help affected small business owners by providing social grants to those enrolled in the Batinda platform.

128. As part of a project to support the creation of microenterprises in the governorates of Medenine and Tataouine, a mentoring programme was developed for 100 young men and women. During the first phase of the project, which was completed at the end of December 2018, 76 grants were awarded to young people, thus contributing to the creation of 134 direct jobs. Support for the entrepreneurs continued once their projects were up and running, with

the aim of helping them overcome the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the sustainability of their projects.

129. The “Meeting Labour Market Challenges for Fair Jobs in Tunisia” project, which was launched in Manouba governorate in 2019, aims to support women in the most disadvantaged areas to set up their own businesses and transition from informal to formal work and thus improve their employment prospects. In addition, a training unit for rural women has been set up and their products are sold in El Batan, in Manouba governorate. In this context, 42 projects were selected and the entrepreneurs were given support and training to set up their businesses.

130. As part of efforts to encourage the creation of businesses in the inland regions, a pilot project was implemented in the governorate of Kasserine with the aim of creating microenterprises for a budget of up to D 50,000 for each project. Nine projects were funded in 2020 (acquisition of equipment) for a total of D 275,000.

131. A legal framework has also been established to encourage the transition from informal to formal activities, including Decree No. 33 of 2020 concerning the entrepreneurial system. Work is currently under way to draft the corresponding regulations and implementation mechanisms. Entrepreneurs also receive mentoring and support services and benefit from a specialized and favourable tax and social regime, depending on the nature of their activity. Similarly, self-employed entrepreneurs can join a higher income bracket than the one linked to their activity, in accordance with the legislation in force relating to the social security scheme for self-employed workers in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and obtain a treatment card valid for one quarter after verification of payment of the contributions due for that quarter.

Restructuring active employment programmes

132. The preparation of the new National Employment Strategy began in 2017 and the Strategy was approved on 19 July 2019. It seeks to respond to Sustainable Development Goal 8 using a participatory tripartite approach between the Government, the employers’ organization and the trade union organization. The Strategy aims to create decent and rewarding jobs for all in a renewed society and is based on labour market governance, reviewing active employment programmes, improving employability, and developing general, sectoral, and regional employment policies. A number of measures from the Strategy’s operational plan have been incorporated into the 2023–2025 Development Plan with a view to improving the business climate. Government Order No. 542 of 2019, which sets out the programmes of the National Employment Fund and the applicable procedures and eligibility requirements, provides for the following:

- The creation of a new programme - the Integration into Working Life Contract – to respond to the skills needs of businesses and facilitate jobseekers’ entry into the labour market and align their qualifications with the requirements of the job market.
- The amendment of the “Dignity Contract” programme, which aims to encourage private companies to recruit higher education graduates and increase the proportion of qualified staff.
- The amendment of the “voluntary civil service” programme, which aims to allow jobseekers to undertake an activity that enables them to develop their competencies and acquire professional skills that facilitate their entry into working life.

133. Decree No. 461 of 2023 sets out a number of urgent reforms to the active employment programmes, most importantly:

- Encouraging the creation of businesses within the framework of the social and solidarity-based economy
- Reviewing the New Generation of Entrepreneurs programme
- Increasing the flexibility of the supplementary training and qualification programme to respond to the needs of specific job openings in companies or to the needs of specific economic sectors

- Creating a new programme, the “Reintegration into Working Life Contract,” to facilitate the re-entry of unemployed permanent and temporary workers into companies the private sector

134. As part of the digital development programme, significant results have been achieved in terms of the occupancy rate of business incubators in technological parks and teleworking spaces:

	<i>Results</i>		<i>Projections</i>		
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Business incubator occupancy rate in technology parks and telecommuting spaces	85%	90%	95%	98%	100%

135. Between the establishment of the start-up programme in April 2019 and June 2023, more than 4,000 new jobs were created and more than 900 start-up labels were awarded.

(b) Vocational training

136. Act No. 13 of 2017 was enacted to establish special measures to make basic vocational training compulsory for young people under the age of 18 who are not working and not studying in basic or secondary education. The Act aims to help combat school dropout and to support those who have dropped out of school by including them in the vocational training system.

137. Government Order No. 620 of 2016 on the State’s contribution to the costs of basic vocational training provided by private vocational training establishments was also passed.

Section 11: Refugees and asylum-seekers (paragraph 33 of the concluding observations)

See paragraphs 48–50 of the present report.

138. As part of the obligation to help these categories of persons in the absence of special legislation, especially the most vulnerable among them, and pay them the necessary attention within the framework of a human rights-based approach and in coordination with all relevant authorities and in cooperation with civil society organizations, material and in-kind assistance (such as social, health, psychological and educational services) is provided to help them secure a new start in life by voluntarily returning to their home countries, resettling in other countries at their request, or integrating into social and economic life. In this context, several measures have been taken, as outlined below.

(a) Healthcare

139. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs issued a joint circular (No. 10 of 2019), which sets out a number of measures related to healthcare for refugees and asylum-seekers, as follows:

- The provision of free healthcare on an equal foot with Tunisian nationals as part of preventive health programmes such as the vaccination of children against tuberculosis and vaccination against COVID-19.
- Financial coverage for medical treatment and care that require financial support by the relevant international organizations.

(b) Education

140. The right to education is a fundamental right guaranteed to Tunisians and foreign nationals residing on Tunisian territory without exception or restriction. Accordingly, access to education for Tunisians and foreign nationals of school age is guaranteed by law.

(c) Employment and training

141. The Tunisian authorities process the files they receive regarding work permits and applications from refugees wishing to enrol in vocational training or work on a self-employed basis. They cooperate with relevant stakeholders, asylum-seekers, civil society, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

142. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, Tunisia worked on a reference document for refugees and asylum-seekers in order to regulate the issue of refugee employment and training. This document serves as a reference in terms of guiding and informing refugees by clarifying procedures and ensuring coordination between all stakeholders, with a view to the social and economic integration of refugees. Procedures for gaining access to employment and vocational training services have been simplified for this group.

143. The employment services offer asylum-seekers and refugees access to vocational training, access to a work permit, support for paid work and support for self-employment.

144. Refugees and asylum-seekers submit applications to the competent departments of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training and the authorities that report to them to obtain the services online or directly in person. The Ministry's departments can also accept applications through one of the UNHCR partners in the Economic Inclusion Programme for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers.

145. Refugees and asylum-seekers benefit from several concessions when applying for work permits. When applying for a work permit, refugees and asylum-seekers whose countries are experiencing turmoil and instability can replace the documents proving their professional competence with a declaration of honour if the documents are missing. A degree of flexibility is shown when issuing work permits to refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugees and asylum-seekers also enjoy access to basic vocational training, short-term vocational training, and a certificate of professional competence.

146. There are two situations in which a refugee or asylum-seeker can obtain paid employment:

- If they have not found an employer, refugees and asylum-seekers must apply to refugee organizations and associations that work to find jobs for refugees and integrate into the labour market
- If they have found an employer, refugees or asylum-seekers must apply for a work permit from the General Directorate for Foreign Employment and Foreign Labour

147. Refugees or asylum-seekers who apply to work on a self-employed basis are directed to the UNHCR partner that runs programme for the economic integration of refugees and asylum-seekers, to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or to specialized associations. Depending on their status and qualifications, refugees and asylum-seekers receive mentoring and training in entrepreneurship and the necessary funding provided by UNHCR or its partner organizations.

148. For example, a Syrian refugee was issued a foreign trader card on 13 April 2016. This individual, who is residing in Tunisia as a refugee, applied to do business and set up a company. He filed his asylum application with the UNHCR office in Tunis. He was then issued with a residence permit in Tunisia, having obtained a foreign trader's card.

149. An Ivorian refugee was issued with a foreign trader card on 30 November 2018. The individual, who is residing in Tunisia as a refugee, applied to do business and set up a company. He received financial support from the UNHCR office in Tunisia, which sponsored his project.

Section 12: Right to just and favourable conditions of work (paragraph 35 of the concluding observations)

150. The role of labour inspectors is to ensure the application of legal provisions on working conditions and the protection of workers in the exercise of their profession, to provide information and technical advice to employers and workers on effective legal

compliance, and to inform the competent authorities of shortcomings or abuses not specifically covered by existing legal provisions.

151. Labour inspection services are clearly defined in article 3 of the ILO Labour Inspection Convention (No. 81) and book IV of the Labour Code.

152. Labour inspection officers may prescribe measures to remedy deficiencies in installations, work arrangements or working methods which they have reasonable cause to consider pose a threat to the health or safety of workers. They can also order immediately enforceable measures in cases of imminent danger to the health and safety of workers.

