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National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*

Dominican Republic

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I. Methodology and consultation process

1. The methodology used to prepare this report was informed by consultations with the State institutions responsible for developing public policy to strengthen the basic rights of those who live in the Dominican Republic and also by consultations with major civil society organizations.
2. The follow-up report was drafted by the Inter-Agency Human Rights Commission, which reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. This document sets out the progress made by the Dominican Republic from 2015 to 2018, during which period the public institutions provided inputs on subjects under their remit, resulting in a draft document that was submitted to the Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for its consideration and approval.
4. The Dominican Republic took as its basis the commitment it had undertaken before the international community to take action on the 87 recommendations that it had accepted out of the 134 recommendations made during its interactive dialogue with the countries that participated in its universal periodic review in 2014. It is honoured to submit its follow-up report on those recommendations as part of the third cycle of the universal periodic review and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 and Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21 and Human Rights Council decision 17/119.

II. Achievements in the protection of human rights in follow-up to the recommendations

A. The Ombudsman and human rights institutions (recommendations 98.22, 98.23, 98.24, 98.25, 98.26, 98.27 and 98.28)

5. Article 190 of the Constitution of 2015 establishes that: “The Ombudsman is an independent authority and has administrative and budgetary autonomy”. Likewise, article 1 of Act No. 19-01 of 2001 states that: “The Ombudsman is an executive authority that is not subject to any restriction other than that provided by law. It is an office characterized by neutrality.”
6. As provided under the Constitution, the Ombudsman and his/her deputies are elected by the Senate based on short lists put forward by the Chamber of Deputies. The Ombudsman is elected for a six-year period, allowing for terms staggered with those of other government authorities.
7. Articles 36 and 37 of Act No. 19-01 establish that the budget of the Ombudsman’s Office will be allocated from within the national budget and that it may not be reduced. The Ombudsman’s Office may receive income from other sources such as international assistance, wills and donations. In 2018, the Ombudsman’s Office was allocated a budget of RD\$ 165,000,000.00 (US\$ 3,300,000.00).
8. Article 25 of Act No. 19-01 provides that: “All agencies shall cooperate with the Ombudsman’s Office in the latter’s investigations and, in general, shall provide the Office with any assistance necessary for it to carry out its functions adequately.”
9. Since 2014, the Ombudsman’s Office has been conducting a publicity campaign on radio, television and social networks to explain its functions and competence. The Office’s Department of Education and Promotion has distributed some 150,000 brochures, calendars, pamphlets, booklets and other materials.

B. Childhood and adolescence (recommendations 98.29, 98.69 and 98.70)

10. Successful measures benefiting children and adolescents have included the implementation of the 2012–2016 Strategic National Plan for the Reduction of Maternal

Mortality and the National Plan for the Prevention of Pregnancy. As part of the follow-up on institutional initiatives, these National Plans are currently being assessed and updated, based on intersectoral and inter-institutional arrangements.

11. In January 2013, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare adopted decision No. 00004-13, making it compulsory to report externally caused injuries, physical abuse and sexual abuse of individuals under 18 years of age.

12. Progress has also been made in incorporating the subject of violence in health regulations on comprehensive care for adolescents, specifically in relation to mental health and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

13. The Ministry of Public Health helped to develop the national strategy regarding violence against women, children and HIV/AIDS in 2015.

14. In terms of regional achievements in Central America, a report has been submitted following a consultancy on the design of a regional strategy for a life-cycle approach to the prevention of violence and the provision of comprehensive health care, with a focus on violence against women.

15. For 2018, the Maternal and Infant Division has been allocated a budget of RD\$ 100,000,000 to carry out its initiatives, of which approximately 70 per cent will be used to acquire contraceptives in order to reduce teenage pregnancy.

16. The Office of Gender Equity and Development has a budget of RD\$ 5,000,000 to carry out the activities provided for in its workplans.

17. The 2006–2016 National Strategic Plan against Child Labour is one of the country's main public policies to eliminate child labour. This Plan has been extended so as to align it with the National Development Strategy for 2030. The eradication of all child labour is thus planned for 2025, and that of the worst forms, for 2020.

18. The Dominican Republic has adopted a road map to make the country free from child labour, which incorporates the goals set out in the plan of action for decent work in the Americas known as “An agenda for the Hemisphere”.

19. It is also carrying out the Sustainability Plan for the Eradication of Child Labour, adopted in 2014, which is designed to spur action to meet the goals of the National Strategic Plan and the aforementioned road map.

20. According to the most recent national household survey (2009–2010), child labour has gone down by 12.8 per cent since 2000, meaning that 132,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old have been removed from work.

21. An action protocol has been adopted by the national steering committee and the local steering committees on combatting child labour.

22. The following campaigns have been carried out:

- “IF YOU SEE IT: take action, speak up, report it” (2,510 awareness-raising radio announcements)
- “Children who work lose more than they gain”
- “Your only job should be to grow and be happy”
- “Social policy and child labour” and “Red Card for Child Labour”, in observance of the World Day against Child Labour

23. A forum on social policy and child labour was also held in observance of the World Day against Child Labour.

24. A panel discussion to assess the impact of social protection policies on the elimination of child labour was organized in collaboration with trade unions.

25. More than 555 talks and workshops have been held around the country to raise awareness about child labour, benefiting over 25,000 people.

26. Child labour awareness-raising activities have been organized for small and medium-sized enterprises in the eastern part of the country.

27. Awareness-raising activities relating to child labour were also carried out for six associations of agropastoralists.

28. Since 2014, thanks to the programme for the eradication of child labour run by the Ministry of Labour, 1,500 children and adolescents have been removed from the workforce.

29. A total of 31 monitoring units have been set up throughout the country with a view to boosting efforts to reduce child labour as much as possible.

30. A total of 22 public policy workshops, focused on the risks related to child labour, have been held for the benefit of 280 experts working for the Ministry of Labour, the National Council for Children and Adolescents, the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, the Ministry of Education and others.

