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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Initial report submitted by Somalia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 1992*

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I. Introduction

1. The Federal Republic of Somalia deposited its instrument of accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter referred to as “the Covenant”) on January 24, 1990, thereby committing to the progressive realization of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.
2. Pursuant to Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, Somalia hereby submits its first periodic report, providing an overview of the legislative, judicial, policy, and institutional measures adopted to implement the rights recognized under the Covenant, as well as the progress made and challenges encountered.
3. This report covers the period from 1990 to 2023 and assesses Somalia’s compliance with the obligations set forth under the Covenant, focusing on both achievements and areas requiring further development.
4. The report has been prepared by the Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development in coordination with relevant ministries, commissions, civil society organizations, and development partners to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive assessment.
5. While recognizing the significant challenges faced due to political instability, security concerns, and economic constraints, Somalia remains committed to strengthening governance structures, enhancing human rights protections, and fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant. This report aims to present a transparent evaluation of the country’s progress and the strategies in place to address existing gaps.

II. General information on the situation in Somalia

6. Somalia acceded to the Covenant in 1990, reaffirming its commitment to the progressive realization of economic, social, and cultural rights. However, implementation has been hindered by political instability, security threats, economic underdevelopment, and environmental challenges, which continue to limit the government’s capacity to fully uphold its ESCR obligations.
7. Politically, Somalia is undergoing a transition from centralized military rule to a federal democratic system. The adoption of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012) established the framework for a federal governance structure, leading to the formation of regional member states. However, state-building efforts have faced challenges due to ongoing insecurity, weak institutions, and fragmented governance. The persistent threat posed by Al-Shabaab, an armed terrorist group, has significantly disrupted governance, restricted access to essential services, and hindered national development efforts. In response, the government has intensified military and stabilization operations to reclaim territories and restore state authority.
8. Economically, Somalia remains one of the least developed countries in the world, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of approximately \$597.5 as of 2023.¹ Decades of conflict have severely damaged infrastructure, disrupted productive sectors, and impeded economic growth. The economy is predominantly reliant on pastoralism, agriculture, remittances, and telecommunications, but structural deficiencies, climate shocks, and insecurity constrain sustainable development. Unemployment and underemployment rates are among the highest in the world, with an unemployment rate of 19.03% and a youth unemployment rate of 34.8% as of 2023.² The government is working to revitalize the economy through initiatives under National Transformation Plan (2025–2029), which focuses on employment generation, infrastructure rehabilitation, and economic diversification.

¹ Source: World Bank 2023.

² Source: Macrotrends - <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/SOM/somalia/unemployment-rate>.

9. Social indicators also highlight significant challenges in realizing ESCR rights. Somalia has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with approximately 54.4% of the population living below the national poverty line. Access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation remains critically low, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Food insecurity affects over 20% of the population as of 2024,³ and malnutrition rates among children remain alarmingly high, with an estimated 1.7 million children aged 6 to 59 months facing acute malnutrition in 2024.⁴ The government, in collaboration with humanitarian partners, has been implementing food security interventions and expanding social safety net programs, such as the Baxnaano cash transfer initiative.

10. Environmental challenges, particularly climate change-induced droughts and floods, have exacerbated Somalia's vulnerabilities. The 2010–2012 drought led to the displacement of over 1 million people, while the 2021–2022 drought resulted in the displacement of approximately 1.35 million people. Recurrent droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns threaten agricultural productivity and water availability, disproportionately affecting rural and nomadic communities. Additionally, insecurity continues to obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid and essential public services in several regions, further deepening social and economic inequalities. To mitigate these effects, Somalia has developed the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) on Climate Change and is working to strengthen disaster resilience and response mechanisms.

III. Part of the report relating to general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1–5)

Article 1

Right to self-determination

11. Somalia reaffirms its commitment to the principle of self-determination, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Covenant, which establishes that all peoples have the right to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. This principle is firmly embedded in the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), particularly under Article 46, which affirms that governance authority rests with the people. Through this constitutional provision, Somalia guarantees transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance, enabling public participation in decision-making processes. The Constitution further safeguards fundamental citizens' rights in Chapter 2, while Chapter 3 explicitly delineates rights related to land, property, natural resources, and environmental protection, ensuring equitable distribution and sustainable use of national resources. Somalia recognizes that self-determination is an essential prerequisite for the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights and remains committed to upholding this right in accordance with the United Nations Charter, international legal obligations, and regional human rights instruments.

12. Economic self-determination remains a critical aspect of Somalia's state-building process. The government acknowledges the importance of equitable resource management, particularly regarding natural resource governance, foreign investment, and economic autonomy. To enhance economic self-sufficiency, Somalia is working to establish stronger legal and institutional frameworks governing the use of oil, minerals, fisheries, and agricultural lands to prevent resource exploitation and ensure benefits reach all communities. The Petroleum Law (2020), the Somali Fisheries Development and Management Law (2023), the Investment Protection and Investors Rights Law (2023), and the Financial Governance and Regulation of Subsurface Resources Law (2023) are key legislative efforts aimed at ensuring that Somalia's natural wealth is used for sustainable development and poverty reduction, reinforcing the people's right to economic self-determination.

13. Somalia is a clan-based society, where governance structures are designed to reflect diversity and promote political and economic inclusion. However, insecurity, weak state

³ Source: OCHA Somalia Situation Report, 17 Mar 2024.

⁴ Source: FSNAU - IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis January - June 2024.

institutions, and persistent conflict in certain regions have hindered the full implementation and enforcement of legal protections to ensure all groups enjoy Covenant rights without discrimination. The Federal Government is actively working to extend governance structures, strengthen rule of law, and promote inclusive development policies that protect the rights of minority groups, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and marginalized communities. In line with this, Somalia is implementing policies that promote equal political participation, access to public services, and representation of women and minorities in decision-making processes.

14. To advance self-determination, Somalia is implementing legal and institutional reforms focused on democratic participation, governance, and economic self-sufficiency. Efforts include expanding electoral reforms to enhance civic engagement, strengthening local governance to empower regional and district authorities, and ensuring the equitable distribution of national resources, particularly from oil, fisheries, and agriculture. The Government is also supporting private sector growth, youth employment, and infrastructure investment to enhance economic stability. Additionally, national reconciliation efforts and legal protections aim to address historical injustices faced by marginalized groups, fostering inclusive development and governance.

Article 2

Progressive realization of rights

15. Somalia reaffirms its commitment under Article 2 of the Covenant to progressively realize ESC rights to the maximum of its available resources. However, decades of conflict, insecurity, and economic fragility have significantly constrained the government's ability to fully implement these rights. Despite these challenges, Somalia is taking comprehensive measures – both independently and through international cooperation – to advance the realization of ESC rights while ensuring the efficient use of available resources to prioritize vulnerable populations.

16. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), under Article 27, mandates the fulfilment of economic and social rights for all citizens, with explicit provisions ensuring that women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and marginalized groups receive the necessary support to realize their socio-economic rights. This legal framework promotes inclusivity, non-discrimination, and equitable access to opportunities in Somali society.

17. To progressively realize economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights, Somalia has implemented sector-specific interventions and policy measures aimed at strengthening education, healthcare, food security, social protection, and labor rights. Under the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), efforts are underway to increase school enrollment, improve teacher training, and expand educational infrastructure, with a commitment to protecting schools from conflict-related disruptions through the Safe Schools Declaration. In healthcare, the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) is enhancing maternal and child health, vaccination programs, and emergency medical care, alongside the expansion of primary healthcare facilities and mobile clinics in rural areas.

18. To address food security and agricultural development, the National Agriculture Development Strategy promotes climate-resilient farming techniques and increased agricultural productivity, complemented by nutrition programs in partnership with WFP and FAO to combat malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant women. Social protection efforts have been strengthened through the Baxnaano Cash Transfer Program, which provides direct financial assistance to over 200,000 vulnerable households, while the National Social Protection Policy is under review to expand coverage for marginalized groups.

19. In the labour sector, the revised Labour Code (2024) enforces worker protections, fair wages, and safeguards against exploitation, while the National Employment Policy (2023) promotes job creation and economic inclusion. Somalia continues to enhance international cooperation, actively engaging with the UN, AU, World Bank, ILO, and bilateral donors to secure technical assistance, financial support, and capacity-building programs for strengthening ESC rights implementation.

20. Despite ongoing resource constraints, Somalia remains committed to progressively achieving the full realization of ESC rights. The government is prioritizing equitable budget allocations, improving domestic revenue collection, and strengthening public financial management to ensure that resources are efficiently allocated to key social sectors. Additionally, Somalia is working to enhance transparency and accountability in public spending through anti-corruption measures and institutional reforms. The government acknowledges that continued investment in governance, economic development, and security stabilization is essential to sustaining long-term progress in the realization of ESC rights.

Article 3

Non-discrimination and equality

21. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), under Article 11, guarantees equality before the law and prohibits all forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, and other protected characteristics. However, Somalia acknowledges that gaps remain in legislative enforcement, institutional protections, and access to justice for marginalized groups. The ongoing constitutional review process aims to strengthen anti-discrimination protections and introduce more comprehensive legal safeguards.

22. While Somalia has made progress in advancing gender equality, deep-rooted sociocultural norms and customary law continue to undermine women's rights in practice. Women face limited decision-making power within their families and communities and experience disparities in education, healthcare, employment, land ownership, and inheritance rights. Violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early/forced marriage, remains a widespread issue. Despite legal and policy measures, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, and prosecution rates for gender-based violence cases are low.

23. Harmful traditional practices, including early and forced marriage, severely restrict women's autonomy and violate their right to education, employment, and personal development. A significant percentage of Somali girls are married before the age of 18, with current data indicating that 35.4% of girls aged 15–19 and 16.7% of girls under 15 are affected by child marriage,⁵ limiting their opportunities for education and economic independence. Maternal mortality remains alarmingly high, with 620 deaths per 100,000 live births recorded in 2020.⁶ Limited access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care continues to be a major contributing factor, disproportionately impacting women in rural and conflict-affected regions and exacerbating existing health inequalities. Gender-based son preference has also contributed to higher rates of malnutrition among girls.

24. Women's economic participation remains constrained by unequal access to financial resources, agricultural assets, and employment opportunities. While women constitute the majority of smallholder farmers, they face systemic barriers to accessing credit, markets, and land ownership rights. Additionally, sexual harassment and inadequate legal protections in the workplace discourage their full participation in the labour market. To address these disparities, Somalia is implementing inclusive economic policies, including targeted initiatives to support women-led businesses and enhance access to microfinance programs. A key initiative is the EU-funded Empowering Women through Investment and Inclusion Networks in Somalia (e-WINS) project, which directly benefits 10,000 women entrepreneurs, supports 61 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and 37 Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and aims to economically empower women and girls through gender-inclusive and transformative approaches.

25. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has taken significant steps to strengthen gender equality and eliminate discrimination through legal and institutional frameworks. The

⁵ Source: Somali National Bureau of Statistics SNBS – Women and Men in Somalia (Gender Statistics Booklet) 2023.

⁶ Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1122869/maternal-mortality-rate-in-africa-by-country/#statisticContainer>.

Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development (MoFHRD) leads these efforts by developing key policies and legislative measures aimed at protecting women's rights, preventing gender-based violence, and ensuring equal participation in governance and economic sectors.

26. The National Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) enhances legal protections and support services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), reinforcing the Government's commitment to eliminating gender-based discrimination. As part of legal reforms, the Rape and Indecency Offenses Bill (2023) was developed through consultations with ministries, civil society organizations (CSOs), and religious scholars, and has been passed by the Cabinet of Ministers, currently under review by the House of the People for adoption. In efforts to combat female genital mutilation (FGM), the Government has introduced the Anti-FGM National Action Plan, incorporating public awareness campaigns, legal enforcement, and religious engagement. Additionally, the National Anti-FGM Bill is undergoing review by religious scholars to ensure broad-based support for its implementation.

27. The Federal Government of Somalia is also committed to ensuring women's leadership and participation in governance, security, and economic sectors. The National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security operationalizes Somalia's commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, ensuring women's meaningful political participation and representation, active role in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and security sector reform. The National Action Plan on Women in the Maritime Sector (WiMS) promotes gender inclusion in maritime industries through capacity-building initiatives and economic participation programs. To advance women's political representation, the Women's Leadership Technical Committee was established to ensure a 30% quota for female parliamentarians, fostering greater inclusivity in national decision-making processes.

28. Despite ongoing efforts, Somalia continues to face structural and resource-based challenges in fully implementing Article 3 of the Covenant. Weak enforcement mechanisms remain a significant barrier to gender equality and anti-discrimination laws, limiting their practical impact. Institutional capacity constraints further hinder the investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence and workplace discrimination cases, affecting access to justice for survivors.

29. Sociocultural resistance poses additional challenges, as deep-rooted traditions and norms continue to limit women's empowerment and acceptance of legal reforms. Insecurity and instability exacerbate these difficulties, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, where social services and justice mechanisms remain inaccessible. Furthermore, resource constraints restrict government-led initiatives, reducing the effectiveness of programs aimed at combating discrimination and promoting inclusive policies.

30. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), in collaboration with international partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, the African Union (AU), and bilateral donors, is actively implementing gender-responsive policies, legal reforms, and public awareness campaigns to advance non-discrimination and equality.

