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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Third periodic report submitted by Uzbekistan under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2019^{*}, ^{}**

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** The annexes to the present report are available for consultation from the Committee Secretariat. They may also be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



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Composition of the working group for the preparation of the third periodic report of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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State bodies, non-governmental non-profit organizations and other organizations that participated in the preparation of the national report

Government agencies

- Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis
- Senate of the Oliy Majlis
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis (Ombudsman)
- Presidential Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights and Lawful Interests of Business Entities
- Constitutional Court
- Supreme Court
- Office of the Procurator-General
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Water
- Ministry of Higher and Secondary Education
- Ministry of Preschool Education
- Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Public Utilities
- Ministry of Construction
- Ministry of Physical Culture and Sport
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Industry
- State Statistics Committee
- State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection
- Oila Theoretical and Practical Research Centre under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- National Centre for Human Rights

Non-governmental non-profit organizations

- Women's Committee of Uzbekistan
- Public fund under the Oliy Majlis for the support of non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions
- Sen Yolg'iz Emassan (You are not alone) State Public Children's Fund
- National Council for Coordination of the Activities of Citizen's Self-governing Bodies
- Youth Union of Uzbekistan

- Association of Persons with Disabilities of Uzbekistan
- Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan
- Soglom Avlod Uchun (For a Healthy Generation) international non-governmental charitable foundation
- Development Strategy Centre
- Ijtimoiy Fikr (Public opinion) research centre

I. Introduction

1. Over the years since the consideration of the second periodic report on the implementation of the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2014–2019), radical changes have taken place in Uzbekistan, demonstrating the inception of a substantially higher level of reform of both State and society, based on the bedrock of respect for the rule of law in the activities of government agencies and officials and the reinforcement of institutional and legal arrangements for the implementation of international human rights standards in the country's law and the practice of public authorities.

2. The new process of democratic reforms and transformation is being pursued in all spheres of the political, economic and cultural life of society and is based on the national strategy of action in five priority development tracks for the period 2017–2021, approved by a presidential decree of 7 February 2017. The strategy defines the five tracks as follows: first, improving the process of State-building and social development; second, safeguarding the rule of law and reforming the judicial and legal system; third, further developing the economy; fourth, improving the social sector; and fifth, ensuring security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance and the pursuit of a mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy.

3. Under the strategy's first track, on State-building and social development, sustained measures have been adopted to enhance the role of the legislature and civil society institutions in the democratization of society and the upholding of human rights and freedoms. To promote the further development of civil society institutions, the following statutory instruments have been adopted: Social Partnership Act of 25 September 2014; Transparency in the Work of State Executive and Administrative Authorities Act of 5 May 2014; Parliamentary Oversight Act of 11 April 2016; and an act of 26 November 2016 amending the Trade Unions and Trade Union Rights and Safeguards Act. Public scrutiny, which is accorded institutional status pursuant to article 32 of the Constitution, has been strengthened through the adoption of the Public Oversight Act of 12 April 2018, and an advisory council for the development of civil society has been set up, which reports directly to the President.

4. Parliamentary attention to the activities of government authorities, including law enforcement agencies, has been stepped up; the Senate has set up special commissions to monitor compliance by the procuratorial and internal affairs authorities with the rule of law and human rights and also to oversee matters relating to exercise of the guaranteed labour rights of citizens. The work of the Legislative Chamber includes commissions on family and women's issues, health care and the independence of the courts. The parliamentary chambers have adopted a plan of action for cooperation in the field of human rights with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, along with a road map on, among other objectives, putting into effect the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed.

5. Pursuant to the outline plan for administrative reform in Uzbekistan and the road map for its implementation, a root-and-branch review has been carried out of the existing governance system, involving the overhaul of more than 100 State administrative and economic management bodies, the reorganization of 77 ministries and departments, the creation of 9 new such bodies and the elimination of 7 others.

6. Work along the second track of the country's development strategy, relating to upholding the rule of law and reshaping the legal and judicial system, has made possible the radical modification of the system for the extrajudicial protection of human rights and freedoms. For the first time in its history the country now has a system of presidential help desks in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, the provinces and the city of Tashkent, and also in each district and city, where citizens can directly petition the President, ensuring the impartial and prompt consideration of their concerns. This system is underpinned by a requirement for the heads of government agencies at all levels, regional chief administrators (*hokims*), and the directors of procuratorial, internal affairs and other law enforcement agencies to make regular reports to the public; and the introduction into the work of

deputies, senators and the heads of executive authorities of regular site visits to verify the situation relating to the rights, freedoms and interests of citizens and to provide material assistance in tackling any critical problems.

7. As part of the process of overhauling the internal affairs agencies, a system has been introduced requiring them to report twice yearly to the Senate, to the Jokargy Kenes (Parliament) of the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and the councils of people's deputies (*kengashes*) of the various provinces and the city of Tashkent. The procuratorial authorities are also required to report annually on their activities at meetings not only of the Senate, but also of the Jokargy Kenes of Qoraqalpog'iston and the councils of people's deputies of the various districts, cities and provinces. To date, 493 reports have been delivered by the country's procurators.

8. Efforts to safeguard public order and ensure the early prevention of criminal behaviour, primarily with the participation of the general public, have led to a 36-per-cent reduction in crime, and targeted measures have been taken to prevent and crackdown on corruption, following which criminal charges have been laid against 1,177 officials who have committed such offences. The Anti-Corruption Act has made it possible to pool the efforts and potential of government agencies and civil society institutions in this area. A presidential decree of 30 November 2017 on additional measures to strengthen guarantees of the rights and freedoms of citizens during judicial investigations declared the use of information obtained through violations of procedural law, including the use of torture, inadmissible as evidence in criminal cases.

9. Further reforms in the legal sphere have been significantly advanced by the adoption of the presidential decree of 21 October 2016 on measures for the further reform of the judicial and legal system and strengthened guarantees of the robust protection of human rights and freedoms, along with the Administrative Procedures Act of 8 January 2018, the Civil Procedure Code of 22 January 2018, the Economic Procedure Code of 24 January 2018 and the Code of Administrative Procedure of 25 January 2018, among other instruments.

10. By a presidential decree of 21 February 2017, the Supreme Judicial Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan was set in place, with the aim of promoting respect for the constitutional principle of the independence of the judiciary. Since 1 April 2017, the penalty of short-term rigorous detention has no longer been applied in Uzbekistan; the period of pre-charge remand in custody has been reduced from 72 to 48 hours and the maximum duration of such remand from 1 year to 7 months; the right to issue approvals for the interception of postal and telegraphic items or the exhumation of bodies and to authorize courts to impose alternative preventive measures has now been transferred to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with powers relating to logistical and financial support for the ordinary courts, and a system of administrative courts has now been set in place. The Constitutional Court has now been vested with the responsibility to submit annual reports to the chambers of the Oliy Majlis and the President, based on an analysis of the practice of constitutional law, on the observance of such law in Uzbekistan.