C. Corruption and access to justice (recommendations 98.30 and 98.75)

31. The activities carried out by the Government to combat corruption include:

- Establishment of public ethics committees within State institutions, pursuant to Decree No. 143-2017 of 26 April 2017.
- Development of a single portal for requesting access to public information (www.saip.gob.do) — an easy-to-access tool that complements the services provided by the information access bureaux.
- Introduction of the e-government programme with a view to upgrading and expediting work and facilitating the services provided through the programme, which is now used by some 207 institutions.
- Overhaul of the country’s public procurement system: whereas six years ago there were 19,000 suppliers to the State, by 2017, the number of registered suppliers had grown to 72,000.
- Creation of a procurement portal for State institutions: as of 2018, the portal is being used by 166 institutions that together manage more than 70 per cent of the national budget.
- Launch of a financial management information system, a tool designed to modernize and increase the transparency of the management of public accounts.
- Act No. 311-2014, on sworn statements of assets, makes it compulsory for public servants to make a sworn and certified statement including a detailed inventory of their movable and immovable assets and establishes administrative and criminal penalties in cases of omission or falsification.
- Conclusion, in September 2017, of an agreement on good practices, with a view to boosting transparency and fostering a more participatory Government that interacts efficiently with its citizens in its management of public affairs.
- Establishment of 25 citizens’ watch committees within ministries and other public institutions.

Justice system reform

32. The judiciary is committed to upholding human rights and recognizes justice as the means to hold institutions and individuals accountable for their actions.

33. In 2017, the Judicial Council heard and issued decisions in relation to 2,363 cases, including:

- The decentralization of the services provided by the criminal court of Santo Domingo Province and the upgrading of services in other areas

34. In terms of international relations, the Judicial Council, together with the Ibero-American, Central American and Caribbean legal community, took a number of targeted actions:

- Harmonizing criminal legislation and the fight against organized crime in Central America and the Dominican Republic
- Strengthening the Ibero-American Network of Legal Cooperation
- Further developing the Central American and Caribbean legal summits and Ibero-American legal summits, both of which serve as spaces for the meeting and interaction of various countries' judiciaries with which the Dominican Republic works closely
- Promoting judicial ethics as a central focus of the Ibero-American Committee for Judicial Ethics and the Central American Judicial Council

35. Inter-institutionally, the judiciary has sought to maintain cooperation and friendly relations with the Public Prosecution Service, the National Public Defence Council, the bar association, the notaries' association, ministries, municipalities, trade associations, business associations and civil society, with all of which it has concluded numerous agreements.

36. The Judicial Council held 150 disciplinary hearings involving administrative staff, resulting in a number of dismissals, suspensions and warnings as well as acquittals.

37. It handed down six decisions for the dismissal of judges, in addition to decisions involving suspensions and acquittals.

38. The most senior representative of the judiciary took part in all the activities related to the administration and governance of the National Public Defence Council, namely:

- Budget management
- Regulatory decisions
- Conclusion of institutional agreements
- Hiring of staff
- Disciplinary actions taken to ensure the good ethics and proper behaviour of the Council's staff
- Approval of its operational plans, among others

39. Recently, the Council adopted a decision establishing the general outline for a procedure for resolving conflicts in criminal matters. The procedure commanded a broad consensus among judges in the Dominican Republic.

40. On 11 October 2018, the Attorney General's Office submitted a plan for humanizing the prison system under which the system will gradually be brought into conformity with international human rights standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

D. Women's rights (recommendations 98.34, 98.35, 98.54, 95.55, 98.56, 98.57, 98.58, 98.59, 98.60, 98.61, 98.62, 98.63, 98.64, 98.65, 98.66, 98.67, 98.87, 98.88 and 98.98)

41. From June 2014 to the present, the Ministry for Women has led a number of campaigns to prevent and respond to violence against women:

- "Unite to stop femicide", an extension of the United Nations campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women".
- "The power of your voice", to raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote the 24/7 emergency helpline set up to give hope to women victims of gender-based violence.
- "Plan out your life", based on the "from one teenager to another" approach, for children and particularly adolescents. The topics covered included gender equity and

equality, women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights, the prevention of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS and violence against women. A play entitled "It won't happen to me" was performed with a view to generating behavioural change and transformation. Approximately 208,820 people benefited from the activities.

- "March for better men", which brought together thousands of men from all sectors of society.
- "Make the space your own" to increase women's representation in elected office.
- The "This has to change" face-to-face campaign, launched in rural areas and in the neighbourhoods of Santo Domingo with the highest rates of violence.
- "Ending violence against women — It's a man's job too".
- Establishment of units specializing in violence against older persons within the Attorney General's Office, thanks to which 90 per cent of cases submitted by older persons have been resolved.

Public policies and programmes related to women

42. The "Progressing with Solidarity" programme was established by Decree No. 488-12 to strengthen the social protection network, shaping a new development model for prosperity, social inclusion and a better life, and to contribute towards the goals set out in the government plan put forward by President Danilo Medina Sánchez for the period 2012–2016 and carried over for the period 2016–2020.

43. The programme has resulted in a number of achievements:

- Through the "Training for Progress" strategy, training has been provided to 583,000 people, 15 per cent of whom have subsequently found jobs.
- As of March 2018, a total of 64,611 businesses had been set up with microcredits made available in partnership with local banks. Some 80 per cent of those businesses are headed by women.
- As of March 2018, a total of 4,406 people had joined savings and loans, agropastoralism, production, mining and crafts cooperatives.
- Strategies for improving employability under the "Progressing for Solidarity" programme have boosted job placement by 5.2 per cent and a significant impact (21 per cent increase) on the ownership of homes, whether paid for or still being paid for, has been observed.
- As of March 2018, as a result of the "Family- and community-owned orchards" strategy, 183,780 plots of land have been sown with aubergine, celery, spinach, tomatoes, lettuce, radishes, chillies and coriander. In addition, 45,444 families (23 per cent headed by women) are growing pulses, oregano and fruit trees collectively.
- A total of 23,372 families (23 per cent headed by women) are raising laying hens.
- A total of 2,766 families (23 per cent headed by women) are involved in the production of organic fertilizer.
- Some 900 families (42 per cent headed by women) are involved in fish farming.
- With the support of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 14 shadehouses have been built for families under the "Progressing for Solidarity" programme. The initiative is now being extended to cover all municipalities.

44. The "Surprise visits" programme was introduced by the President in 2012 to increase national production, create jobs and reduce poverty. As of December 2017, nine projects submitted by associations representing a combined membership of 761 women had been approved.

45. The "Iguinaldo RD" equality label is awarded as part of a programme that recognizes companies, both private and public, that develop and carry out internal policies that promote the inclusion of women. The label is awarded by the Ministry for Women in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme. Two companies

established nationally have obtained the gold label; a further 11 companies have signed letters of commitment to begin the certification process. A total of nine public institutions are also working towards certification.