153. In this context, the labour inspectors, divided between the 25 regional labour inspection and conciliation departments and the 69 local labour inspection and conciliation units, themselves divided between municipalities according to the economy of each region, carry out periodic inspection and monitoring visits or visits following a report of irregularities or an individual complaint from one or more workers in the establishment concerned, as shown in the table below.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Inspection visits	15 487	14 960	14 251	14 976	9 829	13 687	13 740
Follow-up visits	4 426	3 337	3 448	3 051	1 432	2 747	3 578
Total visits	19 913	18 297	18 699	18 027	11 261	16 434	17 318
Written notifications	3 004	3 114	2 470	1 962	1 289	1 893	2 225
Violation reports	559	526	679	637	252	339	534

154. In the first quarter of 2023, the regional departments of the Labour Inspectorate organized a monitoring and awareness campaign in all establishments to monitor the situation of foreign workers in application of article 258-2 of the Labour Code. A total of 391 visits were conducted as part of the awareness campaign, during which labour inspectors met with 139 foreign workers, including 118 from sub-Saharan countries; 122 recommendations were made to regularize the contractual status of workers with the services of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, 59 notifications were sent and 31 reports were filed against offending employers. It should be noted that the labour inspectors did not identify any cases of trafficking or wage discrimination.

155. In view of the limited capacity of the Inspectorate and the fact that a number of labour inspectors are approaching retirement age, efforts are being made to bolster the Inspectorate's staff by intensifying training courses and continuous training in new areas of the Tunisian economy. The distribution of labour inspectors over the 2016–2022 period is shown below.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of labour inspectors	357	357	357	329	316	321	317
Women	178	178	178	170	164	164	173
Men	179	179	179	159	152	157	144

156. The table below shows the evolution of the budget for labour inspection and conciliation, bearing in mind that the labour inspection programme represents more than 70 per cent of the total budget for this body.

Financial year	Allocation provided for under the Finance Act (millions of dinars)	Observations
2016	13 038	
2017	12 718	

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Allocation provided for under the Finance Act (millions of dinars)</i>	<i>Observations</i>
2018	14 773	Approximately 71.09% of the budget is allocated to the Employment and Industrial Relations Programme, estimated at D 20,779 million.
2019	16 575	
2020	16 356	
2021	18 872	
2022	17 791	
2023	21 468	

Section 13: Right to social security (paragraph 37 of the concluding observations)

157. Article 43 (3) of the Constitution establishes that: “The State guarantees free medical treatment for those who have no means of support and those with limited incomes. It guarantees the right to social coverage as regulated by law.”

158. As part of its efforts to ensure broad social security coverage for all workers and disadvantaged persons and families, the Ministry of Social Affairs aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Supporting the reform of the social protection system, particularly by rationalizing the governance of social funds.
- Recognizing and valuing unpaid care work and domestic work by putting in place public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.
- Strengthening the role of social funds as agents of the State tasked with disbursing the funds allocated to vulnerable groups as part of the social services programme.
- Consolidating the national platform for social protection and working to find structural solutions for the financing of social security systems.
- Improving the social benefits and services provided to social security beneficiaries.
- Expanding and improving the effective social coverage of the various social security schemes and working towards integrating workers in the informal sector with the aim of ensuring their voluntary affiliation through a flexible approach.
- Establishing a system of good governance for the funds, improving the quality of their services and bringing them closer to beneficiaries.
- Reducing the timelines for the delivery of various social services (payment of pensions, payment of benefits to beneficiaries, reimbursement of medical expenses).
- Strengthening decentralization and establishing additional social security service centres.
- Following up on the implementation of quality and efficiency standards and indicators.

159. As part of the follow-up to the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Women and Girls Working in Rural Areas, and in order to facilitate their access to social coverage, special mechanisms and support measures have been put in place, namely:

- The signature of a multilateral framework agreement between the Ministry for Women, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries and the Ministry of Social Affairs concerning the establishment of a specialized system to enable women working in rural areas to benefit from social coverage, including the establishment of mechanisms to enable women working in rural areas to benefit from

social coverage by facilitating enrolment procedures and remote payment of contributions and creating a customized and flexible system for this target group based on modern technology and applications.

- The issuance of Government Order No. 379 of 2019, amending and supplementing Order No. 916 of 2002 concerning the application of Act No. 32 of 2002 on the social security system for certain types of workers in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, which approved the withdrawal from the social security system of seasonal and mobile workers in rural areas working in the agricultural sector for a single employer on an irregular basis and for a period of less than 45 days per quarter or for several employers, including women employed in this sector and women shellfish harvesters.
- The publication of a decree issued by the Minister of Social Affairs on 19 June 2019, establishing the documents needed for the enrolment of women shellfish harvesters and seasonal and mobile workers in rural areas working in the agricultural sector.
- The publication of a decree issued by the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Communication Technologies and the Digital Economy on 19 June 2019, ratifying the cooperation agreement between the National Social Security Fund and Tunisia Telecom to enable women shellfish harvesters and seasonal and mobile workers in rural areas and workers in the agricultural sector to join and pay contributions to the Fund pursuant to article 10 of Decree No. 916 of 2002.

160. With a view to simplifying procedures and reducing the number of administrative documents to be submitted in order to register with the National Social Security Fund, on 26 March 2019, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Local Communities and the Environment, as it was named at the time, regarding the digital exchange of civil status data and the digitization of administrative services, under which it was decided to no longer require insured persons to produce civil status documents. In addition, the application form for enrolment in the scheme introduced under the aforementioned Act No. 32 of 2002 was updated, the digital application for registering insured persons was modified, and the “certificate of agricultural activity” provided for in Decree No. 379 of 2019 was drawn up.

161. In terms of communication, the National Social Security Fund has:

- Developed an information and communication plan to raise awareness among women working in rural areas of the benefits of enrolling in the social security system.
- Organized training for female agricultural extension workers on the procedures for joining the social security system for this category of workers and the benefits of membership.
- Invited the heads of the regional and local offices of the National Social Security Fund and the heads of registration units to conduct field visits to rural areas to introduce the system and prepare enrolment files in coordination with the governors in the framework of the programme of field visits by members of the Government, prepared by the Prime Minister’s Office, which includes all of the country’s governorates.

162. These new procedures and mechanisms have attracted international attention. A number of international organizations, including the ILO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, have introduced cooperation initiatives to ensure the success of the system, with the contribution of the National Social Security Fund. These initiatives consist of setting up a database of rural women working in the agricultural sector with the aim of ensuring that they have social security coverage, as well as coordinating to ensure the regular updating of this database, which is made available to the relevant public bodies for use in the development of programmes and services aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of this category of persons.

163. In addition, pursuant to article 10 of Act No. 87 of 201 on the 2017 Finance Act, a special Treasury fund – the Public Health Support Fund – was established to support the public health sector financing mechanism through tax and non-tax funding mechanisms and sources.

164. The areas of intervention of the Fund, as well as the methods and criteria for the distribution of its resources, are set out in Government Order No. 383 of 2019. They relate to the financing of healthcare services provided by public health institutions and regional hospitals to patients who are beneficiaries of free treatment cards and low-cost treatment cards. The creation of the Fund is intended to help achieve a certain financial balance in public health facilities that have been negatively affected by having to cover the costs of treating patients who benefit from free treatment cards and low rates under the free medical assistance programme for impoverished and low-income families, which has seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries.

165. As part of the State's efforts to establish a system that guarantees broad social coverage, the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued a government decree enabling full-time mosque administrators to obtain social security coverage and enrol in the National Pension and Social Security Fund. They were already granted a guaranteed minimum wage for a 40-hour work week in 2017 and a guaranteed minimum wage for a 48-hour schedule starting in 2019. As a result, the budget allocated for the salaries of mosque administrators has increased significantly, as shown in the following table:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cost of salaries for mosque staff</i>
2016	D 43 111 680
2017	D 64 887 887
2018	D 71 065 544
2019	D 75 680 000
2020	D 90 878 000
2021	D 10 5984 549
2022	D 111 211 600
2023	D 118 857 000

Section 14: Violence against women (paragraph 39 of the concluding observations)

166. Article 51 of the new Constitution stipulates that the State is to take measures to eliminate violence against women. Organic Act No. 58 of 2017, which is comprehensive and based on a human rights approach, was enacted on 11 August 2017. The Act contains a broad definition of violence against women and establishes its various forms, which include political violence. The Act is divided into four chapters, covering general provisions, prevention, protection and support services, criminal aspects and prosecution.

167. The Act reflects the international obligations of Tunisia to protect victims and persons in vulnerable situations, taking into account the social situation of women, particularly in terms of age, poverty and destitution, deprivation and legal status, especially with regard to immigration and asylum, and considering the legal and de facto link between the perpetrator and the victim as an aggravating circumstance. The Act guarantees the physical and moral integrity of the person and the inviolability of the home, as well as the protection of women's personal data and health as rights that enable the enjoyment of human dignity.