11. Work on the third and fourth tracks of the country's economic and social development strategy has led to dramatic improvement in the system for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights of citizens on the basis of successive annual State programmes: on the year of the healthy child (2014); the year of attention and care for the older generation (2015); the year of the healthy mother and child (2016); the year of dialogue with the people and of human interests (2017); the year of support for active entrepreneurship, innovative ideas and technologies (2018); and the year of active investment and social development (2019).

12. The process of overhauling the State governance system and providing good quality services in the areas of education, health, labour and employment and social welfare was significantly boosted by the adoption of an array of statutory instruments, including presidential decrees of 16 January 2018, on further measures to ensure the country's food security; of 25 January 2018, on measures to overhaul the system of general, specialized secondary and vocational education; of 2 February 2018, on measures to upgrade support for women and to strengthen the institution of the family; of 5 March 2018, on upgrading

the State governance system in the domain of physical culture and sport; of 29 March 2018, on the Obod Qishloq (Prosperous Villages) programme; of 4 May 2018, on measures to enhance the role of civil society institutions in the process of the country's democratic renewal; of 27 June 2018, on the Obod Mahalla (Prosperous Neighbourhood) programme; of 29 June 2018, on the road map for an improved tax policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan; of 27 July 2018, on measures further to improve the system for protecting the rights and legitimate interests of business entities; of 8 August 2018, on ratification of the road map for improved standard-setting; of 7 December 2018, on comprehensive measures to overhaul the Uzbek health-care system; and others. In 2018, 54 acts, 112 presidential decrees, 254 presidential orders and 652 orders of the Cabinet of Ministers were adopted.

13. In Uzbekistan, over the first three months of 2019 alone, compared to the same period in 2018, gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.3 per cent, with the following components: industry – 6.8 per cent; services – 11.1 per cent; retail sales – 5.9 per cent; and agriculture – 2.5 per cent. Levels of industrial production, investment and real income are rising steadily and reforms have been made to the tax system, creating the possibility of awarding tax breaks to business entities which conscientiously pay their taxes. Since early September 2017, the national currency of Uzbekistan has been freely convertible.

14. More than 1,200 pieces of legislation have been adopted with a view to creating favourable conditions for entrepreneurs and businesses and to protect their rights. These include 156 acts, 138 presidential decrees and orders and 280 orders of the Cabinet of Ministers. In addition, the principle has been introduced that the rights of entrepreneurs are to prevail in their dealings with public, law enforcement and monitoring bodies.

15. Levels of wages, pensions, bursaries and welfare allowances have been significantly raised, to improve the welfare of the general population. In particular, for the first time in the past 10 years, salaries for teachers have risen by almost 50 per cent. As a result of the measures taken, by comparison with 2017, real incomes have increased by 12 per cent and an outline plan has been adopted to upgrade the tax policy. Where previously there was a maximum income tax rate of 22.5 per cent, an income tax rate of 12 per cent has now been introduced for individuals and the 8-per-cent national insurance contribution has been abolished. On 1 January 2019, maximum pension payments have been increased from 8 to 10 times the minimum wage and pensions are now paid in full to pensioners who are still working. Positive structural changes, rapid economic expansion and employment programmes have ensured a growth rate of 113.5 per cent in per capita real aggregate income.

16. In Uzbekistan, progress has been made in the fulfilment of commitments under the Millennium Development Goals: poverty has been reduced; enrolment has been increased in secondary specialized vocational education and gender parity achieved in general secondary education; the proportion of women employed in small businesses and private enterprise has risen, to 45.7 per cent; child mortality and malnutrition and maternal mortality have been reduced. Pursuant to the 2016 General Assembly resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals, Uzbekistan has identified 16 goals and 117 targets, which are now included in the system of national sustainable development goals, and key priorities have been identified in the campaign to achieve productive employment and targeted social protection; the quality of health care, education, environmental protection and public services has been improved.

17. In 2019, far-reaching measures were adopted to improve the performance of the Cabinet in line with the objectives set in the message by the President of 21 January 2019. These included the institution in Parliament of a system of quarterly monitoring of progress in the implementation of the successive annual State programmes; the procedure for the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister only after approval by the Legislative Chamber; the planned adoption of a new version of the Cabinet of Ministers Act and of its rules; adoption of the Strategic Planning Act and the outline plan for social and economic development in Uzbekistan over the period to 2030 and its related regional programmes; and the development and implementation of a package of measures for the further development of the social sector.

18. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 8 January 2019, the Economic Council has been established and, as part of the Council, an international group of experts set up to put into effect the road map for the principal structural reforms in Uzbekistan over the period 2019–2021. Work has started on the preparation, among other programme documents, of strategies for the national digital economy, to be completed by 1 December 2019, for the development of the education sector, to be completed by 1 March 2020, for water resource management, to be completed by 1 September 2020, and of outline plans for agricultural development, to be completed by 1 October 2019, and for the revamping of the State pension system, to be completed by 1 January 2020.

19. Work on the fifth track of the strategy has created the necessary conditions in the country to ensure security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance and to pursue a mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy. Under this track, the Anti-Extremism Act of 30 July 2018 was adopted and the thinking behind approaches to the countering of terrorism and extremism was revisited, as this had principally focused on the consequences of the challenges and threats to security posed by these phenomena. For the first time since 2006, Uzbekistan has not been included among the so-called “countries of particular concern” in the domain of religion. Over the period 2017–2018, more than 20,000 Uzbek citizens were removed from the list of members of extremist religious organizations.

20. In 2018, the State Security Service Act of 5 April 2018 was adopted and presidential pardons were granted to 261 persons who had repented of their offences. That same year, the criminal courts heard 38,133 cases, representing a drop of 35.5 per cent from the total in the corresponding period of 2017, and 867 persons were acquitted.

21. Uzbekistan is extending its international cooperation with the Charter and treaty bodies of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures in matters relating to the application of basic international standards in the domain of human rights and freedoms. In 2016, a memorandum of understanding was concluded between the National Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme and other international organizations and, in 2017, the first-ever visits were made to Uzbekistan by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres; the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed; a delegation of the international non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch; and a delegation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office for Central Asia, led by Ryszard Komenda. Visits were also made by other delegations from the United Nations (senior officials of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Secretary-General, director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media), the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other entities.

22. In 2018, among other instruments, resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly on the initiative of Uzbekistan on strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region and on education and religious tolerance. In addition, the Samarkand Declaration was adopted by the Asian Forum on Human Rights, on the theme of challenges and realities, and a draft international convention was prepared on the rights of young people.

23. To expedite the development of tourism, an amount of 2.3 trillion sum has been allocated to the building of hotel infrastructure, the development of the leisure and hospitality sector and to other areas related to tourism, thereby creating thousands of new jobs.

24. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 16 August 2017 on fundamental measures to streamline exit procedures for citizens of Uzbekistan travelling abroad, with effect from 1 January 2019, the issuance of permits in the form of passport stickers for travel abroad has been discontinued. In 2018, a 30-day visa-free regime was introduced for the nationals of seven countries and the tourist visa procedure for nationals of 39 countries was simplified, with a system of electronic entry visas for Uzbekistan issued via the E-visa.uz platform,

rendering it unnecessary for foreign nationals to apply to Uzbek diplomatic missions abroad. A procedure has been set in place for the visa-free entry to, temporary stay in and departure from Uzbekistan through designated border crossing points by the nationals of 101 States, which has now been used by some 4 million international tourists visiting Uzbekistan.

25. A human rights teaching and training system has been incorporated at all educational levels. This training is also administered to government officials, including judges and law enforcement officials in the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Academy of the Procurator-General's Office, the Academy of Public Administration in the Office of the President, the Higher School of Magistrates of the Supreme Judicial Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Legal Practitioners' Professional Advancement Centre in the Ministry of Justice, the Tashkent State School of Law, the University of Global Economics and Diplomacy and other educational institutions. By a presidential decree of 5 May 2018, a programme of activities was adopted to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and, by a presidential decree of 9 January 2019, an outline plan was approved for raising legal awareness among the general public, along with a road map for implementation of the plan, and a national legal portal was set up, comprising a database of legislation and the provision of free advice to the public.

26. Currently, television and radio programmes are broadcast in more than 12 languages and, pursuant to the E-Government Act, a consolidated portal of interactive public services has been established, together with a data-processing centre and an inter-institutional data-transmission network, to facilitate the expansion of national news web portals. On 7 April 2017, the International Press Club was established on the basis of the country's television and radio channels to discuss the reforms under way in Uzbekistan, and a round-the-clock interactive television programme, called Axborot 24 (Information 24), was launched.

27. In 2017 and 2018, Uzbekistan submitted the following national reports on human rights and freedoms to the United Nations treaty bodies: common core document;¹ fifth national report on implementation of the provisions of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;² third national report within the framework of the universal periodic review;³ fifth national report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;⁴ fifth national report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;⁵ and tenth, eleventh and twelfth periodic reports on implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.⁶

28. The present, third periodic report on the implementation of the Covenant has been prepared with the participation of 37 government bodies and non-governmental organizations. Its preparation forms part of efforts to carry out the national action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies of the United Nations following consideration of the national reports of Uzbekistan in the sphere of human rights and freedoms over the period 2014–2016, and also in pursuance of section III of the national action plan on follow-up to the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights following the consideration of the second national report of Uzbekistan for the period 2015–2017. In preparing the report, due account was also taken of the Committee's requirements set out in the guidelines on the preparation of treaty-specific documents to be submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant. The report focuses on the dramatic changes that have taken place in the country over the period 2014–2019 and on efforts to

¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=HRI%2fCORE%2fUZB%2f2017&Lang=en.

² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/050/14/PDF/G1805014.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

⁵ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CPR%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

⁶ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fUZB%2f10-12&Lang=en.

put into effect the concluding observations and recommendations made by the Committee following consideration of the second periodic report.

29. The report was the subject of hearings in the Committee on Democratic Institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations and Citizens' Self-Governing Bodies of the Oliy Majlis and the Parliamentary Commission on Upholding the Constitutionally Enshrined Labour Rights of Citizens.

II. Information on implementation of the provisions of the Convention and of the recommendations of the Committee

Article 1

30. The rights to self-determination of peoples living in Uzbekistan are underpinned by the principles and rules of the Constitution, which establishes that the nation of Uzbekistan is constituted by its citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin. In its activities, the State is guided by the principles of social justice and legality, in the interests of the well-being of individuals and the community.

31. The governmental system in Uzbekistan is based on the need to uphold the interests of its constituent territories: the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and the provinces, districts, cities, towns, villages and auls. There is only one form of citizenship, applicable throughout the entire territory of Uzbekistan, that is equal for everyone, regardless how it was acquired. Citizens of the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston are also citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which guarantees legal protection and patronage to its nationals in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan and abroad.

32. The borders of the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, the provinces or the city of Tashkent may be modified, and provinces, cities or districts may be formed or abolished, only with the consent of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston has the power to determine its own administrative and territorial arrangements, and its territory and borders may not be altered without its consent. It also has the right to secede from Uzbekistan on the basis of a nationwide referendum held by the people of Qoraqalpog'iston. Mutual relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and their disputes are governed by treaties and agreements concluded between them.

33. The land, its subsoil, waters, flora and fauna and other natural resources in Uzbekistan are the wealth of the nation and are to be used in a sound manner and protected by the State, which guarantees freedom of economic, business and labour activity subject to the prioritization of the rights of consumers, equality and the legal protection of all forms of ownership. Private property, along with other forms of property, is inviolable and protected by the State. Owners may be dispossessed only in the cases and the manner prescribed by law. The use of property may not cause harm to the natural environment or violate the rights and legally protected interests of citizens, legal entities or the State.

34. The necessary legal, social and economic conditions have been set in place in Uzbekistan for the social and economic development of all regions of the country, and also for that of the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston. Priority is accorded to efforts to deepen the reform process in all sectors of the economy and the social sphere, to improve the management of land and water resources, to introduce modern communications technology, and other such undertakings.

35. On the basis of a presidential order of 8 August 2017 on priority measures to accelerate the social and economic development of the regions, far-reaching measures have been taken to refashion the relationship between central and local government authorities. To ensure the effective application of these measures, set out in more than 20 laws, 180 decrees and 450 presidential orders, and to upgrade the forms and methods of work and reporting relationships, in particular to the public, the various territories of the country – the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, the provinces, districts and cities – have been grouped into

different sectors in terms of their overall social and economic development. These sectors are headed, respectively, by the Chair of the Jokargy Kenes of Qoraqalpog'iston, the regional chief administrators of the provinces, the city of Tashkent, the districts and other cities, and the chiefs of the local procuratorial and internal affairs authorities and of the State Revenue Service. Those in charges of the different sectors are responsible for ensuring the accelerated economic development of their territories, including by taking full advantage of their natural, economic and human potential. The work of the different sectors is structured along the hierarchy mahalla – district (or city) – province – republic, in line with the outline for the organization of sector-based work for the overall social and economic development of the districts, cities and regions.

36. In 2018 – the designated year of support for active entrepreneurship, innovative ideas and technologies – more than 76 projects have been carried out, to a total amount of 21 trillion sum and 1 billion dollars. In accordance with the Obod Qishloq and Obod Mahalla programmes, 3 trillion sum has been allocated for upgrading measures, in order to create favourable living conditions in more than 400 villages and mahallas. Under programmes to promote family entrepreneurship and youth welfare and employment, a total of some 2 trillion sum has been allocated for more than 2,600 local-level business projects.

37. Under the Obod Qishloq programme, which has received allocations of 4,865 billion sum, it is planned to improve the living conditions of 1.7 million people in 159 districts and 478 villages of the country, through the construction of 214,240 individual houses and 1,187 apartment buildings; the laying of 3,145 km of water-supply lines, 4,288 km of electricity lines and 709 km of gas mains; the construction of 5,476 km of roads; and the building of 1,466 public amenities, among other facilities. In carrying out the Obod Mahalla programme, steps have been taken to upgrade 116 mahallas, thereby improving the living conditions of over 496,000 people, and 1,111 billion sum has been allocated for implementation of the programme.