46. The business portal for Dominican Women (www.dominicanasemprende.gob.do) provides information on how to create a business of any size and how to obtain loans at the lowest interest rates.

47. On the procurement portal maintained by the Government's Procurement Directorate, some 15,000 women are registered in the Registry of State Suppliers, to whom more than US\$ 1 billion has been allocated since 2012. Women-led companies currently account for 23 per cent of State suppliers.

48. The "Positive image" programme, in which 19,140 older persons have participated, offers educational talks for older persons on self-care, personal hygiene and tending to one's appearance. Hairdressing services, massages and facials are also offered.

49. The Office for Gender Equity and Development established within the Coordinating Office for the Prison Management Model of the Attorney General's Office offered technical assistance to 42 public and private institutions in 2014, 42 in 2015 and 57 in 2016.

National legislation for the protection of the rights of women and girls

50. The Ministry for Women submitted proposals for incorporating a gender perspective and strengthening women's rights in the following laws and bills:

- Political Parties Act; Music Act; Labour Code; Responsible Fatherhood Act; Code of Criminal Procedure; Bill on intersectoral management and coordination of issues relating to early childhood development; Act No. 87-01 on social security; Electoral Act No. 275-97; Comprehensive Law on Violence against Women; Bill on risk management; Act No. 176-07 on the National District and Municipalities; and the Act limiting the use of uniforms for domestic workers.
- The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) have been ratified, the latter making it possible to increase maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks.
- In addition, the resources allocated towards protection against violence against women and assistance for victims of such violence were increased.

Violence against women

51. The Government has carried out many programmes with a view to eliminating the serious social problem of violence against women. The following are a few examples:

- Establishment of 31 provincial offices and 21 municipal offices reporting to the Ministry for Women to ensure that programmes relating to violence against women receive national coverage
- Establishment of 23 units reporting to the Attorney General's Office to provide a comprehensive response to violence against women and family violence
- Introduction of a 24/7 hotline to provide assistance and rescue services for women victims of violence
- Establishment of the Gender Academy to provide training on gender equality as a means of preventing violence against women
- Implementation of a national workplan for assistance to victims of trafficking in the Dominican Republic
- Establishment of a committee for the critical road map for addressing violence against women
- Introduction of national standards for comprehensive health care for victims of family violence and violence against women

- In November 2017, establishment by the Attorney General’s Office of the Directorate against Gender Violence and application of the National Plan against Gender Violence, containing 22 practical, immediate and quantifiable measures

52. During the period from 2013 to 2017, the Attorney General’s Office received an average of 68,740 complaints annually. From January to April 2018, it received 25,162 complaints. Of the complaints received, approximately 10 per cent related to sexual offences. From January to April 2018, 2,073 complaints relating to sexual offenses were received.

53. The Centre for Men’s Behaviour Change, run by the Attorney General’s Office, has also achieved positive outcomes: since 2008, it has helped more than 16,000 men and, to date, no femicide has been reported among those who received assistance related to their violent conduct.

54. The Government has taken measures to increase the resources allocated to protection against violence against women and assistance for victims of such violence. It has, for instance, gradually increased the overall budget of the Ministry for Women (see table below).

<i>Year</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Execution</i>
2014	RD\$ 394 391 197.00	RD\$ 372 798 212.32
2015	RD\$ 436 439 193.00	RD\$ 428 950 403.71
2016	RD\$ 462 561 822.00	RD\$ 396 445 390.10
2017	RD\$ 551 133 474.00	RD\$ 490 804 077.04
2018	RD\$ 654 676 065.00	

E. Smuggling and trafficking in persons (recommendations 98.36, 98.71, 98.72, 98.73 and 98.74)

55. Among the most recent achievements in the fight against trafficking in persons is the establishment of a Criminal Investigation Unit within the Public Prosecution Service. Made up of 41 agents trained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Unit will support investigations into trafficking cases in the Dominican Republic.

56. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons has a team of six investigators to identify possible cases of trafficking. A toll-free telephone hotline, “Call and Live”, has been set up to receive reports of incidents, as well as a dedicated email address serving the same purpose.

57. The Inter-Agency Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling is composed of representatives of various State agencies involved in the fight against these crimes. It holds regular experts’ meetings, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which presides over the Commission.

58. In addition, two protocols concerning identification, support and reintegration services for trafficking survivors have been developed by the agencies that make up the Inter-Agency Commission.

59. The Ministry for Women relies on the Inter-Agency Commission for the Protection of Emigrant Women, which is composed of State and civil society institutions, as a national coordination mechanism to prevent the uninformed emigration of women through educational and employment plans.

60. A specialized home providing assistance to adult victims of trafficking, known as “Hogar Malala”, has been in operation since 2016 and has hosted 83 individuals thus far.

61. In 2016, the “No excuses” prevention campaign was designed and launched. The campaign is aimed at preventing and raising awareness about the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

62. The second National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling for the period 2017–2020 was developed in 2017 and issued in 2018 for immediate implementation.

63. Eight convictions under national legislation for crimes of trafficking in persons and sexual and commercial exploitation involving six men and seven women were handed down in 2016, with penalties ranging from 3 to 20 years' imprisonment.

F. Racial discrimination and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation (Recommendations 98.37, 98.38, 98.39, 98.41, 98.42 and 98.43)

64. As the Government has already affirmed to the international community, the Dominican Republic is a multi-ethnic and multicultural State and, accordingly, has a duty to work to strengthen the protection and safeguards that are needed by all victims of discrimination.

65. Since 2014, as part of the Dominican Republic Fashion Week, the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office has been organizing a fashion show to encourage and raise awareness of non-discrimination.

66. The Ministry of Education has adopted strategies for the design and production of educational materials that ensure the absence of gender stereotypes and that the materials promote equality, non-discrimination and human rights.

67. The governments of the Dominican Republic and other Central American countries have signed an eight-year agreement (for the period 2013–2021) in which they pledge to promote education without discrimination and with equal opportunities as a universal human right.

68. Article 19 of the guidelines promoting harmonious coexistence in the Dominican education system, which were issued in 2013, prohibits all acts of discrimination.

69. Article 3 of General Health Act No. 42-01 establishes the right to health of all Dominicans and of foreign nationals who have set up home in the country.

70. Likewise, in accordance with the principle of universal access established in Act No. 87-01, the National Social Security Council "shall protect all Dominicans and residents of the country without discrimination on grounds of health, sex or social, political or economic status".