168. In accordance with the provisions of Organic Act No. 58, the Ministry of the Interior created two central specialized units to investigate offences of violence against women and children, as well as 128 regional teams in each security and National Guard region, which became operational on 16 February 2018. The central unit and the specialized teams prepare monthly statistics on registered cases, as well as submitting six-monthly reports on cases of violence against women and their outcomes to the administrative and judicial oversight authority and the National Observatory for Combating Violence against Women. The Ministry has sought to develop a new statistical system that includes indicators on forms of violence against women and children, as well as on means of protection and coordination measures. The Ministry is endeavouring to complete the training process and make the necessary arrangements to roll out this system as soon as possible.

169. In 2021, the central units and regional teams specialized in investigating offences of violence against women and children handled 69,777 cases. Physical violence against women and children accounts for 58 per cent of all forms of violence covered by the Organic Act.

170. In 2022, a total of 81,294 cases of violence against women and children were registered nationwide, including 61,671 cases of violence against women and 7,885 cases of violence against girls under the age of 18. In 2022, a total of 73,252 offenders were registered nationwide in cases of violence against women and children, of whom 4,887 were in pretrial detention before being brought before the public prosecution in various courts of first instance, while 62,513 were not in detention when their trial began. Thus, 92 per cent of offenders were arrested and brought to justice. This percentage reflects the efforts of the units and specialized teams and the effectiveness of their interventions in the face of the high level of violent crimes against women and children. This is due to the awareness-raising and media campaigns conducted by various ministries as part of a network with the aim of informing women of their rights and urging them to report cases of violence to the various specialized units.

171. The Ministry of Justice is working to strengthen the provision of judicial and administrative advice in the courts, including for women victims of violence, in accordance with the 2023–2025 sectoral plan and strategic objective 5 of the first strategic priority area relating to access to justice.

172. In cooperation with international partners, a project funded by the Government of the Netherlands to facilitate women's access to justice and help them claim their rights was launched, with a special focus on women survivors of gender-based violence. The project's activities focus mainly on capacity-building and beginning a policy dialogue on the main obstacles and difficulties hindering women's access to justice. This project was implemented in Tunis and Kef governorates, which were selected during the project development phase.

173. It is worth noting that the most important provision of Organic Act No. 58 of 2017 on access to justice is the recognition of the right to mandatory legal aid for women victims of violence. Joint circular No. 183 of 2021 was issued by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for Women on 8 March 2021 to interpret the provisions of the Act in this regard and emphasize the need for legal aid to be provided immediately. Since the Act came into effect in February 2018, the courts have issued 2,996 rulings in favour of women victims of violence to help them take the necessary legal steps to prosecute their abuser or to benefit from protection measures.

174. Statistical data have recently shown an upward trend in the number of cases of violence against women, with an increase in the number of cases brought before the courts between 2018 and 2022, as illustrated in the table below.

<i>Judicial year</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
2018–2019	3 372
2019–2020	3 941
2020–2021	4 106
2021–2022	5 255

175. This growing awareness among women of their rights is reflected not only in the number of criminal cases, but also in civil cases, as evidenced by the increase in the number of protection orders issued to women victims of violence each year, which has reached a total of 7,196. Protection orders aim to protect the victim from potential abuse, primarily by preventing the offender from contacting the victim or the children living with her.

176. In application of the law and the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, the Ministry of Health has set up the first forensic medicine unit, called Injed, at the Charles Nicolle Hospital, to provide care to women and children who are victims of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, in respect of which legal proceedings have been initiated. The Injed unit provides quality and timely medical, psychological and social care services, provides the courts with all the evidence needed to prosecute abusers, cooperates directly with the judicial

authorities and the forensic police and refers victims to the competent services in order to guarantee their right to a legal remedy. Victims generally receive psychological support for an average of six months, an average of one victim per week.

177. In 2022, the Injed unit handled 828 cases, of which 616 were women.

178. Once admitted to the unit, victims undergo a medical examination that includes detailed documentation of signs of trauma, the collection of evidence of the assault, an examination to identify complications, and a systematic interview with a psychiatrist to assess signs of trauma.

179. Pursuant to articles 8 and 39 of the Act, under which the Ministry of Health is required to develop integrated programmes to combat violence against women and to examine, treat and monitor women and the children living with them who are victims of violence, to respond promptly to any request for assistance and to provide victims with medical and psychological services, the Ministry ensures that they are provided with health services tailored to their needs and, in this context, designates focal points in the emergency services of regional and local hospitals to ensure the best possible reception, counselling and guidance services for victims of violence and to facilitate and accelerate administrative care procedures, as well as to liaise with the competent authorities and the various stakeholders in the relevant sectors with a view to ensuring that they receive the proper treatment. To this end, the Ministry is working on designating 80 focal points.

180. In the same vein, the Ministry for Women:

- Set up a free hotline (number 1899) in 2017 to provide guidance to women victims of violence, which operates 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, offering telephone helpline services, interactive listening, psychological, social and legal counselling, advice and referral to partner government institutions or associations. It has received 40,886 calls since it was launched.
- Established centres for women victims of violence that provide neighbourhood services, starting in 2016. There are now 11 shelters with a capacity of up to 150 beds, which are run in partnership with experienced associations, as well as 11 day centres. It is estimated that an average of 400 women use the services of the centres each year.
- Established the National Observatory for Combating Violence against Women, pursuant to Government Order No. 126 of 24 February 2020, and provided it with an official headquarters, human resources and an annual budget for its operation. The Observatory has carried out four scientific studies on violence against women in the family and in the context of migration, and on social representations of violence against women.
- Issued a joint circular with the Ministry of Health in March 2022 on the issuance of free medical certificates in primary care to cover all cases of violence against women and to facilitate reimbursement procedures for medical examinations and accommodation. As of 26 March 2023, 23,803 such medical certificates had been issued to women victims of violence.
- Established 24 regional coordinating bodies to combat violence against women in February 2020 to improve coordination between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry for Women (more than 400 members), attached to the National Observatory for Combating Violence against Women, and the organization of their operational frameworks.

181. Regarding the crime of cyberviolence, a new legislative framework has been established for crimes committed in the digital space, namely Decree No. 2022-54 of 13 September 2022 on combating offences committed through communication and information systems, in order to provide legal protection for users of information and communication networks, including protecting vulnerable groups such as children and women from exploitation and physical attacks, and to support international efforts in this area. Decree No. 2023-17 of 11 March 2023, on cybersafety was also issued to protect national cyberspace and combat the illegal use of the Internet.

182. Various public stakeholders are working to combat crime in the digital space. The Sub-Directorate for Social Prevention of the Judicial Police Department is responsible for combating cybercrime at the national level within its field of competence through investigations carried out in coordination with the public prosecutors' offices of the various courts concerning offences committed against children and adults involving sexual exploitation or abuse via public communication networks.

183. The Sub-Directorate is also responsible for monitoring the virtual space, detecting new criminal phenomena and methodologies, and identifying offenders, in cooperation with telecommunications service providers, the Technical Telecommunications Agency, and the technical services of the Ministry of the Interior.

184. On 29 August 2018, a central squad was created within the Criminal Investigation Department and tasked with combating offences related to communication technologies committed against people, especially women and children.

185. In 2022, a specialized technical unit was established in the Ministry of the Interior to monitor cybercrimes committed through communication networks, including trafficking in persons. The unit is responsible for carrying out the necessary technical work in relation to this category of offences, in accordance with the requisitions issued by the competent services dealing with the investigation and the orders issued by the judicial authorities.

186. During the investigation, victims of cyberviolence are provided with psychiatric care at a public hospital to monitor their state of health and psychological condition. The specialist units have adopted a procedural handbook for criminal investigation officers to use in handling cases of cyberviolence against women and children.

187. Questions concerning sensitizing and training judicial personnel and members of the security forces on all forms of violence against women and stepping up public awareness campaigns are addressed in paragraphs 36 to 41 of the present report.

Section 15: Fighting poverty (recommendation 41)

188. Investing in human capital is one of the most important pillars of sustainable and inclusive development. Public investment in these sectors accounted for about 18 per cent of programmed investment during the period covered by the 2016–2020 Plan.

189. In parallel, in order to achieve social justice, efforts have been directed towards reducing disparities between different social groups, supporting vulnerable groups, strengthening the State's social role and achieving social justice by allocating funds for social transfers intended mainly to cover the cost of basic foodstuffs, energy and transportation. In 2022, the volume of subsidies amounted to D 7,200 million, compared to D 156 million in 2016, and State interventions for the benefit of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups increased to almost D 964 million in 2022, compared to D 580 million in 2015.