38. Thanks to measures to boost social protection and further improve the wages system, the real income of the population was increased in 2018 and is now 12 per cent higher than in 2017. Thanks to the introduction of an entirely new system of tax administration, a balance of 5.5 trillion sum has now been placed at the disposal of local budgets by exceeding the predicted levels of tax collection, which are 6 times higher than those of 2017 and 32 times higher than those of 2016.

39. Quarterly progress reports are submitted by regional chief administrators to the houses of the Oliy Majlis on the implementation in their regions of State social and economic development programmes. These reports also include proposals on ways of tackling existing challenges and closing gaps. A system has been introduced for the President to monitor the situation in the regions on an annual basis and for monthly face-to-face meetings between the Prime Minister, together with the heads of ministries and departments, and the heads of local executive authorities. Every quarter, reports are submitted by the heads of the different sectors at meetings of the Jokargy Kenes of Qoraqalpog'iston and the councils of people's deputies of the provinces, the city of Tashkent and the districts and cities. These meetings are attended by the officials, deputies and senators with responsibility for the respective territories.

40. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 25, particular attention is being given in Uzbekistan to tackling the consequences of the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region, for which purpose an order was passed by the Cabinet of Ministers on 24 December 2014 on measures to implement the arrangements agreed upon at the international conference on promoting cooperation in the Aral Sea basin to mitigate the consequences of the environmental catastrophe, and a programme of action was launched for the environmental protection of Uzbekistan over the period 2013–2017, on which a total of 303,404 billion sum, 808,529,000 dollars, 139,000 euros and 15,000 Swiss francs was spent.

41. According to an order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 29 August 2015, on a comprehensive programme of measures to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea disaster and the reconstruction and social and economic development of the Aral Sea region over the period 2015–2018, a number of specific programmes are to be implemented to

improve governance, to promote the sound use of water resources in the region, to create conditions for the restoration of the gene pool and the health of the population, to create jobs and to improve the standard of living and quality of life in the region.

42. By a presidential order of 18 January 2017, a State programme was approved for the development of the Aral Sea region over the period 2017–2021, for which purpose the Aral Region Development Fund was created and tax incentives were introduced for enterprises set up in the region before 2027. In addition, since 1 April 2017, monthly fees for preschool establishments, specialized and out-of-school educational institutions located in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and the province of Xorazm have been halved; on 1 February 2017, a new type of social benefit was introduced for low-income families, single citizens, pensioners and persons with disabilities in the form of a lump-sum payment measuring between two and five times the minimum wage; and, on 1 April 2017, preferential rates were introduced for rail and air tickets. By a presidential order of 16 August 2018, a preschool educational institution was set in operation from 1 December 2018, which includes a 120-place rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities from the Aral Sea region.

43. To remedy the environmental conditions of the Aral Sea and to arrest the process of desertification and sand deflation, and also to restore the biodiversity on the dry seabed, tree-planting and revegetation programmes are being carried out over an area of more than 95,405 hectares, comprising, in 2014, 16,800 hectares; in 2015, 18,200 hectares; in 2016, 16,800 hectares; and, in 2017, 18,900 hectares. With the support of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, revegetation programmes have been carried out over a total area of 2,482 hectares.

44. In order to regenerate the ecosystem and to ensure sustainable livelihoods on the salinized land of the desiccated Aral seabed, the International Innovation Centre for the Aral Sea Basin was created pursuant to a presidential order of 16 October 2018, with scientific support from the Islamic Development Bank and the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture. On 15 February 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted an order on measures to expedite the creation of so-called “green cover” – protective forest plantations – on desiccating areas of the Aral seabed.

45. On 27 November 2018, at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region was launched by the United Nations, to ensure consolidated assistance for the development of the Aral Sea region through the joint efforts of the Government of Uzbekistan, United Nations agencies and the donor community. Uzbekistan has prepared 19 projects for a total of 60 million dollars to be carried out in the Aral Sea region with funding from the multi-partner trust fund under the auspices of the United Nations.

Article 2

46. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 5, the Uzbek Constitution proclaims the primacy of the universally recognized rules of international law, a principle enshrined in the country's current law on human rights and freedoms, which formally codifies the provision that, if an international treaty to which Uzbekistan is a party establishes rules other than those constituted by Uzbek law, the rules of the international treaty prevail in Uzbekistan. Article 2 of the revised version of 6 February 2019 of the International Treaties of the Republic of Uzbekistan Act includes an additional provision stipulating that the international treaties of Uzbekistan are concluded, implemented, cancelled or suspended in accordance with universally recognized rules and principles of international law and the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and also with the provisions of the Act and of the treaties themselves. Article 3 of the Act establishes that the international treaties of Uzbekistan, along with the universally recognized rules and principles of international law, form an integral part of the national legal system.

47. According to the Courts Act, the work of the courts is governed not only by the country's law but also by the universally recognized rules and principles of international law and no restrictions are placed on the exercise by courts of their right directly to apply

the rules of international law in handing down their judgments. The draft human rights strategy of action for the period 2021–2019 provides for the adoption by the Plenary of the Supreme Court of an order on the application of the rules of international law in handing down court judgments, intended to clarify the rules on references to the provisions of the Covenant and other international instruments.

48. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 6, the national strategy of action in five priority development tracks for the period 2017–2021 establishes as the key areas for reform in the judicial sphere the expansion of guarantees of the robust protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens, the improved access of citizens to justice, steps to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the judicial system, and further improvements to the procedure for the selection and appointment of judges.

49. Details of the specific measures to ensure the independence of the judicial system in Uzbekistan were submitted in the country's fifth national report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,⁷ its third national report under the universal periodic review,⁸ and its fifth periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁹

50. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 7, in order to strengthen the legal status of the institution of Ombudsman, acts were adopted on 30 August 2017 and 14 March 2019, pursuant to which the Office of the Ombudsman is empowered to raise issues with the Constitutional Court, to bring petitions and actions before the courts on behalf of citizens, and to propose to the chambers of Parliament that they hear communications from State executive and administrative bodies. In addition, the acts strengthen the rights and duties of the Ombudsman's deputies in regions of the country and the powers vested in the Ombudsman to protect the rights and freedoms of persons held in custody, and set in place a system – a national preventive mechanism – empowering the Ombudsman to prevent the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and to enlist the participation of non-governmental organizations in this preventive activity.

51. By a presidential order of 22 April 2019 on additional measures to strengthen guarantees of the rights of the child, the office has been created of Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis (Ombudsman) – Children's Ombudsman – with the inclusion in its secretariat of a special unit for the rights of the child. At the same time, the status of this new office has been officially confirmed by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis (Ombudsman) Act. An outline plan is currently being carried out to prepare the institution of the Ombudsman for accreditation as an observer with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, with a view to submission of the application for accreditation in 2019.