71. Within the Ministry of Labour's Directorate for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination, dedicated units focusing on gender equity, promoting diversity and raising awareness of disability have been established.

Preventing arbitrary detention

72. Since 2015, the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office has been running training courses addressing stigma, prejudice and discrimination under an initiative that has also involved the organization of training workshops for officers of the National Police and the Specialized Tourism Security Corps.

73. In connection with this initiative, various surveys have been conducted among sex workers, including transsexuals and homosexuals, in conjunction with the authorities and civil society organizations.

Protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons

74. Public policies for guaranteeing gender equality are set out in the National Development Strategy (Act No. 1–12 and its implementing regulations), the National Gender Equality Plan, the Multi-Year Public Sector Plan, which encompasses all government ministries and decentralized agencies, and the Strategic Plan of the Supreme Court of Justice.

75. A draft general act on equality and non-discrimination is currently under consideration. Its aims are to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination exercised against any person and to promote equal opportunities, equal treatment and a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity.

76. Guidelines for prosecutors have been issued to make them aware of and increase their sensitivity to the manner in which persons with disabilities, older persons and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons should be treated.

G. Cultural integration (Recommendation 98.40)

77. The Ministry of Culture is the body with ultimate responsibility for coordinating the National Culture System of the Dominican Republic and for formulating and implementing cultural development policies, plans, programmes and projects.

78. To this end, the Ministry engages in various activities designed to strengthen the historical patrimony of the country's African heritage.

H. Human rights violations by the security forces and investigative bodies (Recommendations 98.44, 98.46, 98.47, 98.48, 98.49, 98.50, 98.51, 98.52 and 98.53)

79. Enforced disappearance is defined as a criminal offence in article 90 of the new draft of the Dominican Criminal Code.

80. The Inspector General's Office and the Internal Affairs Directorate are the oversight bodies of the National Police. They are responsible for ensuring strict compliance with the Constitution, laws and disciplinary regulations in accordance with articles 31 and 32 of Organic Act on the National Police No. 590-16. In 2016 and 2017, these bodies investigated a total of 585 cases of possible excessive use of force on the part of police officers and systematically pursued them to prosecution.

81. In cases in which officers of the National Police are alleged to have killed citizens in the legitimate exercise of their duties, the public prosecution service that is judicially competent authorizes the oversight bodies to carry out the corresponding investigation.

82. The established, institutional rule within the National Police is that all police officers receive instruction and training in international human rights norms through the Police Institute of Education. The following results have been achieved through this rule's application:

- 14,621 police officers have been trained in human rights; 6,688 officers have been trained in the legitimate use of force; 12,536 manuals on the use of force have been distributed; 12,536 community policing handbooks have been distributed; 2,783 booklets of policing guidelines have been distributed; and 854 police officers have taken part in the mobile teams and police modernization programme.

83. Monitoring committees have been established to ensure due implementation of the internal security plan, which provides for the application of security policies that benefit the public as a whole, in accordance with the constitutional framework. Implementation of the 911 National Emergency Attention and Security System and the adoption and promulgation of Act No. 590-16 have likewise brought advances in the modernization and reform of the National Police.

84. With support from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, the National Police has implemented a pilot citizen assistance and support programme, designed to ensure that citizens can file complaints or accusations at any police station independently and with easy access. In addition, the authorities have launched a mobile application, known as "Tu PoliciApp RD", through which members of the general public can report or provide information on crime-related incidents and unlawful activities.

85. In 2016 and 2017, the National Police rolled out a community policing project under which 748 community policing operations were conducted, paving the way for closer relationship between communities and police.

86. The Ministry of Defence of the Dominican Republic founded the first Military Institute of Human Rights in Latin America — now named the Graduate School of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law — in August 2000. The School offers lectures, diploma courses and specialized training that serve to ensure compliance with the United Nations International Bill on Human Rights and all other treaties, conventions and resolutions to which the Dominican Republic is a party.

I. Civil registration (Recommendations 98.76 and 98.109)

87. To promote the timely registration of births, the Central Electoral Board has 165 registry offices as well as 67 civil status registration units in all public health centres across the country, the aim being to ensure that all children are registered before their mothers return home.

88. Regarding late birth registrations, on October 3, 2008, the Plenary of the Central Electoral Board issued decision No. 45/2008, on the late birth registration of persons over 60 years of age who hold or previously held identification cards, thereby instructing the National Directorate of Civil Status Registration to authorize the late registration of the persons in question. (See annex 1).

89. On November 18, 2011, the Plenary of the Central Electoral Board issued decision No. 75/2010, authorizing the registration of births by third parties acting in the capacity of declarants. (See annex 2).

90. Decision No. 08/2007, providing for the issuance of a minor's identity card to mothers under the age of 16 years old, enables girls to carry out the formalities necessary to obtain an identity card whilst they are pregnant, so that they are able to register their child without problem immediately after the birth. (See annex 3).

91. The Central Electoral Board is a party to the framework agreement for inter-agency cooperation in timely and late birth registration concluded with the Ministry of Health, the National Health Service, the General Directorate for Special Projects of the Office of the President and the United Nations Children's Fund.

92. Article 21 of the Constitution states that: "All Dominicans who have attained 18 years of age and all those who are or have been married, even if they have not attained that age, shall enjoy full citizenship".

93. Article 1 of Act No. 169-14, on naturalization, establishes a special regime for persons born in the Dominican Republic who are not duly registered in the National Civil Registry.

94. For the registration of children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign parents in an irregular situation who are not registered in the Civil Registry, Act No. 169-14 provides as detailed in the next paragraph.

95. To facilitate the registration of foreign nationals, an application for registration should be submitted to the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police within no more than ninety (90) days of the entry into force of the Act's implementing regulations.

J. Prosecution of violations against human rights defenders (Recommendation 98.77)

96. In 2018, the Dominican Republic published the ruling of the Court of Appeal of San Pedro de Macorís, dated 10 April, which sentenced the murderers of journalist José Agustín Silvestre to 20 years' imprisonment.

97. In addition, the Attorney General's Office has been monitoring the threats made against certain Dominican journalists after they appeared in a publicly accessible list of

“Traitors of the Homeland” and “Anti-Patriots” and reported having received death threats for not agreeing with Constitutional Court judgment No. C168-13.