190. Subsidies play an important role in maintaining social peace and the purchasing power of vulnerable groups on low incomes, but studies have shown that 25 per cent of the population receives 80 per cent of the benefits, thus highlighting the need for a radical and gradual reform of the system to direct subsidies towards those who need them most.





191. In the same context, and with the aim of maintaining purchasing power, the inter-professional guaranteed minimum wage has increased significantly, reaching D 429 (for a 48-hour week) and D 366 (for a 40-hour week) in 2020, compared to D 272.5 and D 235, respectively, in 2010.

192. The guaranteed agricultural wage also followed the same trend during this period, increasing from D 8,380 to D 16,512.

193. Thanks to these efforts, various indicators related to human development have improved: the human development index increased from 0.57 in 1990 to about 0.74 in 2019, thus ranking Tunisia in ninety-fifth place out of 189 countries and categorizing it among the countries with high human development.

194. Despite the circumstantial and structural development challenges and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic that the country is facing, this index stabilized in 2021 at 0.73, thus bringing it closer to the level of countries with very high human development and putting Tunisia in second place in Africa alongside Egypt and after Algeria, which is ranked first. The human capital index stabilized at 0.52 in 2020, approaching the level of upper-middle-income countries (0.56), thanks to gains made, particularly in the health sector:

- Probability of survival to the age of 5: 98 per cent
- Proportion of children under the age of 5 without stunting: approximately 91 per cent (comparable to the rate in high-income countries)
- Average life expectancy: 75 years (Tunisia is ranked second in Africa and sixty-second globally out of 183 countries)

195. However, this indicator remains below the targets that have been set, namely to reach the level of high-income countries (0.7), due to the decline in the quality of learning associated with the effectiveness of educational programmes, especially in the fields of science and mathematics (index of 384 in Tunisia compared to 487 in high-income countries).

196. The level of inequality has also been reduced; the Gini index fell to 32.9 per cent in 2020, compared to 35.8 per cent in 2010 and 43.4 per cent in 1985. As a result:

- The share of earned income of the poorest 10 per cent increased from 2.6 per cent in 2010 to 3.2 per cent in 2015, while the earned income of the richest 10 per cent fell from 27 per cent to 25.6 per cent in the same period.
- GDP per capita at constant prices grew by 6.4 per cent over the 2010–2019 period to reach D 6,305.
- The proportion of the population living on less than \$1.9 a day fell from 15.1 per cent in 1986 to 0.2 per cent in 2015.
- The poverty rate was brought under control, falling from 25.4 per cent in 2000 to 15.2 per cent in 2015. The extreme poverty rate decreased from 7.7 per cent to 2.9 per cent in the same period, despite the disparities between the different regions, with the poverty rate exceeding 30 per cent in the North and Centre-West. It is estimated that the poverty rate will reach 19 per cent in 2022 and the extreme poverty rate 3.4 per cent, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, as well as the steady rise in inflation over the last decade. Rising prices and inflation have had a significant impact on purchasing power, with a marked decline during the

2011–2021 period, and the middle class has shrunk and lost 40 per cent of its purchasing power.

Section 16: Right to water and sanitation (paragraph 43 of the concluding observations)

197. Article 48 of the Constitution establishes that: “The state must provide clean water to all on an equal basis and must preserve water resources for future generations.”

198. The percentage of drinking water supply in rural areas was 95 per cent in 2021, covering 3.6 million inhabitants. The National Water Distribution Utility carries out regional projects funded by the regional development councils. National projects are currently under way, notably the water collection projects in the governorate of Bizerte, at a cost of D 360 million for 175,000 inhabitants, and the governorate of Béja, at a cost of D 188.5 million for 91,000 inhabitants. In addition, the State-funded rural water supply improvement project, at a cost of D 214 million, has benefited 163,000 inhabitants.

199. Every year, the National Water Distribution Utility prepares a special programme to drill deep wells, renovate and upgrade some collection and distribution networks, carry out the necessary maintenance operations, replace and renovate certain pumping stations, and manage water demand by rationalizing consumption and saving water, in order to reduce disruptions in the supply of drinking water, especially during the summer peak of consumption. It is also working on the completion of major projects involving the diversion of excess water from the north to the major consumption centres and the desalination projects in Zarat, Sfax and Sousse.

200. Regarding ongoing projects and investments in connection with drinking water in rural areas, 134 projects have been put into operation for the benefit of 134,000 residents, and 67 deep drinking water wells have been constructed as of 2022. The second phase of the rural drinking water supply programme, funded by a D 405 million loan from the African Development Bank, will improve the drinking water supply rate in rural areas to 97.5 per cent nationwide. The main components of the programme are the construction of 88 new projects for the benefit of 76,000 rural residents, the rehabilitation of 180 projects for the benefit of 296,000 rural residents, and the construction of 32 deep drinking water wells.

201. Supplying schools with drinking water is one of the main challenges facing the Ministry of Education. Statistics show that 4,064 schools have a water supply, of which 3,236 are supplied by the National Water Distribution Utility (78.8 per cent) and 829 by associations working in the water sector (22.2 per cent).

202. In order to guarantee the supply of drinking water to educational institutions that have difficulties in obtaining water, the Ministry of Education:

- Conducted a national field survey on the water, sanitation and hygiene situation in educational institutions to assess the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- Signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with Médecins du Monde to provide drinking water to 200 educational institutions in 7 governorates – Jendouba, Siliana, Kef, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa and Gabès – through the delivery of 173 stainless steel tanks and 38 tractors equipped with tanks.
- Supplied 22 tractors with tanks and agricultural accessories to the remaining 13 regions complaining of irregular supply.
- Strengthened civil society intervention (drilling of tube wells and surface wells, construction of cement tanks) with the involvement of almost 100 organizations.

203. As part of this programme, the Ministry of Education aims to:

- Provide the necessary funds (opening a new line of credit) for the widespread construction of cement tanks in schools suffering from water supply problems and the subsequent installation of rainwater harvesting and reuse facilities in all educational establishments.

- Increase the funds allocated to ensure the provision of drinking water to educational institutions.
- Support and develop the work of associations working in the water sector by providing materials and machinery to ensure the continuous supply of water to educational institutions.
- Establish an integrated system to control water consumption and recycle wastewater.
- Develop an integrated media and communications plan to raise awareness of the importance of rationalizing the use of available water resources.

204. As part of the sanitary control of treated wastewater, the Department of Environmental Health and Environmental Protection and the environmental health sub-departments monitor water in the sewerage networks and treatment plants operated by the National Sanitation Utility. In this context, 2,266 laboratory analyses of raw wastewater samples have been carried out to test for salmonella and cholera. Measures have been taken to protect water, soil and air from pollution through public projects aimed at combating water and air pollution and maintaining building hygiene, and national plans to preserve air quality in Greater Tunis, Sfax, Gabès and Bizerte. A joint committee comprising representatives of health and environmental organizations has been established to follow up on the implementation of the National Strategy for Non-Communicable Diseases, as well as the implementation of action programmes related to the reduction of environmental pollutants.

205. In 2022, a national survey on the state of water, wastewater, sanitation and sanitary waste management was carried out in primary healthcare centres nationwide (1,940 centres), as a result of which a national map was drawn up showing the priority regions, and national monitoring and coordination measures were enhanced in order to remedy the shortcomings identified.

206. The State is making its presence felt in villages and rural areas suffering from disparities with a view to improving housing conditions through the Housing Improvement Fund established under Act No. 77 of 2004, which provides financing for interventions aimed at providing a wide range of amenities in housing units, including drinking water supply and sanitation services. Article 4 of Government Order No. 1125 of 2016 on the revision and finalization of Order No. 534 of 2007 on the conditions for granting loans and grants from the National Housing Improvement Fund stipulates that the Fund can provide financing for:

- The replacement or maintenance of fixtures, including drinking water pipes inside homes
- The supply of drinking water to individual homes
- The installation of rainwater harvesting systems
- Works to connect homes to the sanitation network and the construction of septic tanks to collect wastewater in areas where there is no sewerage system
- Improvements to equipment to save water

207. In the context of efforts to tackle water shortages caused by climate change, the 2023 Finance Act provides for measures to preserve water resources through the issuance of interest-free loans by the National Housing Improvement Fund of up to D 20,000 to finance rainwater storage tanks during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023, to be repaid over a maximum of three years.

208. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation conducted a working visit to Tunisia from 18 to 29 July 2022.

Section 17: Right to adequate and affordable housing (paragraph 45 of the concluding observations)

209. Tunisia has been involved in the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda since 2003, one of the objectives of which is ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrading slums.