52. On 5 May 2017, the institution was created of Commissioner in the Office of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the Protection of the Rights and Lawful Interests of Business Entities (Business Ombudsman), together with its own regional network. The Commissioner's activities are governed by the Act of 29 August 2017 and the presidential decree of 15 March 2019. Since 1 April 2019, the Commissioner for the protection of the rights and lawful interests of business entities has been vested with the right to coordinate audits of business entities and to monitor the correctness of the conduct of such audits by the audit authorities.

53. Measures to enhance the legal status of the National Centre for Human Rights have been taken pursuant to a presidential order of 10 December 2018. The Centre has been assigned responsibility for the systematic monitoring of implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and the preparation of

⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

⁸ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/050/14/PDF/G1805014.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

proposals for improvements to the law, and is required to submit annual reports to Parliament, the President and the Government on the human rights situation in the country. Pursuant to this order, the government authorities are required to set up agencies and to appoint officials responsible for providing information to the Centre on human rights matters, and the Legislative Chamber is advised to hold hearings on the outcome of the review of the national reports of Uzbekistan on human rights and to adopt national action plans to implement the recommendations arising from such reviews.

54. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 8, with a view to eradicating corrupt practices in government agencies, the Anti-Corruption Act of 3 January 2017, the presidential order of 2 February 2017 on measures to implement the provisions of the Anti-Corruption Act and the State counter-corruption programme for the period 2017–2018 and subsequent years were all adopted and central and regional commissions set in place to counter corruption. Additional measure to combat corruption included the Transparency in the Work of State Executive and Administrative Authorities Act of 5 May 2014, the Social Partnership Act of 25 September 2014, the Parliamentary Oversight Act of 11 April 2016, the Legal Information Dissemination and Access Act of 7 September 2017, the Administrative Procedures Act of 8 January 2018, the outline plan for administrative reform, the Public Procurement Act of 9 April 2018, and the Public Oversight Act of 12 April 2018. With the aim of fostering an intolerance of corruption among members of the public, 13,819 meetings, seminars and round tables were held and over 200 posters and flyers distributed; 948 media appearances were arranged; and 5 public information videos were produced on the laws against corruption.

55. In the process of combatting corruption, criminal charges have been laid against 1,907 officials, 35,146 offences have been detected, and 19,556 criminal proceedings and 10,047 administrative proceedings have been instituted. Of these cases, 1,114 involve violations of the rights of business operators and 1,967 involve money-laundering (to a total of 4.3 trillion sum). Within the internal affairs system, the number of officers charged with criminal offences, convicted, and dismissed from the police service for acts of corruption was 57 in 2014, 61 in 2015, 70 in 2016, 51 in 2017 and 30 in 2018. Between 2016 and January 2019, 26 presidential decrees on the granting of citizenship have been adopted in respect of 4,286 stateless persons, of whom 179 persons received citizenship in 2016, 1,064 in 2017, 2,759 in 2018 and 284 in January 2019.

56. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 9, the principles of non-discrimination and equality of rights in the enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in the Covenant are a priority of the State policy of Uzbekistan, as set out in article 18 of the Constitution and the basic laws concerning human rights and freedoms. A detailed account of the issue of the legal codification and further development of the regulatory framework for the non-discriminatory protection of human rights may be found in the common core document,¹⁰ the tenth, eleventh and twelfth national reports of Uzbekistan on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,¹¹ and the country's fifth national report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹²

57. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 28 and 29, discussion of the question of accession by Uzbekistan to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance demonstrated that it would be inadvisable for Uzbekistan to sign this treaty, since many of its provisions are already incorporated in domestic law and the practices of public authorities, such as the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Procuratorial Service Act, the Human Trafficking Act, the Remand in Custody in Criminal Proceedings Act, the Internal Affairs

¹⁰ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=HRI%2fCORE%2fUZB%2f2017&Lang=en.

¹¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fUZB%2f10-12&Lang=en.

¹² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en.

Agencies Act, the Procedure for Administrative Detention Act, the Petitions by Individuals and Legal Entities Act, and others.

58. Discussion of accession by Uzbekistan to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the Optional Protocols relating to the submission and consideration of individual complaints may be found in the draft national action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council on the outcome of its consideration of the third national report of Uzbekistan within the framework of the universal periodic review for the period 2021–2019.

59. With regard to implementation of the Committee’s recommendation in paragraph 30, as part of the work carried out by the chambers of Parliament to monitor implementation of the provisions of the Covenant, on more than 60 occasions over the period 2014–2018, the Senate committees reviewed issues of education, health care and the prevention of HIV-related disease and submitted 12 parliamentary and senatorial queries on issues related to protection of the family, motherhood and childhood, participation in cultural activities, harnessing the benefits of scientific progress and other issues.

60. Over the period 2015–2018, the Legislative Chamber held 64 parliamentary hearings on issues covered by the Covenant; in 2018, a regular event known as the “Government hour” was introduced, at which deputies heard answers to the questions that they had put to six ministers and heads of State committees. The Chamber submitted more than 15 parliamentary issues to Parliament and 207 to deputies on the subject of economic, social and cultural rights.

61. During the reporting period, arrangements have been strengthened for the participation of civil society institutions in the implementation of the provisions of the Covenant and, to this end, two presidential enactments have been adopted. The first, a decree of 4 May 2018, set out measures to boost the role played by civil society institutions in the process of the country’s democratic renewal, and led to the formation in the President’s Office of an advisory board for the development of civil society. The second, an order of 4 July 2018, outlined the organization of the work of public councils in government agencies and introduced a system whereby non-governmental organizations are involved in the preparation of national and shadow reports on implementation of the provisions of the Covenant and also participate in the implementation of policy documents on those issues.

Article 3

62. With regard to implementation of the Committee’s recommendation in paragraph 11, currently, women constitute about 50 per cent of the population of Uzbekistan and comprehensive support of women, along with robust guarantees of the protection of their rights and freedoms, is one of the main objectives of the reforms being effected in the country.

63. To recognize women who have made a significant contribution to the protection of motherhood and childhood and to instilling a spirit of patriotism in the younger generation, the Mutabar Ayol (Women of Honour) award has been instituted and, in 2019, 260 women were awarded Mutabar Ayol medals. Among the women of Uzbekistan, there are 514 doctors of science, 6 academicians, 15 holders of the title “Hero of Uzbekistan”, 17 senators and 15 deputies of the Legislative Chamber. In addition, women make up more than 23 per cent of the members of local councils of people’s deputies. Women constitute 6.5 per cent of the members of the Cabinet and 15.3 per cent of the heads of local executive authorities. The proportion of women in senior management positions in ministries, State committees and agencies stands at 10 per cent and, in middle management positions, 24 per cent.

64. There are more than 1,400 women managers of Uzbek government and public organizations. In the areas of health care and social services, the proportion of women is

higher than 82 per cent; in science, education and child development, culture and the arts – 72 per cent; in agriculture – 45 per cent; and in industry – 38 per cent.