31. Moving forward, Somalia is prioritizing the finalization and enactment of the Rape and Indecency Offenses Bill, strengthening legal protections for survivors of sexual violence. The Government is also working to expand the Baxnaano social protection program to cover a larger number of female-headed households, ensuring economic security for vulnerable women and their families. Plans are underway to develop a national anti-discrimination law that explicitly prohibits all forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, and other protected categories.

32. To enhance institutional capacity, Somalia is committed to gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring adequate resource allocation for women's rights and empowerment initiatives. Additionally, efforts to strengthen legal enforcement and accountability mechanisms are being prioritized to increase prosecution rates for gender-based violence and workplace discrimination, reinforcing Somalia's commitment to eliminating systemic inequalities.

Articles 4 and 5

Limitations & Restrictions

33. Somalia recognizes its obligation under Article 4 of the Covenant to ensure that any limitations on ESC rights are imposed only in strict compliance with legal principles, necessity, and proportionality. While Somalia faces resource constraints, security challenges, and institutional limitations, the government remains committed to ensuring that any restriction on rights is determined by law, compatible with the nature of the rights, and exclusively for the purpose of promoting general welfare in a democratic society.

34. Ongoing security challenges, economic instability, and underdevelopment continue to limit the availability of resources for the full realization of ESC rights. Rebuilding government institutions, infrastructure, and essential public services after decades of conflict remains an ongoing priority, requiring long-term financial and technical investment. Despite these limitations, Somalia upholds the principle that any restriction on ESC rights must be necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory.

35. Somalia continues to face significant structural constraints in fully realizing economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights, with challenges spanning education, healthcare, social security, workers' rights, and essential infrastructure. The education sector struggles with severe shortages of schools, trained teachers, and learning materials, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions, limiting access to quality education. While the National Education Plan is working to expand school infrastructure and improve teacher recruitment, progress remains contingent on available resources. Similarly, the healthcare sector faces critical gaps in medical facilities, trained professionals, and essential medical supplies, with mobile clinics deployed in remote areas but insufficient coverage to meet national healthcare demands.

36. Beyond education and healthcare, social security remains limited due to financial and institutional constraints, preventing the establishment of a comprehensive social protection system. Food aid programs and cash transfer initiatives, such as the Baxnaano Program, provide essential support to vulnerable groups, but broader systemic reforms are required. Workers' rights enforcement is hindered by governance instability and economic constraints, although ongoing legal reforms under the tripartite dialogue framework aim to strengthen minimum wage regulations and occupational safety standards. Water and sanitation infrastructure remains underdeveloped, with reconstruction efforts slowed by resource competition and governance challenges, affecting access to clean water and sanitation services nationwide. The absence of an updated national census further complicates evidence-based policymaking and equitable resource allocation, particularly for marginalized communities. The Government is working with international partners to conduct a national census, ensuring accurate demographic data for effective planning and development.

37. Somalia remains committed to addressing structural constraints through progressive realization strategies, targeted policymaking, and strengthened international partnerships. The Government is prioritizing equitable budget allocation to ensure sustained investment in essential services, while also enhancing domestic revenue collection to reduce dependency on donor funding and promote fiscal self-sufficiency. Expanding legal frameworks to strengthen ESC rights protections remains a key focus, ensuring that national laws align with international human rights standards. Additionally, Somalia is deepening partnerships with international organizations, including the United Nations, World Bank, and African Union, to advance human development programs and support long-term socio-economic resilience.

38. Somalia affirms that under Article 5 of the Covenant, no limitation or restriction may be placed on rights that would compromise their fundamental nature. Any restriction must align with international human rights standards and serve the legitimate purpose of promoting general welfare in a democratic society. Somalia ensures that legislative and institutional measures prevent the arbitrary limitation of ESC rights.

39. Historically, Somalia has faced severe challenges in safeguarding fundamental freedoms, particularly during periods of conflict. Non-state armed groups, including Al-Shabaab, have imposed repressive policies in areas outside government control,

restricting access to girls' education, freedom of expression, and freedom of association, while also denying individuals due process and legal protections.

40. While security has improved in many regions, the terror group Al-Shabaab continues to pose a significant threat. They undermine state authority and subject populations to extreme misinterpretations of Sharia law that not only contradict Islamic Sharia, but also violate basic human rights standards.

41. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has adopted a rights-based approach to governance, ensuring that any limitations on rights comply with international human rights norms. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012) establishes a democratic governance framework, guaranteeing separation of powers and human rights protections. As part of ongoing reforms, Somalia is developing a National Human Rights Policy to strengthen legal protections, document rights violations, and enhance enforcement mechanisms.

42. Judicial independence is a key priority, with efforts focused on expanding access to legal aid for vulnerable populations and eliminating extra-judicial rulings that contravene human rights standards. Law enforcement officials are undergoing community-based training on international human rights norms and policing approaches, ensuring compliance with rights-based law enforcement principles. Additionally, the Government is engaging religious scholars and traditional leaders to counter misinterpretations of Sharia law and promote human rights education at the community level.

43. While challenges remain due to instability and governance limitations, Somalia remains fully committed to ensuring that all restrictions on rights adhere to Article 5 of the Covenant and do not undermine the fundamental dignity and freedoms of individuals.

IV. Part of the report relating to specific rights (arts. 6–15)

Article 6

Right to Work

44. Somalia recognizes that the right to work is fundamental to ensuring human dignity and fulfilling other economic, social, and cultural rights. Following years of conflict and economic instability that disrupted lives and livelihoods, employment creation remains a central pillar of the country's post-conflict recovery, social stability, and poverty reduction strategy.

45. Under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), every Somali has the right to freely choose or accept employment under just and favourable conditions. This right is further guaranteed by Articles 14, 23, and 24 of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), which prohibit forced labour, uphold freedom of employment choice, mandate fair labour relations, and protect workers – particularly women – from discrimination, segregation, and all forms of workplace abuse.

46. To ensure the realization of this right, Somalia has undertaken key labour market reforms and employment initiatives. The Labour Code (1972) has been revised to provide updated legal protections for workers, ensure fair wages, promote occupational safety, and address emerging labour market challenges. The National Employment Policy (NEP) has been launched to focus on job creation, skills development, and private sector expansion across agriculture, livestock, fisheries, infrastructure, and services.

47. Despite ongoing efforts to strengthen employment opportunities and labour protections, Somalia continues to face significant challenges in ensuring the full realization of the right to work. As of 2023, the national unemployment rate stood at 19.03%, with youth unemployment (ages 15–24) at 34.28%, primarily due to limited job availability and skills mismatches. Labour market institutions remain weak, as the absence of a formal labour monitoring system hinders the enforcement of labour laws, employment trend tracking, and workplace regulation.