K. Freedom of expression (Recommendation 98.78)

98. Article 49 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic states that: “All persons have the right to freely express their thoughts, ideas and opinions, by any means, without prior censorship”.

L. Workers’ rights (Recommendation 98.79)

99. The Ministry of Labour has conducted various workshops and awareness-raising campaigns for both labour inspectors and workers, so as to increase their knowledge of labour rights. All these workshops are detailed in the annexes to this report. (See annexes 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.)

M. Poverty elimination and social development (Recommendations 98.80, 98.81, 98.82, 98.83, 98.84, 98.85, 98.86 and 98.90)

100. The main tool in the campaign to eliminate poverty is the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, which protects the poorest and neediest families in the Dominican Republic and bolsters their human and social capital through conditional cash transfers, the aim being to ensure that such families can meet their minimum consumption needs and are guaranteed access to basic health and education services.

Results of the programme:

- 828,822 households in extreme and moderate poverty receive the “Eating comes first” conditional cash transfer for the purchase of basic foodstuffs
- 957,061 households receive the “Bono Gas” gas subsidy, intended to serve as a disincentive to using coal and firewood and thus to protect the environment
- 448,363 households receive the “Bono Luz” electricity subsidy, which helps them to pay for the supply of electricity

101. Direct intervention strategies such as the distribution of micronutrients to 327,020 children aged under 5 years old, pregnant women and older adults have also been implemented, with the following results:

- Chronic malnutrition has been reduced by more than half, from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, in children aged between 6 months and 5 years old in households participating in the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme in the National District and the provinces of Santo Domingo, San Juan, Elías Piña and Azua, according to a study conducted by the Office of the Vice President and the World Food Programme.
- By means of its nutrition component, the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme has reduced acute malnutrition from 10 per cent to 1.7 per cent and reduced global malnutrition to minimum, near-eradication levels, trimming the measure from 3.4 to 0.7 per cent. Another important achievement is the reduction in overweight and obesity over the past three years, from 14 per cent to 3 per cent.
- Studies carried out by the World Food Programme indicate that the nutrition component of the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme has reduced anaemia in the beneficiary population by 50 per cent.

102. Shelter for indigent older persons. The Government has been endeavouring to put an end to situations in which older persons are left roaming the country’s streets, providing them with a roof over their head that meets their basic needs. The Government has also been endeavouring to resolve the situation of older persons who have been abandoned in hospitals or in their homes, focusing on locating members of their family in order to re-establish responsibility and guarantee their return to the family nucleus.

103. The Programme for the Protection of Older Persons in Extreme Poverty ensures social equity and human dignity for older adults living in extreme poverty. Approximately 83,333 older persons have benefited in the form of cash transfers.

Access to health care, education and housing for all persons on an equal footing

104. Strategies such as checking that beneficiaries of the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme assume their share of the responsibility for health checks and the school attendance of family members, as a prerequisite for receiving the “Eating comes first” cash transfer and the school attendance incentive, have yielded the results described below.

105. The school dropout rate at the basic education level was 1.8 per cent higher among non-beneficiaries than among members of families receiving the school attendance incentive.

106. At the intermediate level, the national dropout rate was 5.7 per cent whereas only 1.9 per cent of “Progressing with Solidarity” beneficiaries dropped out of school. Overall, the dropout rate was 3.8 per cent higher among students who did not benefit from the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme than among those who did.

107. The conditions set under the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme have helped to ensure compliance with the care protocol issued by the Ministry of Health for children under the age of five years old, pregnant girls and girls who have recently given birth. Since 2013, “Progressing with Solidarity” staff have been carrying out checks to verify that health checks have been completed, thereby directly helping to build the human capital that will enable families to break out of the intergenerational circle of poverty.

Social plans to reduce poverty and social exclusion

108. To reduce poverty and social exclusion, the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme adopted the “Training for Progress” strategy, through which the following results have been achieved:

- 44 “Progressing with Solidarity” community training and production centres have been established.
- 300 local training units have been established.
- Of the 543,320 persons who have completed short-cycle training courses, run in partnership with the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training, 37.7 per cent have found a job; 38 per cent are engaged in some form of income-generating activity; 45.3 per cent have started a business; 7.2 per cent have improved the business they had already started; and 9 per cent have secured a loan.

109. In addition, 314,195 members of “Progressing with Solidarity” families are producing food from agricultural activities in order to enhance their food security and 461,854 adolescents and young people have received guidance in health, sexual and reproductive issues and the prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS through the “I’ve decided to wait” and the “Babies, think it through” programmes.

Measures to ensure the food security and well-being of the population

110. The Strategic Review of Food Security in the Dominican Republic was developed and disseminated as part of efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (zero hunger) and in order to strengthen, in partnership with other institutions, activities that yield results such as the following:

- In “Progressing with Solidarity” beneficiary households, moderate and severe food insecurity are 2.68 per cent and 0.56 per cent lower, respectively, than in non-beneficiary households.
- Overweight and obesity among pregnant women who are “Progressing with Solidarity” beneficiaries are 4 per cent lower than among those who are not programme participants.

111. According to the survey, which included pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under five years old and persons over 65 years old, programme participants have a more varied diet, are more likely to be in the normal weight range and are in a better work situation. The survey indicates that the positive impact of the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme is also reflected in housing, in that families in the “Progressing with Solidarity” beneficiary group are 12.3 per cent more likely to have their own homes than families that are not taking part in the programme.

112. The results of the survey to compare the nutritional status and food security of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, which was conducted among a sample of 1,268 households divided into two segments, show that older persons participating in the programme are 10 per cent less likely to be underweight than those not taking part in this government initiative, among whom 44 per cent are underweight.

113. In the group of pregnant women, those who belong to the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme are 2.1 per cent more likely to be in the optimal weight range than the non-beneficiaries surveyed, 56.8 per cent of whom were not in the normal weight range. Calorie intake is higher in all groups belonging to the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, and moderate food insecurity is 2.7 percent lower among beneficiary families than the 31 per cent figure recorded in the non-beneficiary group.

Access to housing

114. To guarantee access to housing and the right to property, in the period 2013–2017 the Government made available a total of 24,756 homes (14,483 new builds in 99 new housing projects and 10,273 renovated homes), benefiting 103,975 people and generating 61,890 jobs. Furthermore, 87,437 homes were designated as low-cost housing, benefiting 349,748 people throughout the country, and a number of new housing development projects, such as the Ciudad Juan Bosch and Ciudad Domingo Savio projects, are currently under way. The Government also offers subsidies, tax exemptions and first-home buyer bond schemes, while at the same time pressing ahead with its State land titling programme. To date, 30,008 properties, housing and land titles have been issued.