65. At the current time, 1,388 women are employed in senior positions in the system of State and public organizations, including 45 in ministries and departments, 39 in the Office of the President, the Cabinet, the Senate and the Legislative Chamber, 22 in public organizations, 207 in local hokimiyats (administrations), 1,075 in local councils of people's deputies, and 1,208 women in the courts system. More than 9,000 women are employed in the mahallas as specialists in women's issues and work to strengthen spiritual and moral values in families.

66. More than 120,000 small businesses, including 4,500 farms, are run by women. Over the past 10 years, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises headed by women has increased by a factor of 1.6 and more than 40 per cent of these women are managers of small businesses. To promote the involvement of women in business activities and the development of family businesses, loans to women have doubled over the past two years. Thus, over the period 2014–2016, commercial banks accorded loans to women totalling 3,800 billion sum, while, in 2018 alone, loans to women totalled 3,361 billion sum.

67. Pursuant to the national plan of action to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, approved on 10 October 2017 by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Chair of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, and to the road map of 20 October 2018 for the implementation of the country's national sustainable development goals and the targets of the 2030 Agenda, special measures have been put in place to improve the protection of women's rights in education (target 4.3), to eradicate violence against women and human trafficking (5.2), to prevent early and forced marriage (5.3), and to uphold other economic and social rights for women and men.

68. On 2 February 2018, a presidential decree was adopted on measures to upgrade activities in support of women and to strengthen the institution of the family, pursuant to which the office of specialist in women's issues was introduced in citizens' assemblies; the Oila (Family) centre for applied research was set up under the Cabinet, which, together with its local-level units, is exploring ways of strengthening the institution of the family; since 1 April 2018, the civil registry offices have been placed under the authority of the district and municipal hokimiyats and report to the regional women's committees; special training courses are being run at the Oila centres to train specialists in preparing young people for family life, and a public foundation has been created for the support of women, families and those living in difficult circumstances.

69. By a presidential decree of 1 March 2018, gynaecological consultations for adolescent girls and women of childbearing age were added to the services offered by family clinics and rural health centres, including, on a confidential basis, advice on issues of reproductive health, the provision of knowledge and awareness-raising on the law relating to questions of maternity and childhood. The decree also endorsed a programme of comprehensive measures to support women and strengthen the institution of the family.

70. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 18, by a presidential order of 14 March 2017 on measures for the further upgrading of the crime prevention and control system, a plan of comprehensive measures was endorsed for the prevention of domestic violence over the period 2017–2018 and 9 social and legal support centres and 170 advisory centres for women have been set up in the regions and are operating as non-profit non-governmental organizations on a pro bono basis. They provide social, psychological and legal support and assistance in the job placement of women living in difficult circumstances.

71. Regular sociological surveys are carried out among the female population in the various regions of the country by the Ijtimoiy Fikr centre for public opinion research, focusing on social well-being and social attitudes. The surveys demonstrate that most survey participants believe that the issue of domestic violence is a serious problem with a significant negative impact on the spiritual and moral atmosphere in families. In this regard, the conduct of measures to prevent domestic violence and to instil in society zero tolerance

for all forms of aggression and pressure against women is of critical importance not only for law enforcement agencies, but also for society as a whole.

72. By a presidential order of 2 July 2018 on measures to improve the system of social rehabilitation and adaptation and the prevention of domestic violence, a programme of practical measures was approved with a view to improving the system of social rehabilitation and adaptation and the prevention of domestic violence. In addition, a national centre was established for the rehabilitation and adaptation of persons who are victims of violence and for the prevention of suicide. The programme aims to provide confidential medical, psychological, social, educational, legal and other assistance to the victims of violence, including through 160 local-level centres in the various regions and via helplines set up for the provision of essential advisory services. A bill is currently being drafted on the prevention of domestic violence.

73. More than 14,000 women have sought assistance from the regional rehabilitation and adaptation centres and a hotline to the Women's Committee has been created, using the number 1146, by which women can receive confidential psychosocial, legal and other assistance. In 2018, in different parts of the country, attention was given to the problems of more than 47,690 women living in difficult circumstances, including 13,344 women with disabilities.

74. On 11 January 2019, the Protection of Victims, Witnesses and Other Participants in Criminal Proceedings Act was adopted, establishing the right of victims of criminal offences to temporary shelter for themselves and their families in safe places when there is a real risk of their being killed or suffering violent attacks, or their property being destroyed. The act guarantees the application for their benefit of the security measures provided for by law.

75. By a presidential order of 7 March 2019 on measures for the further strengthening of the guarantees of labour rights and support for entrepreneurial activities by women, since 1 March 2019 there have been no prohibitions on or barriers to the employment of women in certain industries and occupations and the list of such industries and occupations is now merely recommendatory in nature. The order further prohibits the dismissal by employers of women of retirement age or of women below the age of 60 in connection with their potential entitlement to a pension, and also of women prior to the expiration of a fixed-term employment contract. Under the order, women now have the right to the free legal assistance of a lawyer in court proceedings regarding violations of the equal rights of men and women.

76. The order also established a commission for the protection of gender equality in Uzbekistan, responsible for developing proposals on the incorporation into domestic law of universally recognized international rules, including those of the Covenant. Bills have been drafted on guarantees of the equal rights and opportunities of women and men and on the protection of women from harassment and violence, which outline ways in which violence against women, not only at home but also at workplaces and in educational institutions, may be combated.

77. In addition, under the decree, women's entrepreneurship centres have been set up, including centres in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, the various provinces and the city of Tashkent which take the form of business incubators and have the status of non-governmental non-profit organizations. The centres are intended to provide training support for women who wish to engage in business activities. Funds totalling 100 billion sum are allocated annually to commercial banks by the Public Foundation for the Support of Women and the Family and no less than 50 per cent of these funds are allocated to women living in rural areas. Funds from the Foundation have been used as start-up financing for 1,691 women in need of housing and, in 2019, it is planned to allocate more than 1,600 homes on a preferential basis to low-income women with disabilities.

Articles 4 and 5

78. The State has identified the principal legal ways and means of protecting human rights when they are violated and, in 2016, further steps were taken to improve the legal protection afforded to their social and economic rights through the launching of the system of presidential help desks in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, the provinces, the city of Tashkent and every other district and town, and also through the online help desk of the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan and online government help desks, including those of the law-enforcement agencies, designed to ensure the prompt monitoring and oversight of the exercise by citizens of their right to petition the public authorities. As of May 2019, 2,867,058 petitions had been submitted to the President's online help desk, of which 2,816,737 have been considered on their merits.

79. During the first quarter of 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers and the various ministries and departments had received a total of 429,000 petitions from citizens, including 301,000 submitted to the hokimiyats. A total of 825 officials were sanctioned according to the law for infringement of the procedure for considering petitions.

80. A round-the-clock centre for the reception of complaints regarding undue interference in the activities of businesses in any region of the country has been set up in the Office of the Procurator-General. The centre maintains electronic communications with 56 ministries and departments and operates a system for the electronic monitoring of the processing of petitions. To date it has received 307,019 complaints, of which 58,383 have been satisfactorily resolved. The procuratorial authorities have directly resolved 979,213 complaints and have taken up the cases of 940,585 citizens.