48. Women and marginalized groups continue to experience low workforce participation, with women's labour force participation at 15.8% compared to 39.4% for men. Internally

displaced persons (IDPs) and persons with disabilities also face systemic barriers to employment, exacerbating social and economic inequalities. The dominance of the informal economy, where 70-80% of the workforce is engaged in unregulated, precarious employment without social protections or legal safeguards, further undermines labour rights enforcement.

49. Additionally, ongoing conflict and economic instability disrupt private sector investment and job creation, particularly in insecure regions, limiting opportunities for sustainable employment. Climate change-induced drought and desertification continue to threaten agriculture and pastoral livelihoods, affecting a substantial portion of the workforce. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policy reforms, labour market modernization, and expanded investment in economic resilience programs.

50. Somalia's National Development Plan (NDP-9) (2020–2024) and the ongoing National Transformation Plan (2025–2029) align with Article 6 of the ICESCR, reinforcing the Government's commitment to expanding employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and strengthening labour protections. The plans emphasize sustainable economic growth and investment as key drivers of job creation, while integrating social and labour policies to ensure inclusive development.

51. Efforts to strengthen the rule of law focus on protecting workers' rights, promoting fair working conditions, and enforcing labour standards. The Government is also working to encourage private sector participation in labour-intensive industries, fostering entrepreneurship and industrial growth to absorb a growing workforce. Additionally, increasing the resilience of vulnerable workers to climate-related economic shocks remains a priority, particularly for those in agriculture, pastoralism, and informal employment, ensuring long-term economic stability.

52. Somalia remains committed to ensuring the full realization of the right to work by implementing targeted labour market reforms and employment strategies. The revised Labour Code is being enforced to strengthen legal protections for workers, ensure fair wages, and improve workplace safety standards. Expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs remains a priority, particularly for youth and marginalized populations, equipping them with market-driven skills to enhance employability.

53. Efforts are also underway to improve labour market data collection and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring better tracking of employment trends and workforce needs. The Government is enhancing partnerships with the private sector to stimulate job creation and industrial growth, while also developing active labour market policies that align with long-term economic development objectives, ensuring sustainable and inclusive employment opportunities for all Somalis.

Article 7

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

54. The Federal Government of Somalia recognizes that all persons engaged in work are entitled to just and favourable conditions of employment, including fair wages, safe working environments, and reasonable working hours, in accordance with Article 7 of the Covenant. Achieving internationally recognized standards for decent work remains a challenge given Somalia's post-conflict reconstruction, economic recovery phase, and ongoing labour market reforms. The Government remains committed to progressively realizing these rights through targeted policy interventions, legislative reforms, and institutional strengthening.

55. Somalia's labour laws were historically governed by the Labour Code of 1972, which established fundamental employment rights and protections. However, this legislation did not fully align with international labour standards, including those set by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In response, the revised Labour Code has introduced key reforms to strengthen worker protections and promote fair labour practices.

56. The updated legislation establishes a legally mandated minimum wage, ensuring that all workers receive fair remuneration that upholds a decent standard of living. Occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations have been reinforced to enhance workplace safety and prevent occupational hazards. Recognizing the significant role of the informal economy, the

Labour Code now includes stronger protections for informal sector workers, ensuring access to basic labour rights. Additionally, provisions on non-discrimination and gender equality have been updated to address wage disparities and promote equal workforce participation, strengthening Somalia's commitment to inclusive labour policies.

57. Somalia's labour regulations establish fundamental protections for workers, ensuring fair labour practices, workplace safety, and non-discrimination. The legal working hours are set at eight hours per day and forty-eight hours per week, with overtime compensation at higher rates. However, enforcement remains challenging, particularly in the informal sector, where many workers endure excessive hours without adequate compensation.

58. Employers are required to maintain safe and hygienic workplaces under occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations, but compliance monitoring remains difficult, especially in high-risk sectors such as construction and manufacturing. Maternity protection laws guarantee 14 weeks of paid maternity leave, including breastfeeding breaks upon returning to work, though informal sector workers often lack access to these protections.

59. Somalia's labour laws mandate equal pay for equal work, yet gender pay gaps persist, particularly in male-dominated industries. The Government is working to strengthen gender-responsive labour policies to ensure equal economic opportunities. Child labour restrictions prohibit the employment of children under 15 in hazardous work, yet economic hardships and enforcement gaps have led to continued child labour in informal sectors. The Government is taking steps to improve child labour monitoring and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to protect children's rights in the workforce.

60. The Government recognizes the essential role of trade unions in protecting workers' rights, negotiating fair wages, and improving working conditions. However, trade union participation remains low, and formal mechanisms for collective bargaining require further strengthening to ensure effective labour representation.

61. To address these challenges, the Government is working in collaboration with labour unions, employers, and relevant stakeholders to enhance trade union capacity, ensuring greater representation and expanded collective bargaining coverage. Efforts are also underway to develop regulations that promote social dialogue and improve dispute resolution mechanisms, facilitating fair negotiations between employers and workers. Additionally, the Government is committed to strengthening tripartite cooperation between government institutions, employers, and trade unions, ensuring that labour policy reforms are inclusive, participatory, and aligned with international labour standards.

62. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has undertaken several initiatives to enhance labour conditions, expand economic opportunities, and promote sustainable employment. The National Labour Market Policy is being finalized to increase workforce participation, improve job protections, and create employment opportunities, with a specific focus on women and youth.

63. Infrastructure development remains a key driver of job creation, with large-scale projects in road construction, public building rehabilitation, and energy sector development, supported by the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), and international development partners. These projects have contributed to both temporary and permanent employment opportunities. Economic reforms have also been prioritized, with Somalia reaching the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Completion Point, securing substantial debt relief. The financial resources freed from debt servicing are being redirected towards labour market development and public services.

64. To enhance social protection, the Government, in collaboration with the World Bank and international partners, has expanded safety net programs such as the Baxnaano Programme, providing direct cash transfers to vulnerable households to mitigate income insecurity and employment shocks. Labour rights enforcement is also being strengthened through enhanced labour inspection mechanisms, in partnership with ILO and UNDP, ensuring compliance with occupational safety regulations.

65. Investments in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs have been expanded to bridge skills gaps and improve employability for youth and marginalized populations. Additionally, the Government, in collaboration with the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO), is advancing food security programs and employment initiatives in the agricultural sector, ensuring sustainable livelihoods and economic resilience.

Article 8

Right to form and join trade unions

66. Somalia recognizes the fundamental right of workers to form and join trade unions, as enshrined in Article 8 of the Covenant. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012, Article 24) explicitly guarantees the freedom of association and the right to form and join trade unions to protect workers' interests and engage in collective bargaining. The Government is committed to strengthening legal protections and institutional frameworks to ensure that trade unions can operate effectively and contribute to just and fair industrial relations.