210. Cooperation between the Republic of Tunisia and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was enhanced through the opening of a local UN-Habitat office under Presidential Order No. 2019-115 of 9 July 2019.

211. In 2014, the Ministry of Equipment, Housing and Territorial Planning, in cooperation with the World Bank, prepared a study on the development of a new housing strategy. The strategy, which was adopted in 2015 and launched in 2016, provides for a number of reforms, as outlined below.

Review of the legal framework

212. This involves reviewing housing finance mechanisms, supporting the supply of social housing and developing mechanisms to control property ownership. Government Order No. 1125 of 2016, amending and supplementing Order No. 534 of 2007 on the conditions for the allocation of loans and grants from the National Housing Improvement Fund, was also issued and introduced the following reforms:

- Simplifying procedures and reducing the number of documents that need to be submitted with an application for a grant or loan
- Expanding the list of works financed by the Fund
- Raising the grant ceiling from D 2,000 to D 5,000
- Extending the period for using the grant to 18 months from the date of issue of the payment order
- Raising the maximum amount of individual loans from D 5,000 to D 10,000

Review of housing finance mechanisms

213. The functioning of the Housing Promotion Fund for Wage Earners was reorganized in accordance with Government Order No. 1126 of 2016, which sets out the terms and conditions for its interventions.

Supporting the provision of housing

214. To support the provision of housing, a new programme for first homes was established pursuant to Government Order No. 161 of 2017. It aims to help middle-income families to finance the purchase of homes built by property developers or others, by granting them soft loans covering the self-financing amount, in accordance with pre-established conditions. As of September 2021, 1,781 homes have been financed through this mechanism, at an estimated cost of around D 50 million. The Ministry of Finance has made available additional funds for the programme, in the amount of D 5 million, which were transferred to the Central Bank of Tunisia to finance a second phase to be opened in 2022.

215. The Loan Guarantee Fund for Groups with Irregular Incomes was established under Government Order No. 749 of 2018 to help these groups obtain loans to purchase housing by covering the risk of non-recovery of housing loans granted by banks at a rate of 70 per cent of the non-recoverable amounts of principal and contractual interest due.

216. As a result of these measures, a total of 21,082 housing units and plots were completed in 2022 under the Housing Promotion Fund for Wage Earners, the Special Social Housing Programme and the First Home Programme: 15,126 under the Special Social Housing Programme, 3,836 under the Housing Promotion Fund for Wage Earners and 2,120 under the First Home Programme.

217. It is estimated that 23,773 housing units and plots will be completed by the end of 2023, (marking an increase of 13 per cent compared to 2022), 27,375 in 2024, and 32,129 in 2025.

Interventions under programmes for the rehabilitation of residential areas

218. The first generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas (2012–2022) involved the rehabilitation of 155 neighbourhoods with about

865,000 inhabitants in all governorates of the country, for a total updated cost of approximately D 608.1 million.

219. Regarding the housing improvement component of the Programme, work has been completed in 94 neighbourhoods and started in a further 7. The process of social research and preparation of the list of beneficiaries for an additional three neighbourhoods is ongoing. The programme is approximately 85 per cent complete and is expected to be finalized in 2023.

220. The second generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas (2019–2024) involves the rehabilitation of 155 neighbourhoods with about 780,000 inhabitants across all governorates of the country, for a total updated cost of approximately D 664.7 million.

221. In addition, efforts have been made to avoid administrative obstacles that could limit the right to housing by establishing simplified procedures and formalities for all to ensure that the allocated funds reach those who need them.

222. Investment programme for the provision of housing proposed by the Tunisian Government for the 2023–2025 period

	<i>Number of units</i>	<i>Total investment (millions of dinars)</i>
Private property developers		11 000
	100 000	80% by households and 20% by private property developers
Public property developers	4 100	490
Special Social Housing Programme		
First component: eliminating primitive housing, replacing it with new housing or restoring/extending existing accommodation	3 567	55.4
Second component: construction and supply of social housing and plots	3 730	298

223. Investment programme for the financing of housing proposed by the Tunisian Government for the 2023–2025 period

	<i>Number of units</i>	<i>Total investment (millions of dinars)</i>
Housing Promotion Fund for Wage Earners		
Approval of financing for the purchase of a home	3 000	490
Approval of financing for the purchase of a plot of land	2 600	215
National Housing Improvement Fund		
Housing improvement		30
First Home Programme		
First Home Programme		60

224. Investment in the rehabilitation of residential areas proposed by the Tunisian Government for the 2023–2025 period

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Number of neighbourhoods</i>	<i>Total investment (millions of dinars)</i>
First generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas	13	8.8
Second generation of the Programme for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Residential Areas	159	555

Section 18: Unsafe housing, forced evictions and homelessness (paragraph 47 of the concluding observations)

225. Decree No. 65 of 2022, amending and supplementing Act No. 53 of 2016 on expropriation for public use, was enacted to remove the obstacles that prevented the owner of a property intended to be used as part of a public project from entering into negotiations before the expropriation was carried out and before taking any legal action to request an increase in the proposed compensation, by offering the owner the possibility of obtaining compensation in kind, entering into negotiations with the State regarding the amount of compensation, and submitting an objection to the amount proposed through a committee, known as the “investigation and reconciliation committee”, created at the governorate level. The committee allows for the involvement of citizens in the public project in a participatory manner, while providing all guarantees of impartiality, as it is chaired by a neutral party (a judge).

226. In order to establish a general framework for intervention in the case of dilapidated buildings, and as part of the updating of the provisions of Organic Act No. 29 of 9 May 2018 on the Local Government Code, especially in terms of the possible social repercussions of evictions or demolitions in the absence of previously established programmes to rehouse the occupants of dilapidated buildings, the Ministry of Housing drafted a bill on buildings in danger of collapse, which is in the advanced stages of consultation at the level of the Prime Minister’s Office. In particular, the bill aims to regulate interventions and the guarantees offered to the occupants of buildings subject to demolition or renovation. Among the most important guarantees included in the bill is the regulation of the issue of rehousing of occupants, either through temporary accommodation, until compensation is obtained, or permanent accommodation for social cases in the framework of individual interventions. In the case of collective operations carried out on old urban areas involving demolition and reconstruction, the bill establishes the principle of guaranteeing the right of occupants to temporary accommodation until the demolition and construction operations are completed and automatically providing them with a fully-equipped housing unit on the same site once the intervention has been completed.

227. As part of efforts to tackle the problem of unsafe housing, the State has put in place two mechanisms to finance interventions in connection with rudimentary housing:

- The Special Social Housing Programme:
 - Eliminating rudimentary housing, replacing it with new housing or restoring/extending existing accommodation
- A programme to eliminate rudimentary housing has been developed under the Special Social Housing Programme:
 - 10,000 housing units are planned
- Agreements have been concluded with the regional councils in all governorates concerning approximately 9,000 housing units at a cost of D 200 million
- Work has begun on the construction of about 7,200 housing units: 5,000 are ready and have been delivered and another 2,200 are being completed
- The construction of about 1,800 housing units began in the fourth quarter of 2020

228. The National Housing Improvement Fund allocates D 4,960,000 annually for housing improvement grants, distributed as follows:

- D 240,000 for each of the 14 priority governorates: Béja, Siliana, Jendouba, Kef, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Zaghuan, Kairouan, Gafsa, Kebili, Gabès, Medenine, Tozeur and Tataouine
- D 160,000 for each of the other governorates: Tunis, Manouba, Ariana, Ben Arous, Bizerte, Nabeul, Sousse, Monastir, Mahdia, and Sfax

Section 19: Right to health (paragraphs 49 and 50 of the concluding observations)

229. The National Health Policy was adopted in 2021 to strengthen the right of access to adequate, affordable and quality healthcare on equal terms. Bringing health services closer to communities and improving access to them are among the health sector's strategic goals for the 2023–2025 period.

230. The budget for the health sector has been increased to 7 per cent of the State budget. The sources of funding are State resources, the direct contributions of citizens and the contribution of the National Health Insurance Fund.

231. The programme to support specialized medicine in priority regions has been running since 2015. In 2023, the estimated cost of the programme was D 14 million and it covered 17 health regions and 24 health structures, with a coverage rate of 95 per cent by 2021.

232. The Public Health Support Fund was established in 2017 to cover the costs of the healthcare services provided to beneficiaries of the free medical care programme and has contributed to improving the resources of hospitals in the regions and reducing their level of debt.

233. The adoption of the telemedicine system, as outlined in Presidential Decree No. 318 of 2022, is intended to reduce the cost of services, bring them closer to citizens and improve their accessibility.