81. A total of 43,121 complaints have been referred to the procuratorial authorities from the President's online help desk and the public help desks. Of these, 236,403 have been dealt with directly by the procuratorial authorities, including 98,156 that were resolved in the applicant's favour and 126,041 in which a statement of reasons was given. Following the consideration of the complaints, 1,810 challenges have been lodged and 686 recommendations issued on measures to eliminate the causes of offences; 3,927 applications have been filed with the courts for the payment of 20.3 billion sum in damages; disciplinary and administrative proceedings have been brought against 2,402 persons; 464 criminal cases have been instituted in cases involving major violations of the law; practical assistance had been rendered in recovering 17 billion sum in salaries, pensions, child-support allowances and other payments; on-site consultation visits have been organized to all regions of the country and attended by 12,206 citizens, from whom a total of 7,863 petitions have been received.

82. As part of the upgrading of the system for the provision of public services, a presidential decree of 12 February 2017 was adopted on measures to revamp the national system for the provision of public services to the population, pursuant to which a public services agency has been created under the Ministry of Justice, along with 201 consolidated centres for the provision of public services to business entities, in application of the single window principle. In the various districts and cities of the country, these operate as public services centres forming part of the presidential help desk system. In addition, a consolidated register of public services has been formally established. A portal has been created to gather submissions from the public, known as "Mening fikrim" ("My opinion"), to be used for the analysis of public opinion. To date, more than 2,400 electronic messages have been uploaded to the portal.

83. On 26 January 2018, the Uzbek Code of Administrative Procedure was adopted. According to the Code, all persons are entitled to apply to the Administrative Court for the protection of their violated or disputed rights or legally protected interests, by submitting applications or complaints calling for the nullification of orders or unlawful actions or omissions of administrative authorities or citizens' self-governing bodies and their officials if they believe that their rights and lawful interests have been violated by these actions or omissions, that impediments have been posed to the exercise of their rights, freedoms and lawful interests, that any unlawful obligations have been imposed upon them, or that other obstacles have been created to their activities in one or another area.

Articles 6 and 7

84. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 12, over the reporting period, measures have been taken to improve labour legislation, to strengthen safeguards and the rights of citizens to work without discrimination, and to improve working conditions. In 2016, a revised version of the Labour Protection Act was adopted, which expanded the right of trade unions to conduct public monitoring in the field of labour protection and specified the rights and duties of employers and workers in respect of labour protection. The Act formed the basis for the adoption of a comprehensive programme for the improvement of working conditions in the workplace. On 27 April 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted an order ratifying the regulations governing organization of the work of professional entities in the labour market relating to labour protection, the maintenance of a consolidated register of such entities, the auditing of their activities, their retraining and in-service training requirements, and expert appraisals of working conditions. By a presidential order of 24 May 2017, a consortium was established for the support of home-based work, with the allocation of loans to home-based workers from 1 July 2017 at a fixed tax rate of 75 per cent; by an order of 14 October 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the regulations governing the training procedure for unemployed and economically inactive persons in the various regions; on 14 July 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted an order on the creation of a system for the centralized electronic logging of citizens' individual insurance contributions to the Pension Fund and on the migration to an electronic system for tracking the length of service of individual employees, including entrepreneurs, members of *dehqan* farms and other organizations.

85. By a presidential order of 24 May 2017 on steps to organize the work of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan a fundamentally new system has been set in place for the provision of services by the authorities responsible for labour, following the single window principle. In addition, the network of branch offices of the agency responsible for external labour migration for the employment of citizens abroad has been expanded and a system has been launched for the monthly publication of information on the labour market and employment on the Ministry's official website, an open-access data portal, and in mainstream media outlets. The order also ratified the programme of comprehensive measures for the further enhancement of the work of the labour and employment agencies. Thus, since 1 July 2018, the State programme "Yoshlar – kelajagimiz" ("Youth – our future") has been in operation in all districts and cities of the country, loans on easy terms totalling 403.2 billion sum have been allocated for 3,141 business ventures and 19,991 new jobs have been created for young people. By an order of 28 March 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a State programme for the period 2019–2018 to promote employment for persons with disabilities, aimed at creating conditions for people with disabilities who want to engage in business and increasing the benefits available in this area.

86. By an order of 17 July 2018, the Cabinet ratified a road map of measures over the period 2018–2022 years to improve the system for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of persons released from places of deprivation of liberty. Pursuant to the order, rehabilitation and social adaptation centres have been established for these persons and they receive lump-sum benefits for their basic necessities, payment of rent, specialist services, medical and other assistance.

87. On 16 October 2018, the Private Employment Agencies Act was adopted, setting out the rights and obligations of private employment agencies and listing the services provided by these organizations in finding employment for job seekers in Uzbekistan and abroad on the basis of contractual arrangements with these job seekers.

88. According to data from the employment promotion centres, in 2017, out of a total of 271,900 persons applying for assistance in finding employment, jobs were found for 229,900 (84 per cent) and, in 2018, for 611,400 out of a total of 626,500 applicants (97 per cent). In 2018, the employed population in Uzbekistan was 13.3 million, or 41 per cent of the mid-year population and 91 per cent of the economically active population, and the unemployment rate was 9.3 per cent: 15.1 per cent among young people under 30 years of age and 12.9 per cent among women.

89. Pursuant to a presidential order of 3 February 2018 on measures to implement the State programme to promote employment for 2018, a total of 372,100 new jobs have been created. By a presidential order of 5 March 2019, targets were set for the creation of more than 370,000 jobs under public contracts.

90. In 2018, 20,500 persons were assigned to skills training, retraining and in-service training courses by the employment promotion centres; 355,800 were employed on public works; in 2016, 14,477 persons received unemployment benefit; in 2016, 4,118 persons were placed in jobs after undergoing training, in 2017, 4,180 persons and, in 2018, 13,722 persons.

91. The proportion of the population employed in the informal sector stands at 59 per cent (7.9 million) of the total number of persons in employment. In 2017, businesses contributed 119,301 billion sum to the country's GDP – 53 per cent of the total. In 2018, a two-year moratorium was introduced for audits of the financial and economic activities of business entities. In addition, venture funds that have been set up for the co-financing of high-tech business start-ups and other initiatives have been exempted until 1 January 2023 from the payment of all types of taxes and compulsory payments, except for the universal social payment.

92. Under the programmes to promote family entrepreneurship and youth welfare and employment, during the first quarter of 2019, a total of 552.8 billion sum was disbursed on the creation of jobs for over 13,500 people, 61,800 citizens applying to the job agencies were placed in employment, 37 billion sum was spent on the recruitment of 49,000 citizens in paid community work and jobs were found for 2,500 women in difficult circumstances. Overall, the number of people placed in employment over this period rose to 13,377 and the proportion of unemployed persons among the economically active population stands at 9.4 per cent.