67. Somalia's revised Labour Code further provides legal guarantees for freedom of association and collective bargaining. However, trade union participation remains limited, and challenges persist in both the public and private sectors. While public sector unions are relatively more developed, union representation in private enterprises, informal employment, and emerging industries remains weak. Bureaucratic requirements, lack of collective agreements, and inadequate labour dispute resolution mechanisms impede effective unionization.

68. To strengthen the realization of Article 8 of the ICESCR, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has undertaken key initiatives to support trade unions, improve labour relations, and enhance social protection mechanisms. While Somalia does not have a dedicated Labour Relations Board, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) plays a central role in managing labour disputes and related issues, ensuring fair industrial relations and workplace rights enforcement.

69. Through UN and donor-supported initiatives, capacity-development programs have been introduced to train trade union leaders, enhance negotiation skills, and strengthen collective bargaining strategies, ensuring effective representation of workers' interests. Additionally, the enactment of the Somalia Social Protection Policy has expanded social welfare programs, providing safety nets and economic support for vulnerable populations.

70. The Government is also advancing tripartite social dialogue mechanisms in collaboration with trade unions and employer representatives, fostering labour market governance and dispute resolution frameworks that promote industrial harmony and equitable labour policies. These initiatives collectively contribute to strengthening Somalia's labour rights framework and ensuring greater worker protections.

71. However, key challenges persist. Violence and instability in some regions undermine free unionism in practice. Most workers are informal or self-employed with limited understanding of rights. Employers view unionization negatively due to weak rule of law and compliance. Financial resource constraints also limit union administrative capabilities. Absence of a strong union tradition requires time to develop.

72. The way forward includes legislation protecting unions from anti-union discrimination, expanding unions to new sectors, public awareness campaigns, representation enhancements through the ITCU, developing collective pacts and ensuring security for union members and activities across Somalia.

73. The Government remains committed to strengthening trade union rights and collective bargaining mechanisms as part of broader efforts to ensure just and favourable working conditions for all Somali workers. The realization of Article 8 is central to Somalia's labour market development, economic reform agenda, and adherence to international human rights and labour standards.

Article 9

Right to social security

74. Somalia recognizes social security as a fundamental human right under Article 9 of the Covenant. The Provisional Federal Constitution of Somalia (2012, Article 27) guarantees everyone the right to full social security and ensures that women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and minorities – who have long suffered from discrimination – receive the necessary support to realize their socio-economic rights. The Government remains committed to progressively realizing a comprehensive and sustainable social security system, despite the challenges posed by Somalia's post-conflict recovery, economic constraints, and institutional limitations.

75. Somalia currently lacks a universal social security system due to limited institutional capacity, financial constraints, and governance challenges. However, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has prioritized emergency relief and targeted social protection programs to support vulnerable populations, particularly those affected by drought, conflict, and displacement.

76. To address food insecurity, emergency food distribution programs, implemented in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) and humanitarian organizations, provide critical assistance to communities facing severe shortages. The Baxnaano Cash Transfer Program, supported by the World Bank, delivers direct financial assistance to (add number) vulnerable households, helping to mitigate economic shocks and food insecurity.

77. In the healthcare sector, the Government, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, has expanded access to basic health services, including maternal and child healthcare, vaccination programs, and mobile clinics in remote areas. Additionally, Somalia has introduced social protection policies for internally displaced persons (IDPs), ensuring access to temporary shelter, essential services, and reintegration support to facilitate long-term stability and resilience.

78. To progressively realize Article 9 of the Convention, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has undertaken key initiatives to establish a sustainable social protection framework, ensuring economic security and support for vulnerable populations.

79. The National Social Protection Policy (2021), developed with support from ILO and UNICEF, provides a comprehensive framework for expanding social assistance, employment-based social security, and financial protection mechanisms. The Baxnaano Cash Transfer Program utilizes biometric identification and mobile money platforms to ensure efficient, transparent, and corruption-free financial assistance to those in need.

80. Additionally, targeted child benefit initiatives have been introduced to reduce malnutrition and improve school attendance rates, ensuring that children from vulnerable households receive essential support for their education and well-being. These efforts collectively strengthen Somalia's commitment to building an inclusive and resilient social protection system.

81. However, key challenges persist. Poverty is widespread due to lack of jobs, infrastructure damage and climate shocks. Social assistance currently relies heavily on foreign aid subject to donor priorities. Conflict and instability also limit reach into some rural/internal areas. Administrative costs are high given weak federal structures and coordination. Additionally, data gaps exist in identifying needs across diverse regions.

82. Going forward, Somalia intends to progressively realize Article 9 through expanding cash transfer programs nationwide; developing poverty reduction and employment policies; establishing social security contributions and pensions; strengthening health systems; building statistical capacities; and promoting social dialogue on a rights-based social contract between citizens and the government. International support remains critical.

83. The Federal Government of Somalia acknowledges that achieving universal social security coverage is a long-term goal that requires sustained national efforts and international cooperation. In this regard, the Government will continue to collaborate with development partners, multilateral agencies, and international financial institutions to ensure the

progressive realization of Article 9, in line with Somalia's National Transformation Plan (2025-2029) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Article 10

Protection of the family

84. Article 28 of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012) outlines the state's duty to protect marriage and family, ensure mother and child care, uphold children's rights to parental care and education, and mandate adult children to support their parents, aligning with the family support obligations emphasized in Article 10 of the Convention. However, traditional practices and weak state institutions have impeded full implementation.

85. The current status shows that Family Law of 1975 provides legal protection but is unevenly enforced across regions. Early and forced marriage remains widespread, affecting 16.7% of girls under 15 and 35.4% of girls aged 15–19, driven by entrenched customs, poverty, and insecurity. Domestic violence is also prevalent without adequate protection services or response. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) remains prevalent, affecting approximately 98.4% of girls. Weak property rights deny many widows, divorced women inheritance and assets.

86. The government has launched some initiatives to realize Article 10 of the Convention. Awareness campaigns promote women's consent in marriage, maternity benefits. Alternative ceremony of passage programs encourage abandonment of FGM practice. New Birth Registration rules bolster documentation of children. Cash transfer programs also support families with nutrition, healthcare and education.

87. Acknowledging existing challenges, the government is actively enhancing women's empowerment, tackling economic drivers of child labour and early marriage, and reinforcing family stability amid insecurity. Efforts are underway to strengthen the rule of law and expedite the establishment of family courts to ensure equitable legal support for all citizens.

88. Somalia is committed to bolstering Article 10 implementation by advancing women's economic inclusion, engaging with traditional authorities, enhancing healthcare and education, enforcing anti-domestic abuse laws, addressing gender-based violence, and collaborating with religious leaders to champion women's rights, all within the framework of Islamic principles and international cooperation.