234. As part of efforts to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, the goal of promoting maternal and child health has been included among the priorities of the 2023–2025 Development Plan. In 2021, 86 per cent of pregnant women received at least five prenatal consultations.

235. In 2021, 300 midwives were trained in several regions to develop interventions in the field and provide reproductive health services through mobile teams and clinics; as a result, 932,250 services were provided in 2021, compared to 78,508 in 2020.

236. To ensure that patients are informed of their rights, they are provided with a “Patients’ Bill of Rights” that outlines the process for filing a complaint in the event of attempted bribery.

237. In this context, the Ministry of Health has endeavoured to:

- Activate the *e-citoyen* system (e-citizen) for reporting suspicions of corruption, helping to improve its effectiveness in receiving complaints and reports from citizens.
- Support the activities of the unit responsible for access to information in disseminating information and responding to requests for access.
- Enhance citizen participation by developing the necessary organizational framework to that end and a plan to develop their capacity for effective participation by activating the consultative process provided for in the Healthcare Regulation Act (No. 63-91) and setting up a committee on participatory governance within the central administration, in the office of the Ministry.

Section 20: Right to education (paragraphs 52 and 53 of the concluding observations)

238. A total of D 1,849 million was invested in the education sector during the 2016–2022 period, while ongoing investments post-2022 are estimated at D 1,861 million.

239. As part of efforts to strengthen the Ministry's financial resources and boost the pace of investment in this sector, Tunisia joined the Global Partnership for Education programme, under which it received a \$40 million grant for the development of the Tunisian education system, funded by the Partnership and the European Union.

Addressing disparities and promoting equal opportunities in educational attainment, including in rural areas

240. School services for students from disadvantaged and low-income families, especially in working-class areas and in the interior of the country, have been strengthened by providing assistance in the form of scholarships, which consist in exempting students from disadvantaged families from paying all or half of the cost of full board or half board in boarding school. This assistance is granted according to specific criteria and conditions, for example if the student has a disability, his or her parents' situation, the number of siblings in school who do not have a scholarship, and the family's annual income.

241. School dormitories and canteens are a vital part of learning and continuing education, especially for children from disadvantaged and low-income families living in dispersed rural communities who have to travel more than 3 kilometres to get to school. There are 345 boarding schools with a capacity of 90,000 beds at the middle school and secondary levels, and 45,000 boarding students, most of them (35,000) in the governorates of the North and Centre-West regions.

242. At the primary level, there are five boarding schools accommodating 118 students, one in Manaqā, one in Matar, and three for blind children.

243. The school transportation system has also been developed and the group of beneficiaries expanded; a total of 18,000 pupils now use the school transportation system.

244. In addition, the work of the school social action units has been strengthened through the establishment of a comprehensive programme of social support designed to help pupils from disadvantaged and low-income families to continue their studies and improve their social conditions. In 2020/21, 50,289 students benefited from this support, including 29,589 girls. There were 1,991 school social action units in the 2020/21 school year, and 76.2 per cent of cases were handled.

245. Health services are also provided through the National School Vaccination Programme, under which all pupils have received compulsory vaccinations, as well as monitoring of diseases targeted by vaccination, including polio, hepatitis B, measles and rubella.

246. In the 2020/21 school year, 240 primary schools had an infirmary. However, the proportion of schools with infirmaries remains low: only 5 per cent in primary schools, 45 per cent in middle schools and 65 per cent in secondary schools.

247. Cultural and sports activities have been promoted in educational institutions. There are 7,051 clubs in schools: 3,455 in primary schools and 3,576 in middle and secondary schools.

248. In addition, national training institutes for elite athletes have been set up under the partnership and cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, with the aim of strengthening physical education and sport in schools. Three such institutes already started operating at the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year in Sfax, Jendouba and Gabès, and preparations are under way to establish sports institutes in Gafsa, Kairouan and Sousse.

249. The technical education system, which is an important element in the education system, was reviewed to accommodate a category of students whose results and qualifications did not allow them to continue their studies in general education, thus providing them with the opportunity to change their educational path.

250. There were 9,307 students enrolled in technical schools during the 2021/22 academic year, compared to 9,958 in 2016/17.

251. The results of the national examinations attest to the effectiveness of the education system and pupils' academic success:

- In the 2022 Baccalaureate:
 - The overall pass rate was 53.27 per cent

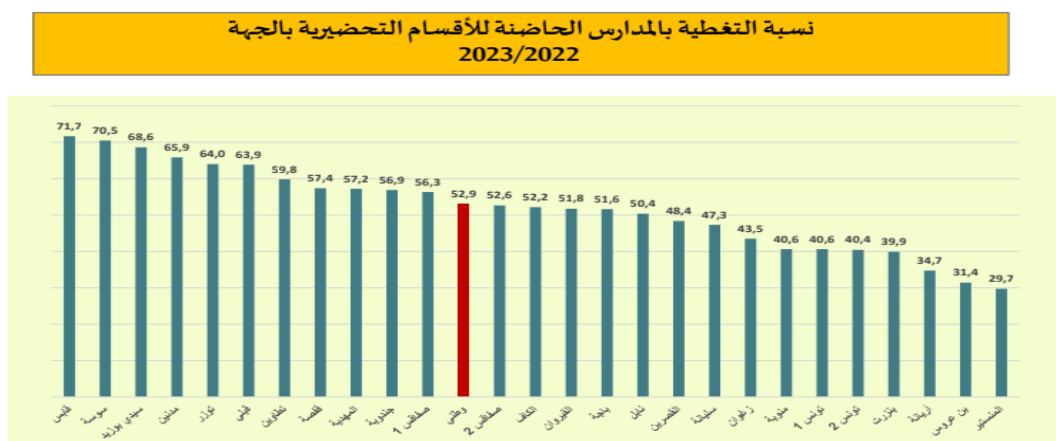
- 11 regional delegations achieved results above the national average, while 15 achieved results below the national average

252. As part of the continuation of the programme to mainstream the pre-primary preparatory year, efforts have focused in particular on rural areas and densely populated working-class neighbourhoods, where private sector intervention is difficult or non-existent, given that the State provides this education free of charge to children from poor, low-income families and other children pay only a nominal fee.

253. The investments made in this area have made it possible to draw up a map of primary schools with preparatory classes, of which there were 2,426 by 2022/23, compared with 362 when they were first introduced in 2001/02. There were 54,325 children enrolled in preparatory classes in public schools (50.8 per cent girls and 49.2 per cent boys) compared to 58,325 children in 2021/22. The table below shows the evolution of the data with respect to the preparatory year.

254. There are 2,426 preparatory schools, 902 of them in urban areas (37.2 per cent) and 1,524 in non-urban areas (62.8 per cent). The regions of Medenine, Kairouan, Sousse, Nabeul, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Jendouba, Gafsa, Siliana and Gabès recorded the highest rates of enrolment in preparatory classes, while the regions of Tunis I, Tunis II, Tozeur, Manouba, Ariana and Monastir recorded the lowest rates. The table below shows the evolution of the data with respect to the preparatory year in public schools by region.

255. The coverage rate for preparatory classes is 52.9 per cent nationally; the governorate of Monastir is in last place (29.7 per cent), preceded by Ben Arous (31.4 per cent), while the governorate of Gabès is in first place (71.7 per cent), followed by Sousse (70.5 per cent). The table below shows the coverage rate for 2022/23.



256. A review of the preparatory year programme was initiated in partnership with the Ministry for Women and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and a joint committee was formed to develop possible mechanisms and scenarios for extending the preparatory year, particularly in remote areas, with the aim of enabling 18,000 children who have not benefited from preschool education to gain access to it.