N. Right to health (recommendations 98.91, 98.92, 98.93, 98.94, 98.95, 98.96, 98.97, 98.98 and 98.99)

115. The Government is currently working on organizing and equipping 16 centres, or nodes, for the national network of blood facilities.

116. It is also in the process of renovating 26 hospitals nationwide.

117. Ninety-seven per cent of older persons living in extreme poverty are now covered by the subsidized health scheme available through the national health insurance system.

118. A network of caregivers has been established to provide help and support, in their homes, for older persons in a situation of dependency. More than 5,123 persons working with non-governmental organizations accredited by the National Council for Older Persons have received caregiver training.

119. The 2012–2016 Strategic National Plan for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality was implemented in all branches and at all levels of the National Health Service. The main aims were to improve the coverage and quality of sexual and reproductive health services and to enhance the information system and the epidemiological surveillance of maternal and infant mortality and serious maternal morbidity.

120. The 33 per cent reduction in infant mortality is attributable to increased vaccination. In recent years, vaccination against rotavirus (2012), pneumococcus (2013) and cervical cancer (2017) has been added to the Expanded Immunization Programme.

121. In addition, central storage capacity for vaccines has risen substantially, after two additional cold rooms were fitted out and 500 refrigerators, 1,000 100-pound tanks for propane gas bottles, 50 freezers for freezing batteries for the transportation of vaccines, 960

desktop computers, 50 thermal boxes and 2,000 thermos flasks were supplied to the network of vaccination centres and posts.

122. The country has successfully participated in six consecutive Annual Vaccination Weeks in the Americas over the past six years.

123. Investment has been increased four-fold, from RD\$ 250 million to RD\$ 1,000 million, and inter-programme and inter-agency partnerships have been established.

124. An updated version of the Action Plan for the Reduction of Maternal and Infant Mortality covering the period 2018–2020 has recently been drafted, setting out the actions to be taken to prevent maternal and neonatal mortality throughout the services network, as follows:

- 137 centres forming part of the State network will provide the full range of essential and emergency obstetric and neonatal services.
- 57 health centres with the highest rates of maternal and neonatal mortality have been selected to begin offering comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care in essential service centres.
- The first monitoring and evaluation cycle for maternal and neonatal care-related indicators was carried out during July and August 2018, through coordination between provincial health directorates and the various health sector agencies.

125. The National Health Service’s response to teenage pregnancy has included measures of a preventative nature with a focus on information, education and communication. These measures have included the design, dissemination and implementation of a number of nationwide awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies, with the following names:

- “You are not old enough for this”, which achieved nationwide coverage and involved all government and civil society institutions active in the field
- “Zero tolerance to pregnancy in the under-15s”, in which teenagers themselves were active participants and received training as outreach workers
- “Babies, think it through” and “I’ve decided to wait”, coordinated by the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme

126. Act No. 295-11 establishes 26 September as annual teenage pregnancy prevention day and teenage pregnancy prevention week, which involves major nationwide campaigns on the subject, has become a regular fixture on the National Health Service’s calendar.

127. Five forms of contraception are now available through hospitals throughout the country and are distributed on a timely basis. In the period 2015–2018, investment in the procurement of contraceptives was more than RD\$ 280 million.

128. Contraceptive devices and drugs are also available in 200 pharmacies under the Essential Medicines/Logistical Support Programme.

129. There are 52 inter-agency committees monitoring compliance with the policies set out in the First National Plan for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy and work is under way to develop a second plan that will include a component addressing the needs of teenagers who are already mothers and those of their children.

130. The comprehensive health-care model in place is focused on providing timely, ongoing care for persons living with HIV and/or AIDS.

131. In the case of HIV, the care model encompasses a set of measures necessary for awareness-raising, prevention and early diagnosis of HIV, the provision of assistance and the physical and psychological rehabilitation of infected persons that facilitates their full integration within society.

132. There are currently 73 comprehensive care centres nationwide, affording easy access to health-care services.

133. The National Development Strategy sets out the general government planning framework for the next two decades, including the nation’s response to HIV and AIDS.

134. The response to HIV/AIDS falls under objective No. 2 of the National Development Strategy, which is to guarantee: “A society based on equal rights and opportunities within which the entire population is guaranteed access to decent housing and to quality education, health care and basic services that contribute to the progressive reduction of poverty and social and regional inequalities”.

135. The National Strategic Plan for the period 2015–2018 brings together in one document the vision, strategies and principal outcomes of the national response to HIV/AIDS, guaranteeing universal access to educational, preventive and care services that in turn ensures efficient but sensitive monitoring of sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS.

O. Right to education (recommendations 98.100, 98.101, 98.102, 98.103, 98.104, 98.105 and 98.106)

136. With regard to the right to education and its vitally important role, a number of steps have been taken to guarantee access to State-sector educational institutions for all children and teenagers. This is evident in the decision to prolong the measure introduced by Ministry of Education Circular No. 18 of July 27, 2011, thereby renewing the instruction to “all directors of State-sector educational institutions in the country to proceed with the enrolment of all children and teenagers whether or not they are duly registered in the country”.

137. Another major advance achieved in 2017 was the registration of 2,420 children who had not previously had identity documents and the issuance of birth certificates for 1,668 of them, in continuation of the institutional agreement concluded between the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate of Migration.

138. The National Plan for School Buildings and the Construction of New Schools made it possible to offer an additional 18,179 school places and to bring into operation 1,137 new schools, 13,523 new classrooms and 2,888 refurbished classrooms. In addition, a total of 54 childcare centres were opened, of which 52 are fully operational.

139. As of June 2018, the extended schoolday programme was benefiting a total of 1,162,849 students, representing 62 per cent of all pupils enrolled at the preschool, primary and secondary levels.

140. The lower secondary education cycle, which replaced the seventh and eighth grades of basic education and the first grade of the former secondary education cycle, was introduced in the 2017/18 academic year. To date, 69 per cent of schools have adjusted their educational cycles to the new curricular structure.

141. A total of 175,812 children aged under 4 years old have joined the early childhood care programme called “Quisqueya begins with you”. Between September 2016 and June 2018, 266 new centres came into operation, incorporating 105 integrated early childhood care centres and 232 child and family care centres.