89. The Federal Government acknowledges that full implementation of Article 10 requires long-term legislative, institutional, and cultural transformations. The Government remains committed to promoting family protection, gender equality, and child welfare as integral components of Somalia's National Transformation Plan.

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

90. Somalia (FGS) is committed to ensuring access to adequate food, clothing, housing, and continuous improvements in living conditions as enshrined in Article 11 of the Covenant. This right is further supported by Article 27 of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), which guarantees social protection and economic security for all citizens. However, decades of conflict, environmental stresses, and the destruction of critical infrastructure have severely impacted efforts to fully realize this right.

91. Somalia has established a national poverty line using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach, ensuring that measurements reflect both food and non-food necessities. The poverty line is set at \$754 per person per year (\$2.06 per day), with the food poverty line at \$425 per person per year, ensuring a minimum daily caloric intake of 2,200 kilocalories. Findings from the Somalia Poverty Report 2023 indicate that 54.4% of the population lives below the poverty line, with poverty incidence reaching 46.1% in urban areas, 65.5% in rural areas, and 78.4% among nomadic populations. The Somalia Integrated Household Budget

Survey (SIHBS) 2022 provides a comprehensive framework for tracking poverty trends and informs national poverty reduction strategies.⁷

92. The country continues to face widespread food insecurity due to recurrent droughts and floods, displacing large segments of the population and disrupting traditional agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. Over 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in precarious living conditions, reliant on humanitarian aid and lacking access to adequate housing. Waterborne diseases remain prevalent, particularly in communities where access to safe drinking water and sanitation services is limited. The lack of sufficient infrastructure, coupled with insecurity in certain regions, continues to hinder the expansion of essential public services.

93. The Federal Government has developed various strategies to address these challenges. The National Development Plan 9 (NDP-9) outlines a broad framework for economic and social development, with Pillar 3 focusing on economic growth, employment generation, and livelihood support, and Pillar 4 emphasizing social development, including access to healthcare, education, and social protection programs. The Government has introduced cash-for-work initiatives that promote infrastructure development, such as roads, water catchments, and reforestation efforts. Social safety nets and direct food assistance programs are being expanded to support the most vulnerable populations. The strengthening of cooperatives has enhanced access to agricultural inputs, credit, and markets, fostering economic self-sufficiency.

94. To improve monitoring and evaluation of national development initiatives, the Government has implemented the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (NIMEF), which tracks the performance, outcomes, and impacts of national programs. The framework ensures that lessons learned from ministries and government agencies are incorporated into policy design and implementation, improving efficiency and accountability in poverty reduction efforts.

Targeted Policies

95. Under NDP-9, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has implemented targeted policies and programs to combat poverty and address economic and social exclusion, ensuring inclusive growth and equitable access to essential services.

96. The Government is committed to improving social protection mechanisms, enhancing access to health, education, and essential services, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, children, and communities in rural and deprived urban areas. Strengthening social development initiatives remains a key priority, with strategies aimed at expanding healthcare, education, and social protection services, focusing on women, infants, children, youth, and persons with disabilities.

97. To drive inclusive economic growth, the Government is promoting employment-generating opportunities for women, youth, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), ensuring their integration into the labour market and economic sectors. Additionally, NDP-9 emphasizes gender and social equity, reinforcing commitments to human rights and social inclusion for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including women and ethnic minorities. These efforts collectively aim to foster a more equitable and resilient society.

Right to adequate food

98. Somalia has faced numerous challenges in ensuring the right to adequate food for its citizens, largely due to decades of conflict, political instability, and natural disasters such as droughts and floods. However, the country has made efforts to establish legal, policy, and institutional frameworks to address food security and nutrition.

99. The Somali Provisional Federal Constitution, adopted in 2012, provides a legal framework that includes the right to adequate food. Article 27 of the Constitution states that every person has the right to own, use, enjoy, sell, and transfer property, which implicitly

⁷ Somalia Poverty Report 2023 – Chapter 4 (Poverty and Inequality Statistics).

includes land for food production. Additionally, Article 29 emphasizes the rights of children, including the right to nutrition. While the Constitution does not explicitly mention the right to food, these provisions lay the groundwork for policies that could support food security and nutrition.

100. In terms of policy, Somalia has developed several national plans and strategies to improve food security. For instance, the National Development Plan (NDP) outlines priorities for economic growth and poverty reduction, which are essential for food security. The Federal Government of Somalia has also been working with international partners to develop a Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) to monitor and analyse food security and nutrition data.

101. The Federal Government of Somalia has instituted the Somalia National Durable Solutions Strategy for the period of 2020 to 2024. This critical document encapsulates the strategic vision and articulated goals essential for advancing the government's commitment to enhance support for the society's most vulnerable groups. The Strategy's strategic imperatives are meticulously crafted to facilitate permanent and sustainable solutions for communities within Somalia that have been affected by displacement. This will be accomplished through the meticulous application of evidence-based analysis, fostering a participatory and inclusive process for consensus-building, and the implementation of cohesive and strategically structured programming.

102. Institutionally, Somalia has government bodies responsible for agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, which are critical sectors for ensuring food availability. However, the effectiveness of these institutions is often hampered by limited resources and capacity.

103. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and other international organizations have been working with the Somali government to strengthen these frameworks and support the realization of the right to adequate food.

Right to water

104. In accordance with Article 27(1) of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), which enshrines the right to water, the Federal Government of Somalia is actively implementing measures to ensure that all citizens have access to sufficient, safe, and affordable water for personal and domestic use. These measures include the development of water management policies, the enhancement of water infrastructure, and collaborations with international partners to advance water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs.

105. The Barwaaqo program, aims to enhance access to multi-purpose water resources in Somalia's drylands, benefiting human consumption, livestock, and irrigation. It focuses on building the capacities of community, local, state, and national institutions, fostering community-led sustainable land management, and encouraging the adoption of innovations that boost productivity. Through these efforts, the program seeks to bolster the adaptive capacity and resilience of rural Somali communities to climate change impacts.

106. The FGS also invests in the capacity building of local water management entities, enacts legislation to safeguard water resources, and undertakes public education initiatives to promote water conservation. Amidst the challenges of climate change and limited resources, these efforts underscore the government's dedication to upholding the constitutional right to water for its people.

107. However, key obstacles persist. Environmental degradation limits productive livelihood options. Insecurity also hampers aid delivery and economic activities in conflict zones. Lack of irrigation infrastructure and water infrastructure weaknesses pose issues. Limited state capacity and budgetary constraints also restrict investing in basic services. Recurring climate-induced losses undermine poverty reduction efforts.