Increasing the number of qualified teachers and developing appropriate educational infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas

257. Tunisia has strengthened the human resources of the Ministry of Education to guarantee the right to education (see tables below)

Total number of educational institutions (2021/22)	7 237
Public institutions	6 118
Private institutions	1 119
Public schools offering a preparatory year	2 422
Public primary schools	4 584

Private primary schools	636
Public middle and secondary schools	1 455
Technical institutions	79
Private middle and secondary schools	483

<i>Evolution in the number of teachers at all levels</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2021/22</i>
Teachers in public schools	144 107	148 857
Teachers in private schools	22 356	24 631
Preparatory year teachers in public schools	2 656	2 877
Teachers in public primary schools	65 981	71 161
Teachers in private primary schools	9 567	10 634
Teachers in public middle and secondary schools	73 979	73 795
Teachers in technical schools	1 491	1 024
Teachers in private middle and secondary schools	12 789	13 399
Total number of teachers	166 463	173 488

Evolution in the number of teachers at primary level

<i>School year</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>	
		<i>Total</i>	<i>Female teachers</i>
1984/85	3 214	37 412	13 150
1994/95	4 286	58 279	27 927
1999/2000	4 456	60 333	29 736
2004/05	4 494	58 342	29 871
2009/10	4 517	58 567	32 109
2014/15	4 565	63 303	37 402
2016/17	4 568	64 000	38 673
2017/18	4 576	63 642	39 176
2018/19	4 583	63 228	39 626
2019/20	4 583	65 981	42 492
2020/21	4 582	68 871	45 570
2021/22	4 584	71 161	48 167

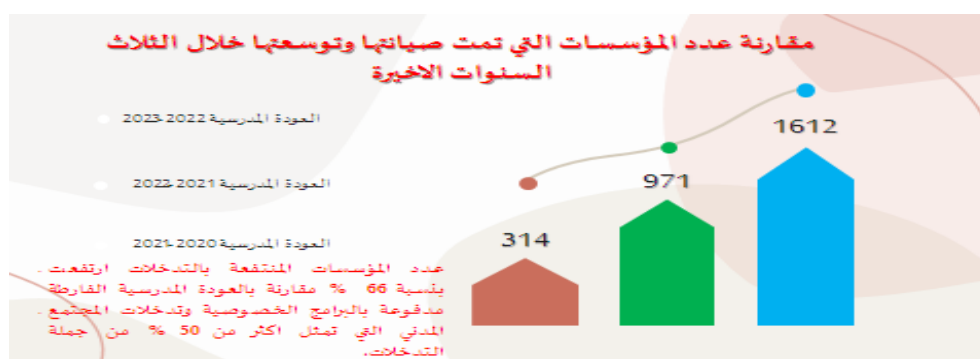
Evolution in the number of teachers in middle and secondary schools

<i>School year</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>				<i>Total</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>
	<i>Middle school only</i>	<i>Secondary school only</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Total</i>		
1994/95	389	74	249	712	27 785	
1999/2000	616	253	116	985	42 377	
2004/05	665	388	138	1 191	59 132	
2009/10	757	493	100	1 350	72 194	
2014/15	786	532	85	1 403	74 283	
2016/17	796	542	83	1 421	74 249	
2017/18	798	543	83	1 424	73 665	
2018/19	803	544	84	1 431	72 887	
2019/20	810	547	80	1 437	73 979	

School year	Number of schools				Total	Number of teachers
	Middle school only	Secondary school only	Mixed			
2020/21	815	552	81		1 448	73 474
2021/22	807	553	95		1 455	73 795

258. Infrastructure is one of the key factors in developing the educational system and improving educational attainment. The Ministry of Education has revised and improved the schools map through the following measures:

- The creation of 22 new educational institutions during the 2022/23 school year: 9 primary schools in Tunis 1, Tunis 2, Nabeul, Sfax 1, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte, Monastir and Medenine; 6 middle schools in Tunis 1, Ariana, Kasserine, Sfax 1, Sfax 2 and Medenine; and 7 secondary schools in Tunis, Sfax 2, Kasserine, Medenine, Monastir, Gabès and Zaghuan.
- Maintenance and extension works in 1,612 schools:
 - Annual programmes: 624 schools (development budget: public resources, external loans)
 - Special Upkeep and Maintenance Programme (Presidential Initiative): 396 schools
 - Interventions by young developers: 312 interventions
 - Contributions from organizations, associations and civil society: 280 schools



Addressing school dropout

259. School dropout is one of the biggest issues facing the education system, despite the efforts made to curb this phenomenon, which has negative repercussions on children and society.

260. In this context, the Ministry of Education has developed a plan of action to address school dropout, with contributions from various stakeholders through a participatory approach, that takes into account the best interests of the student, based on the following elements:

- Providing support to those at risk of school failure by strengthening psychological, social and health care, reinforcing the school social action units, strengthening measures to address all negative phenomena that threaten schools (school violence, drugs, electronic games, sexual harassment, polarization, transmitted diseases), providing support classes for students with learning, psychological or social difficulties, and strengthening guidance and counselling services.
- Improving and developing the education system by revising and updating approved curricula, revising approved teaching methods and teaching aids, promoting the use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning and training teachers in this area, developing the assessment system, developing the basic and in-service training system for education staff, promoting recreational, cultural and

sporting activities with the aim of renewing pupils' productive and creative capacity, and developing school mapping.

- Promoting remedial education through the implementation of the four-dimensional programme to help prevent school dropout (M4D), supported by the British Embassy, the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development and UNICEF, which involved the establishment of two pilot centres in Bizerte and Gabès, pending the roll-out of the programme to all regions.
- Reintegrating students who have dropped out of school into the education and training system, as part of the Second Chance Programme, which enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to integrate into society and build their career plans.
- Establishing the National Education Observatory to monitor all negative phenomena that threaten the safety of pupils and schools.
- Developing a media plan and programme to raise public awareness of school failure and early school dropout.
- Developing monitoring mechanisms for early school dropout.
- Strengthening the role of civil society and associations and urging them to play their role in supporting and reinforcing educational work through direct, timely and rapid intervention.

261. In the same context, the Second Chance School was set up, a programme run by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the Ministry of Vocational Training and the Ministry of Social Affairs, with the support of its financial and technical partners and in collaboration with civil society organizations. It aims to provide students aged between 12 and 18 who have dropped out of school with a second chance to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to integrate into society and build their career plans.

262. The project started with the creation of the Second Chance Centre in Bab El-Khadra, Tunis (Government Order No. 57 of 13 January 2021), and there are plans to establish two other centres in Kairouan and Gabès, as well as three regional centres of the Second Chance School in the Béja, Mahdia, and Nabeul governorates.

Literacy

263. The National Strategy for Literacy, Adult Education and Non-formal Education, developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Office, is part of a drive to contribute to improving human capital and offer plans and programmes to nearly 2 million illiterate Tunisians to support their social and economic integration.

264. The Strategy aims to develop the educational and skills system for illiterate people, remove barriers to learning, and develop scientific research in the field of literacy and adult education.

Data on the adult education programme by academic year

	2019/20	2020/21
Centres	999	952
Learners	22 105 (83.1% women and 16.9% men)	19 649 (80% women, 20% men)
Teachers	1 125 (114 permanent social education teachers and 1 011 contracted teachers)	1 125 (114 permanent social education teachers and 1 011 contracted teachers)
Cohorts	2 297	2 265
Social education inspectors	17 (10 active in the field and 7 administrators (regional coordinator for adult education))	17 (10 active in the field and 7 administrators (regional coordinator for adult education))
Exam takers	9 938	6 458

	2019/20	2020/21
Number of people who have become literate	8 952	5 434
Number of people who have passed the exam	7 023	5 434 (4 104 women)
Success rate	62.8 per cent	84.1 per cent

Section 21: Cultural rights (paragraph 55 of the concluding observations)

265. Article 49 of the Constitution of 25 July 2022 stipulates that the right to culture is guaranteed. It also provides that the State supports the originality, diversity and revival of national culture and enshrines the values of tolerance, non-violence and openness to different cultures. This article also establishes that the State shall protect cultural heritage and guarantee the right of future generations to it.

266. Amazigh culture is an integral part of the national culture and is the focus of various cultural projects, including documentation and inventory work related to several forms of Amazigh cultural and artistic expression, such as costumes, skills, traditional knowledge and oral traditions, as well as preservation and restoration programmes in respect of a number of Amazigh mountain villages, such as Chenni, Douiret, Toujan, Toudjout and Toukrouna, and seminars, symposiums and scientific publications organized by State universities and research institutions. In this context, mention should be made of the international scientific forum on indigeneity – “Autochtonie” – which has been held twice, most recently in November 2021. The proceedings of the first session have already been published and those of the second are awaiting publication.

267. Tunisia also submitted an application to UNESCO for the inclusion of one of the expressions of this culture, namely the skills associated with the pottery of the women of Sejnane, known for its Amazigh roots, approved in 2018, when the inclusion of this artefact on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was officially announced. Similarly, in partnership with Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania, a joint application was prepared in respect of couscous, the well-known Amazigh dish, which was added to the same list in 2019.

268. Some associations, such as Tawassul, have also started teaching the Amazigh language freely in several regions of the country.

269. The limited budgetary resources allocated to Amazigh culture and the protection of Amazigh cultural heritage does not mean the denial of this culture, but is due to the dissolution of the ethnic structure as a result of the social integration of its members, so that budgetary allocations are not granted on the basis of this criterion, either to groups of Amazigh origin or others. However, the Amazigh component of Tunisian culture, both tangible and intangible, benefits from several State-funded programmes, especially in the framework of preserving and valuing the national cultural heritage.