142. As of the end of the first half of 2018, a total of 588,484 persons had learned to read and write through the National Literacy Plan entitled “Quisqueya learns with you”. In addition, 126,615 learning hubs have been certified as meeting the requirements set under the Plan since its launch in 2013.

143. In the field of technical and vocational training and arts education, the most significant achievements of 2017 included the establishment of the technical committee and operations unit required to implement the National Qualifications Framework, in line with Decree No. 173-16, as a result of which a total of 48 State-sector educational institutions had been converted into polytechnics as of June 2018, and the increase in the availability of the arts module after six new centres began offering this option.

144. The aim of the Digital Literacy Information Programme for Older Adults is to ensure, by means of a continuing education programme, that older persons who have learnt to read and write through the “Quisqueya learns with you” programme are digitally literate.

To date 110 of the 1,600 older adults who have learned to read and write have succeeded in entering the world of work.

Actions to strengthen the quality of education

145. Significant improvements were made to the curriculum and student learning assessment programmes in 2017, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

146. The new vocational and technical education curriculum was approved by the National Education Council, 75 vocational and technical qualifications were awarded, 687 training modules, 52 technical baccalaureate courses and 23 basic technical courses were run, and the launch of the new curriculum, including the new arts module and the first secondary level cycle, was approved by the National Education Council.

147. With regard to student learning assessments, a national diagnostic evaluation of the third grade was carried out in all schools; a pilot diagnostic evaluation of the sixth grade was conducted; a pilot of the Programme for International Student Assessment was run in 2018; authorizations were granted to 99 students; and national tests were sat by students in adult primary education, general secondary education, vocational and technical training and the arts, with pass rates of 93 per cent, 82 per cent, 94 per cent and 93 per cent respectively.

148. A new standard for ensuring quality teacher training in the Dominican Republic has been approved (Standard No. 09-15). To date, 115 courses have been approved.

149. Teachers' performance assessments were conducted in 2017, with salary incentives being awarded, based on results obtained, starting from a baseline of 10 per cent of the salary of primary and secondary school teachers.

150. Teachers' salaries have increased in recent years. Whereas a primary school teacher earned RD\$ 26,259 in 2012, by 2017 the figure had risen to RD\$ 49,453. Secondary school teachers' salaries rose from RD\$ 29,390 to RD\$ 57,992 over the same period and adult education teachers' salaries increased from RD\$ 27,512 to RD\$ 50,380.

151. A competition was held to generate shortlists for the selection and appointment of directors of the 18 educational regions and 122 educational districts throughout the country. A total of 1,369 teachers took part.

152. Twenty teachers were admitted to the "Highly Qualified Teachers" programme run by the Salomé Ureña Higher Teacher Training Institute. The subjects covered are Mathematics, Philosophy, Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Linguistics, Literature, Physical Education, Sports Sciences and Neuroscience.

153. Reform, institutional modernization and social participation facilitated progress in the process of approving the operating handbooks for the educational regions and districts that are due to be introduced before the end of 2018.

154. Under its Digital Republic Programme for the period 2016–2020, the Government plans to deliver electronic devices to 950,000 students and 79,500 teachers.

155. General guidelines for recognizing diversity have been drawn up, as well as guidelines for making tailored curricular adjustments within an educational system designed to foster inclusion. The aim is to encourage adaptation of educational responses in order to ensure access, learning and the continuing attendance of students with special educational support needs.

156. Special education is overseen by the Ministry of Education's Special Education Directorate, which monitors compliance with the educational policies designed to give effect to the right to education, equal opportunities, participation and non-discrimination of persons with specific educational support needs.

157. With regard to human rights education at the preschool, primary and secondary levels, an agreement has been concluded with the Dominican Constitutional Court pursuant to which: "The Constitutional Court undertakes to cooperate with the Ministry of Education in training teachers in constitutional matters, while the Ministry of Education undertakes to train citizens to be aware of their rights and duties".

158. In schools which run the extended schoolday programme, optional courses and workshops on human rights, road safety and the environment, among other subjects, are being offered.

159. The quality school meals programme was introduced in 2017 to help schoolchildren living in vulnerable situations. The programme provides approximately 70 per cent of daily nutritional requirements and benefited 1,812,907 students, teachers and school administrative employees in 2017. From January to June 2018, the programme benefited 1,813,096 students, teachers and administrative employees.

160. For 2018 the school meals programme was given a budget of RD\$ 19,125,644,517.00. As of September, RD\$ 13,453,507,858.71 had been used. For 2019, the programme will have a budget of RD\$ 21,093,324,424.16.

161. During the school holidays, the programme provided 5,178,642.00 meals to 123,301.00 children, for an outlay of RD\$ 64,991,957.10.

162. A comprehensive campaign against bullying in schools has been under way since June 2018 as part of an initiative proposed by school student Carlos Emmanuel Cruz in a request made during the National Student Forum for a Culture of Peace.

P. Migration (Recommendations 98.107, 98.108, 98.120, 98.121, 98.123 and 98.124)

163. The General Directorate of Migration has drawn up operational protocols to support the legal regulations and has trained its staff using these protocols in a cross-cutting manner. Its main policies are detailed below.

164. Strategic detention, taking into consideration the reasons for which migrants should be detained and helping them with document verification tools, is used as an effective alternative to simply automatically detaining foreign nationals for migratory reasons.

165. Foreign nationals whose status is presumed to be irregular are detained as a last resort, when the other avenues of recourse described in migration protocols and regulations have proved insufficient. The migrants concerned are sent to reception centres for a second status review in order to confirm whether they are in an irregular situation or should be released. In 2017, 89,184 migrants presumed to be in an irregular situation were detained, but 43,971 of them were released following the second status review.

166. Reception centres for detained migrants subject to deportation operate in accordance with international human rights standards. All pre-deportation requirements are completed as part of the detention, processing and expulsion proceedings and due process is guaranteed. The deportation and detention order sets out the reasons for issue and the means of recourse open to foreign nationals, including their right to communicate with relatives, to have access to a translator and lawyer, to obtain information from embassies and consulates and to view their information file, inter alia, thereby preventing arbitrary and mass deportations.

167. The detention or deportation of vulnerable migrants — namely, unaccompanied children and teenagers, pregnant or breastfeeding women, older persons, persons suffering from an illness requiring special care, persons enrolled in the National Plan for the Regularization of Foreign Nationals and persons who have refugee status or are seeking asylum — is prohibited.