108. The establishment of the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change of the FGS, along with the endorsement of the Environment Protection Management Bill by both houses of the Federal Parliament, signifies progress in Somalia's environmental governance. Furthermore, the completion and submission of enhanced National Determined Contributions (NDC) to the UNFCCC reflects Somalia's commitment to meeting global requirements and fulfilling its obligations under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Right to adequate housing

109. The 2017/2018 Somali High Frequency Survey (SHFS) demonstrated a strong correlation between poverty and inadequate housing conditions. Households experiencing poverty are more likely to reside in substandard dwellings, with 46% of poor households living under non-metal roofs compared to 37% of wealthier households. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face the most severe housing challenges, with 17% residing in makeshift shelters, lacking access to basic services. Although approximately 50% of Somali households have access to improved sanitation facilities, disparities remain stark between urban and rural areas, with Mogadishu and other urban centres benefiting from significantly higher service levels than remote communities. Access to electricity follows a similar pattern, with 61% of non-poor households connected to power grids compared to 47% of low-income households.

110. The National Transformation Plan (2025–2029) integrates housing as a core component of economic and social stability. The plan prioritizes the development of comprehensive housing policies to facilitate affordable housing solutions, particularly for low-income groups, IDPs, and returnees. Investments in housing infrastructure are being scaled up, aiming to construct durable and cost-effective housing units that meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. To leverage private sector participation, the Government is fostering public-private partnerships (PPPs), mobilizing private sector investment and technical expertise to support housing projects.

111. Recognizing the importance of secure land tenure and property rights, Somalia is strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks to protect housing rights, streamline land registration, and prevent forced evictions. Urban planning reforms are also underway to ensure well-structured city expansion, access to essential services, and sustainable land use management. Targeted programs are being introduced to support vulnerable groups, including women-led households, persons with disabilities, and families living in informal settlements.

112. The Government is also enhancing institutional capacity to plan, implement, and oversee housing projects, ensuring that housing programs are efficient, transparent, and equitable. Innovative housing finance mechanisms are being explored to facilitate homeownership and rental assistance, enabling low-income citizens to access affordable housing loans and alternative financial support structures.

113. Federal Government of Somalia is committed to progressively realizing the right to adequate housing through sustainable infrastructure investment, disaster risk management, and strengthened social protection mechanisms. Expanding collaborations with international donors, UN-Habitat, and regional housing initiatives will be crucial in achieving long-term housing resilience and inclusive urban development.

Article 12

Right to health

114. Somalia is committed to ensuring access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as enshrined in Article 12 of the Covenant. This commitment is further reflected in Article 27 of the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), which guarantees citizens the right to social welfare, including access to healthcare. However, decades of conflict, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent humanitarian crises have severely impacted the country's health system, creating significant barriers to delivering equitable healthcare services.

115. The overall health indicators in Somalia remain among the worst globally. Infant mortality rates are at 61.771 deaths per 1000 live births in 2024, a 1.63% decline from 2023,⁸ while maternal mortality continues to be a major concern due to the lack of emergency obstetric care. Communicable diseases, including malaria and tuberculosis, remain widespread due to limited prevention and treatment interventions. Malnutrition rates remain critically high, exacerbated by food insecurity and recurrent droughts. Mental healthcare

⁸ Source: <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/SOM/somalia/infant-mortality-rate>.

services are almost non-existent, despite the widespread prevalence of trauma-related disorders resulting from decades of violence and displacement. Healthcare access is highly uneven, with most hospitals, health facilities, and trained professionals concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural populations, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups with little to no access to essential services.

116. To address these challenges, the Government has implemented several initiatives aimed at progressively realizing the right to health for all Somalis. The National Health Care Policy and Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) were established to standardize healthcare delivery and expand access to essential health services. The Government has introduced mobile health clinics, improving outreach to rural areas and IDP camps. Primary healthcare units have been strengthened to offer basic curative services, nutrition programs, and immunization campaigns, while community health workers play a critical role in promoting hygiene, sanitation, and disease prevention. Efforts to upgrade medical education institutions are underway, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the healthcare workforce.

117. Somalia is particularly focused on reducing maternal and child mortality, with over 70% of interventions under the Essential Package of Health Services directed toward maternal and child health. The Government has developed a series of policies to enhance reproductive and newborn healthcare, including the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy (2019–2024) and the Every Newborn Action Plan, alongside targeted programs addressing immunization and nutrition. The Ministry of Health is also implementing a social and behaviour change strategy to improve health-seeking behaviours, particularly among pregnant women and caregivers.

118. Several international partnerships are driving Somalia's health sector improvements. The Better Life for Women and Children Project, covering six regions and 15 districts, is supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The Damal Caafimaad Project, backed by the World Bank, focuses on expanding access to essential health and nutrition services across the country. The Every Breath Counts Initiative, funded by King Salman, is providing life-saving interventions for childhood pneumonia in 28 health facilities. Additionally, the Healthier Women and Girls Project, supported by USAID, strengthens maternal and child health services in Southern and Central Somalia, specifically targeting marginalized communities. These programs collectively contribute to strengthening healthcare systems, improving service delivery, and enhancing the quality of care for vulnerable populations.

119. Despite these efforts, Somalia continues to face significant challenges in fully realizing the right to health. The country suffers from severe shortages of medicines, medical equipment, electricity, and clean water at healthcare facilities. Reliance on external donor funding creates uncertainties in long-term health financing, often crowding out essential investments in health systems strengthening. Socio-cultural and security barriers continue to hinder women's access to reproductive health services, while non-state groups in certain regions actively undermine public health initiatives.

120. To fully implement Article 12, the Government is prioritizing legislative and policy reforms to strengthen the healthcare system, scale up primary healthcare coverage, and address the social determinants of health. Investments in supply chain management and pharmaceutical procurement systems will improve medicine availability and quality. The Government is also committed to upgrading medical education and training programs to increase the number of skilled healthcare workers. Expanding nutrition programs, improving healthcare financing mechanisms, and rebuilding damaged health infrastructure in rural areas remain key priorities.

121. Recognizing that international collaboration is critical to achieving universal health coverage, Somalia is expanding partnerships with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNFPA, and other global health agencies. The Government is aligning its health strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 on Good Health and Well-being, to ensure long-term health security and resilience for all Somalis.

Articles 13 and 14

Right to education

122. Education is recognized as a fundamental right under Article 13 of the Covenant and plays a critical role in Somalia's national development agenda. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012, Article 30) and its amendment in 2024 guarantees the right to education for every Somali citizen, emphasizing free and compulsory primary education and the Government's duty to provide equitable access to learning opportunities. However, the country's prolonged conflict, economic instability, and limited educational infrastructure have significantly disrupted schooling and hindered progress in achieving universal education.