270. Many associations working on Amazigh culture have organized events related to Amazigh culture, such as:

- The Tunisian Association for Amazigh Culture, which organized a scientific symposium on Amazighness in the context of the transformations taking place in Tunisia on 7 January 2023.
- The Lam Echeml and Touiza associations, which, in cooperation with the Heritage Laboratory at the Faculty of Arts in Manouba, organized an event on “Living memory and the continuity of the Amazigh heritage in Tunisia – a day of celebration of the Amazigh New Year” on 14 January 2023.

- The Tamaguet association for Amazigh rights, freedoms and culture has also organized activities.

271. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs facilitates activities organized by associations concerned with Amazigh culture and provides them with financial support, including for the following activities:

- The International Festival of Mountain Caves in Sened, Gafsa governorate, received a grant of D 45,000
- The Mountain Olive Festival organized by the Wakri Association in Douiret and the Chenni Association for Social Responsibility in Tataouine governorate in December received a grant of D 41,000
- The International Festival of Berber Music in Kesra, organized by the “Siliana Halma” association, received a grant of D 6,000

272. Given that the Amazigh represent an important part of the Tunisian social fabric, Amazigh culture will be included, as from 2024, as a supplementary component of official school curricula through cultural activities organized by clubs for those wishing to participate.

273. With regard to statistics disaggregated based on self-identification, the National Institute of Statistics conducts a general population and housing census every 10 years, using a form prepared by a team of experts with questions on a number of indicators. The National Institute adopts a human-right-based approach to the areas addressed in the questionnaire in performing its functions, bearing in mind the rules governing the protection of personal data and the need to respect individuals’ freedom to provide the requested data. However, as the questionnaire used by the National Institute does not include fields on the ethnic or religious composition of the population, there are no accurate data on the ethnic composition of Tunisian society.

274. It should be stressed that the Tunisian State enshrines the principle of equality and non-discrimination in its legal system and abides by it when formulating policies and developing programmes and action plans, which are applicable to all persons without discrimination based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or gender. The State monitors all infringements of the legislation in force by individuals or groups, including infringements motivated by discrimination, including racial discrimination.

275. Regarding the registration of Amazigh names in the civil register, on 15 July 2020, the Ministry of Local Affairs issued a circular revoking joint circular No. 1965-85 of 12 December 1965 issued by the Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for the Interior, which imposed some restrictions on parents’ choice of names for newborn babies when registering their birth. The new circular guarantees, in particular, the right of the Tunisian population of Amazigh origin to register children with Amazigh names (see annex 6). The departments tasked with monitoring compliance with the circular seek to prevent cases in which individual civil servants fail to comply with this obligation.

Section 22: Measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

276. The period that followed the review of the last national report and the issuance of the Committee’s concluding observations was characterized by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a major impact on the social, economic and health situation in Tunisia, as elsewhere around the world. All ministries and public authorities worked in cooperation with all stakeholders, especially civil society, to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic since its outbreak in the country by adopting and implementing various programmes for both workplaces and the general public.

277. This report outlines some of the measures taken to address the effects of the pandemic in a number of areas related to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Combating violence against women and children

278. During the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women increased sevenfold with respect to the same period of the preceding year. In fact, 3,085 calls were received on the 1899 hotline between March and June 2020.

279. As a result of this, the operation of the hotline has been extended and it now runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Eighteen persons specialized in interaction with victims of violence have received training, and a system of services for women and girls, including refugees, has been set up with 24 psychiatric crisis units in 24 regions.

280. The 1899 hotline directs victims of violence to the competent institutions, according to the needs of each case. Seventy-four cases have been directed to security institutions, 53 cases to the courts, 46 to healthcare institutions and 16 to child protection delegates. It should be noted that each instance of violence may include more than one request.

281. An online platform delivering psychological services for children and families was launched, while the 1809 free hotline was opened to provide psychological support and guidance for children and families. Moreover, a daily radio programme was broadcast with advice on how handle interactions in the family during lockdown.

Protecting the right to work

282. Several measures have been taken, including the granting of an exceptional monthly grant for workers in the tourism and handicraft sectors for a maximum of six months in 2021. Measures were also taken for the benefit young entrepreneurs in the form of grants to help save jobs. A programme was run involving the disbursement of loans on favourable terms to heads of microenterprises, with a maximum ceiling of D 5,000. A sum of D 100 million was allocated to guarantee loans given to institutions that suffered harm as a consequence of the pandemic, while D 500 million, in the form of financing and assisted loans, was injected into the tourism sector. Loan repayments were deferred for companies and professionals in the tourism sector, while credits for certain projects and international cooperation programmes in 2021 were diverted into financial assistance for microenterprises and grants for entrepreneurs.

283. Credits of D 50 million were allocated to support persons who had sought assistance via the batinda.gov.tn website, and an exceptional grant of D 1,200 was handed out on an ad hoc basis to each of a group of 2,735 businesspersons.

284. Credits in the form of interest-free ready money have been distributed to support businesspersons and children's associations affected by the pandemic. The money is repayable over 24 months, including a six-month grace period.

285. As a way of protecting domestic workers, especially those affected by lockdown, they have been offered interest-free loans of up to D 1,000 repayable over 24 months, including a two-month grace period.

Healthcare

286. The information centre of the Ministry of Health coordinated with other stakeholders to develop apps and dashboards to monitor the spread of COVID-19. Also, a central database was set up to follow up on the epidemiological aspects of the pandemic and a computer system was created for that purpose.

287. A system for managing appointments for COVID-19 tests was set up as well as a system for managing the medicines and medical supplies used in the programme to combat COVID-19.

288. In order to tackle the developing pandemic, public health structures were supplied with intensive care beds and with oxygen tents. Increased demands for oxygen were met thanks to efforts made in partnership with companies that produce medical oxygen. The national vaccination campaign was launched in March 2021, initially targeting healthcare personnel and citizens over the age of 70, as well as those over 60 suffering from chronic illnesses. This phase was followed by open days for intensive vaccination that benefited nearly 2 million people. This brought the total number of persons who have received at least

one dose of vaccine to 7,430,000, of whom 3,420,000 have completed the full course. The Tunisian armed forces also participated in national efforts to vaccinate citizens and residents by organizing convoys in inland regions.

Education

289. More than 2.3 million students interrupted their schooling between March and April 2020, and more than 7,000 State-run and private schools were closed. The academic year was then terminated for all levels of schooling.

290. The school timetable and the examination calendar were reviewed and adapted to the requirements of the health situation, bearing in mind the interests of students and of teaching staff (the grouping system). This programme was then relaxed in line with changes in the epidemiological situation.

291. Remote teaching was used during the period of lockdown thanks to the launch of a special educational television channel. For its part, the National Centre for Technology in Education set up its own virtual school.

Supporting vulnerable groups and reducing poverty

292. Social assistance was disbursed to some 1.1 million low-income families for a total estimated value of D 287 million. At the same time, 460,000 wage earners and self-employed workers were provided with financial assistance estimated at D 92 million, while 1,272 Tunisians living abroad were provided with an estimated D 400,000. Foreign nationals in Tunisia have also received food and financial assistance.

293. Persons drawing a pension were given a supplementary top-up. This was in addition to a number of other social measures including ad hoc financial assistance to 1,173,000 families in 2020 and to 869,000 families in 2021 for an estimated total amount of D 520.5 million. Moreover, repayments on loans were postponed from the beginning of March to the end of September 2020.

294. A committee comprising representatives of several ministries, the IOM, UNHCR, the Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, and representatives of civil society groups was established to monitor the situation of migrants and asylum-seekers, develop an action plan to ensure coordination among relevant stakeholders, and identify all forms of intervention and mechanisms for distributing aid to these vulnerable groups.

295. In addition, a digital platform was created for the remote management of donations and aid. It receives requests for assistance from foreign students, refugees and asylum-seekers or their representatives, regardless of their legal status, and also receives material aid and donations from individuals, companies and institutions that wish to provide support to these groups.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in places of detention

296. A number of preventive measures were taken, including temporarily suspending direct visits while continuing with ordinary visits behind screens, reducing the number of visits for child offenders to one per week and allocating isolation wings in seven prisons to take in new inmates from different regions. In doing so, due account was taken of the type of detention, overcrowding, the geographical location of courts and the specific characteristics of each prison.

297. Among the key experiences in preventing and responding to the effects of COVID-19, reference is made to the national “Azima” programme, under the supervision of the Prime Minister’s Office, which involved partnership with public bodies, civil society, international organizations and institutions and contributed to the implementation of several objectives, namely:

- Promoting the widespread use of sterilization and disinfection methods to prevent the repercussions of the pandemic through:
 - Awareness-raising on the need to respect the health protocol established by the Ministry of Health

- Protecting vulnerable groups from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic
 - Valuing scientific research and supporting civil society initiatives and innovations aimed at tackling the coronavirus
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