168. Temporary documents are issued as an alternative legal means of protection for vulnerable migrants. Such documents grant provisional right to remain, protect against unjustified deportation and include special residence permits for persons enrolled under the National Plan for the Regularization of Foreign Nationals, short-term permits for victims of trafficking, migrant smuggling and other offences, and certificates attesting to refugee status.

169. The voluntary return policy open to migrants from Haiti as an alternative to deportation, in accordance with Decree No. 27-13 on the Plan for the Regularization of

Foreign Nationals, ensures that foreign nationals who did not sign up for the Regularization Plan may return to their country of origin in an orderly manner and in dignified conditions. There were 2,626 voluntary returns in 2017 and 1,020 to date in 2018.

170. Under current refugee policy, after being recognized as having refugee status, migrants who are refugees become temporary residents (category RT6) in accordance with article 35, paragraph 6, of General Migration Act No. 285-04, thereby acquiring the same rights and duties as other temporary residents. At present there are four foreign nationals in the Dominican Republic who have been recognized as refugees — two Syrians, one Iraqi and one Cuban.

Policies for the regularization of foreign nationals in application of the law and in special cases

171. The special “hand-in-hand” programme implemented by the General Directorate of Migration helps to ensure the regularization of temporary workers who are employed in the formal labour market on an irregular basis.

172. The following special concessions facilitate the regularization of Haitian students: the provision of documents; waiving of administrative fees due for time already in the country; authorization for re-entry, granted by the General Directorate of Migration; and free visas approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a view to regularizing the immigration status of all students of Haitian nationality.

173. In order to reduce the vulnerability to crime and human rights violations of migrants who find themselves in an irregular situation in the country, the Government of the Dominican Republic has regularized the situation of the persons detailed below.

174. Haitian nationals who worked as sugar cane cutters between the 1930s and 1990s under agreements concluded between the Government of the Dominican Republic and the Government of Haiti through the intermediary of the State Sugar Council, but have now retired, have been granted permanent residence.

175. The National Plan for the Regularization of Foreign Nationals and the Special Naturalization of Migrants is intended to regularize migrants whose status in the country is irregular by means of a special process established in Decree No. 327-13 d/f 29/11/2013. The process is carried out free of charge by the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police and in just one year the authorities have managed to regularize 260,241 people of 116 nationalities, of whom 97.8 per cent were Haitian nationals.

Unaccompanied migrant children and teenagers

176. In respect of unaccompanied children and teenagers, the Dominican Republic’s migration regulations provide that these vulnerable migrants must be protected and that the best interests of the child and their right to remain with their family group and/or under the protection of their parents must be respected. Unaccompanied minors are placed in the care of the National Council for Children and Adolescents, which is responsible for family reunification and minors’ voluntary return to their country of origin. A total of 101 unaccompanied minors were placed in the care of the National Council for Children and Adolescents in 2016, 625 in 2017 and 146 in the first half of 2018.

177. The General Directorate of Migration prohibits the detention and deportation of minors who are not accompanied by their parents, even in cases where there is doubt as to the biological age of the undocumented person who is presumed to be a minor.

178. With regard to the special naturalization process, the Dominican State issues official identity documents to all persons of foreign descent who have applied and have provided proof that they were born in the Dominican Republic, regardless of whether or not they were registered before 2007, although their date of registration determines the beneficiary group to which they belong. Beneficiaries belonging to group A, which is managed by the Central Electoral Board, have been issued with birth certificates and identity cards, while beneficiaries belonging to group B, which consists of unregistered persons managed by the Ministry of Interior and the National Police, in accordance with Act No. 169-14 on special

naturalization, have been granted permanent residence, with the option of applying for naturalization through the ordinary process two years after obtaining regular migrant status.

Cooperation with Haitian authorities on migration issues

179. The Government's political will to work with the Haitian migrant population is evidenced in the following actions:

- Implementation of the "hand-in-hand" programme by the General Directorate of Migration, which helps employers regularize the situation of temporary foreign workers
- The issue of operating protocols drafted by the Office of the President of the Republic, in coordination with the General Directorate of Migration and the Haitian Embassy, to ensure oversight of voluntary and mandatory deportations of illegal migrants carried out by reception centres
- The development, through Dominican-Haitian dialogue, of bilateral mechanisms that allow for the coordination of inter-agency actions, as well as coordination between the two countries' embassies and consulates
- Meeting with the authorities of the General Directorates of Migration of the Dominican Republic and Haiti within the framework of the Sixth Session of the Bilateral Dominican-Haitian Commission, in November 2014, to discuss mutual cooperation issues

180. The authorities of the General Directorate of Migration of the two countries, hosted under the auspices of the Dominican-Haitian Bilateral Joint Commission and the Sub-Commission on Migration, Border and Labour Affairs, have met to follow up on the agreements reached during the Sixth Session of the Bilateral Joint Commission in November 2014, with the following results:

- Issue of decision No. DGM-03-2015, which exempts Haitian students who regularize their migratory situation from the payment of taxes for lengthy stays in the country, processing fees and re-entry fees
- Organization of information sessions on how to obtain a visa, including details of the free visa system available for students and temporary workers, by Dominican consulates. Consult the link: www.consuladord.com
- Implementation of the Plan for the Regularization of Immigrants in the Dominican Republic, which is coordinated at the inter-agency level and with the diplomatic authorities of the Government of Haiti in Santo Domingo.

Dialogue with Haiti

181. The international community has had an important role in the dialogue with Haiti. In particular, over the past three and a half years the European Union has helped to build an agenda of urgent, intensive dialogue between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The private sector, meanwhile, has provided support for strengthening the Executive Secretariat of the Bilateral Dominican-Haitian Commission and the Commission itself, specifically by organizing meetings and border missions, carrying out research into specific issues and providing technical support in tandem with the Government.

182. The country has received technical assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank to strengthen the institutional structure of the dialogue, and specifically the Bilateral Dominican-Haitian Commission, and to come up with formulas that allow for joint investment in development.

III. Final conclusions

183. Conscious of the urgent need to eliminate still persistent social inequalities, the Dominican Republic is committed to continue planning and implementing legislative and institutional initiatives and affirmative actions that benefit the following sectors of the population and/or the address the following areas: children and adolescents, women,

persons with disabilities, migrants, the justice system, older persons, workers, poverty elimination, health care, intercultural integration, education, social and human development, trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.