123. The current state of education in Somalia reflects deep-rooted challenges. Primary net enrolment ratios remain low at 25.7% for boys and 23.9% for girls as of 2022,⁹ with significant disparities based on residence, particularly among nomadic populations and children from impoverished households. Many children, especially in rural and pastoralist communities, remain out of school due to poverty, cultural practices, and insecurity. The shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate learning materials, and poor infrastructure further compromise the quality of education. Despite the expansion of secondary and higher education institutions, participation rates remain low, and literacy levels remain among the lowest globally, as generations of children lost access to schooling during the conflict. While madrasas serve as a complementary education system, their curriculum and relevance to national education goals require strengthening to align with modern educational standards.

124. The Federal Government of Somalia has implemented various initiatives to progressively realize Article 13, ensuring that education services are restored and expanded across the country. The National Education Policy sets a 10-year goal for free basic education, supporting school construction and rehabilitation projects in partnership with international donors. Teacher training programs have been launched to enhance the quality of instruction and standardize teaching methods based on the national curriculum. Adult literacy campaigns are being implemented through formal and non-formal education models, targeting older generations who were previously unable to access schooling. Additionally, scholarship programs provide financial support for Somali students pursuing higher education both locally and internationally.

125. Additionally, to safeguard education from conflict-related disruptions, Somalia has adopted the Safe Schools Declaration, which commits the Government to protecting schools from attacks, ensuring accountability for violations, and strengthening educational resilience in conflict-affected regions. A large-scale teacher recruitment and training program was undertaken by the Government, aiming to deploy 3,000 teachers to urban and rural schools, accommodating 120,000 additional school-age children. In collaboration with education stakeholders, the Government has constructed 87 new classrooms and rehabilitated 198 existing ones, expanding capacity for out-of-school children. The development of an Early Childhood Education Policy, Curriculum Framework, and Syllabus for children aged 3-6 years is another critical step in ensuring school readiness and facilitating smooth transitions into primary education.

126. Significant challenges remain in achieving universal education. Security concerns continue to disrupt education services in contested regions, limiting school construction and teacher mobilization. Widespread poverty forces many children into child labour, preventing them from attending school regularly. Remote and pastoralist communities suffer from severe shortages of trained teachers, learning resources, and school facilities, making it difficult to ensure equitable education access. The large number of out-of-school children requires extensive catch-up education programs, while budgetary constraints hinder the Government's ability to fully implement policy commitments.

127. The right to compulsory primary education for all is a key priority under Article 14 of the Covenant. However, achieving this goal faces numerous obstacles due to Somalia's

⁹ Source: Somali National Bureau of Statistics SNBS – Women and Men in Somalia (Gender Statistics Booklet) 2023.

post-conflict environment and resource limitations. Educational access is constrained by high costs of uniforms, learning materials, and transportation, which disproportionately affect low-income families. Humanitarian crises continue to divert resources away from the education sector, further exacerbating funding gaps.

128. Somalia remains committed to investing in school infrastructure development, teacher training, and the provision of learning materials. Expanding access to safe water and sanitation facilities in schools is a key priority to improve attendance rates. Strengthening tracking systems for out-of-school children will ensure that vulnerable groups receive targeted educational support. Developing mobile education units tailored to nomadic populations will address pastoralist learning needs, while continued engagement with international education partners, including UNESCO and UNICEF, will facilitate long-term improvements in education delivery and access.

Article 15

Right to participate in cultural life

129. Somalia upholds the right of its citizens to freely participate in cultural life and benefit from scientific advancements, as guaranteed under Article 15 of the Covenant. The Provisional Federal Constitution (2012, Article 31) further reinforces this commitment by ensuring access to cultural activities, knowledge, and scientific progress. However, decades of conflict, political instability, and limited institutional capacity have significantly disrupted cultural preservation, scientific research, and technological innovation, requiring sustained efforts to rebuild and strengthen these sectors.

130. The country's rich cultural heritage faces challenges due to a lack of systematic documentation and preservation mechanisms. Traditional knowledge, oral literature, and indigenous practices are at risk of being lost, as historical archives and artistic expressions remain largely undocumented. Access to digital information, media, and the internet is highly unequal, particularly in rural areas, where connectivity is limited. Scientific research and technological advancement have also been severely impacted by conflict, resulting in chronic shortages of funding, technical expertise, and institutional support. Somalia's intellectual property framework remains weak, requiring urgent reforms to protect local innovations and promote creative industries.

131. To address these issues, the Federal Government has introduced initiatives aimed at promoting cultural preservation, expanding public access to information, and revitalizing scientific research. The Ministry of Information leads efforts to promote Somali arts, oral traditions, and national festivals, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a cornerstone of national identity. Public libraries are being revitalized to serve as knowledge hubs, providing access to cultural materials and reading spaces that encourage literacy and engagement with Somali history. In higher education, universities have established science and technology faculties, laying the groundwork for future research and innovation. Additionally, innovation hubs and youth mentorship programs are being developed to support technological solutions to national development challenges.

132. Despite these efforts, Somalia continues to face major obstacles in ensuring full cultural and scientific participation. Insecurity in rural and conflict-affected regions limits artistic expression and cultural preservation, while economic hardship prevents many citizens from fully engaging in cultural activities that require financial resources. Digital literacy remains low, and technological infrastructure is underdeveloped, restricting participation in scientific research and global knowledge-sharing networks. Additionally, brain drain has significantly affected Somalia's ability to retain qualified professionals in science, technology, and higher education, hindering long-term research and innovation efforts.

133. To fully implement Article 15, the Government is prioritizing the restoration and expansion of its education system, cultural institutions, and research capacity. Investments in information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure will enhance public access to digital knowledge, academic research, and innovation opportunities. National programs will be expanded to systematically document and preserve Somali cultural heritage, ensuring that oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, and historical artifacts are recorded and

safeguarded. Strengthening intellectual property laws is a key priority to protect the rights of local artists, creators, and inventors, ensuring they receive legal recognition and financial benefits from their contributions.

134. The Government is also committed to expanding artistic and cultural industries, encouraging public and private sector investments in creative fields such as literature, music, and film production. Scholarships and research grants will be provided to support emerging Somali scientists and cultural practitioners, fostering a new generation of innovators and artists. Legal and institutional reforms will be introduced to strengthen Somalia's intellectual property framework, ensuring alignment with international conventions such as UNESCO cultural heritage treaties and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) regulations.

135. Recognizing that cultural and scientific development requires stability and peace, Somalia remains committed to ensuring that all citizens can freely express, create, and innovate without restrictions or fear of persecution. Strengthening national policies on cultural rights, investing in education and technology, and expanding international partnerships will be essential for Somalia to fully realize its cultural and scientific potential in the years ahead.