93. Over the period between 2017 and 1 January 2019, a total of 1,647 complaints were filed with the office of the Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights and Lawful Interests of Business Entities (Business Ombudsman), of which 608 were satisfactorily resolved; clarifications of a legal nature were provided in respect of 827 complaints; and 212 complaints were referred for consideration on the merits. The Business Ombudsman handed down 42 recommendations, 18 findings on consideration of the complaints of business operators and 18 warnings about the inadmissibility of violations of domestic law. In addition, three applications and seven claims to a total amount of 14.7 billion sum were filed with the courts and administrative proceedings were opened against 4 persons and disciplinary charges laid against 35 persons. The courts found in favour of claims totalling more than 11.4 billion sum. With the assistance of the Business Ombudsman, business operators recovered funds totalling 13.2 billion sum and ensured the allocation of loans in the amount of 5.4 billion sum.

94. By a presidential order of 14 July 2018, a road map was approved for measures to improve and enhance the effectiveness of employment and allocations were made from the State employment assistance fund totalling more than 150 billion sum in 2018 and rising to 300 billion sum from 2019. The order stipulated that at least 50 per cent of the designated loans should be allocated to dehqan farms and family businesses, in an amount of up to 500 times the minimum wage and for periods of up to three years, with a grace period of up to six months, along with other benefits. From 1 August 2018, unemployed persons have been allocated lump-sum benefits and training grants from the fund.

95. By a presidential decree of 27 July 2018 and a presidential order of 17 October 2018, provision has been made for the first time for the write-off of debt (tax amnesty) accumulated by individuals who have lost the status of business entities, subject to the resumption of their business operations. As a result of the cancellation of 535.7 billion sum worth of debt, 15,494 business entities have been able to resume operation. Since 1 September 2018, audits of business entities have been discontinued and all barriers removed to the export of fruit and vegetables.

96. On 7 March 2019, a presidential order was adopted to establish the national commission for family businesses and support centres in all regions of the country and offices were set up in the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and the

hokimiyats of the provinces and the city of Tashkent for the provision of financial support for family businesses from the Central Bank. By a presidential decree of 2 April 2019, measures have been taken to strengthen the powers of the mahallas to deal with problems experienced by the public through the organization of assemblies of citizens which can then submit reports of such problems in their mahalla, on the basis of neighbourhood surveys, to the heads of sectors and the presidential help desks.

97. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 15, Uzbekistan has concluded a number of treaties on foreign labour migration. These include the agreements between the Government of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Russian Federation on the reciprocal establishment of missions of agencies with responsibility for migration (5 April 2017), on the systematic recruitment and enlistment of citizens of Uzbekistan for the performance of temporary employment in the territory of the Russian Federation (5 April 2017), between the Government of Uzbekistan and the Government of Turkey on protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families (30 April 2018), and between the Government of Uzbekistan and the Government of Kazakhstan on cooperation in combating illegal migration (12 April 2019).

98. In accordance with the new version of the Consular Statute of 17 January 2019, consular offices provide assistance and protection to citizens of Uzbekistan who have been victims of human trafficking; promote the return of victims of trafficking and, where they lack identity documents, take prompt steps to establish their identity.

99. Over the reporting period, 2,177 reports related to trafficking were submitted to the law enforcement and other authorities, compared to 2,188 in 2014, 1,830 in 2015, 2,131 in 2016 and 2,272 in 2017. In 2018, prosecutions under article 135 of the Criminal Code were brought against 201 persons (34 male and 167 female); in 2014 against 649 persons (259 male and 390 female); in 2015 against 551 persons (229 male and 332 female); in 2016 against 510 persons (192 male and 318 female); and in 2017 against 405 persons (83 male and 322 female). In 2018, 207 persons (83 men and 124 women) were discovered to have been trafficked; in 2014, 1,226 persons (793 male and 433 female); in 2015, 946 persons (618 male and 328 female); in 2016, 717 persons (351 male and 366 female); in 2017, 432 persons (168 male and 264 female). In 2018, 195 victims of human trafficking were assisted by the National Rehabilitation Centre for the Victims of Trafficking.

100. By a presidential decree of 24 May 2017, non-governmental organizations were granted rights with effect from 1 January 2018 to offer fee-based employment services within Uzbekistan and, on the basis of licenses issued in accordance with the prescribed procedure, to find jobs abroad; microbusinesses, small enterprises and farms are permitted to conclude fixed-term contracts with the consent of their employees, including for temporary and casual work. Pursuant to the decree, a public works fund has been established under the Ministry of Labour to finance the participation of temporarily unemployed persons on large-scale investment projects and a programme of measures has been adopted for the period 2017–2020, to expand access points and the range and scope of microfinance services for emergent entrepreneurs.

101. By a presidential order of 5 July 2018, with effect from 1 September 2018, legal entities are entitled to recruit Uzbek nationals for jobs abroad on the basis of Ministry of Labour licences issued by the External Labour Migration Agency; a fund has been established to support and protect the rights and interests of citizens in employment abroad and regulations have been approved on the licensing procedure for the employment of citizens abroad, the systematic recruitment of nationals and the work of the External Labour Migration Agency, the fund and other entities.

102. By an order of 12 September 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers laid out the key responsibilities of the External Labour Migration Agency to assist citizens in exercising their right to seek employment abroad, to grant licenses for the employment of citizens abroad, to issue permits to legal entities to recruit foreign workers for employment in Uzbekistan and other functions. By an order of 25 March 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted additional measures to facilitate the employment in the territory of Uzbekistan of foreign specialists, for which purpose regulations were ratified on the procedure for recruiting and employing foreign labour in Uzbekistan.

103. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 19, work is under way in Uzbekistan to prevent and eradicate the practice of forced labour. A multi-year system for the monitoring of the use of child and forced labour in agriculture is in operation, with the involvement of International Labour Organization (ILO) experts. By an order of 10 May 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers has taken concerted measures to combat all forms of forced recruitment of citizens, including those working in the fields of education, medicine and other government-funded organizations, with the imposition of stiff disciplinary measures on officials permitting such practices. Under the law, the imposition of forced labour incurs fines ranging from one to three times the minimum wage, and where the victim is a minor, from seven to ten times the minimum wage.

104. On 31 May 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted an order on additional measures over the period 2018–2020 for the implementation of the ILO conventions ratified by Uzbekistan and set up a national interministerial commission for the implementation of the set of such additional measures.

105. Over the period from 25 September to 1 November 2018, a nationwide monitoring exercise was carried out for the prevention of child labour and forced labour in the cotton harvest. For the conduct of this exercise, 13 local area working groups were formed from among the representatives of the Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Youth Alliance and local non-governmental organizations, and also members of the parliamentary commission on the guaranteed labour rights of citizens and members of its local branches. During the monitoring exercise, visits were made to 532 farms, 9 institutions of higher education, 83 colleges, 4 specialized secondary schools, 317 schools, 74 preschool establishments, 29 business entities, 135 health-care facilities, 96 hokimiyats, 17 rural citizens' assemblies and 64 mahalla assemblies of citizens. The exercise revealed that there was 97.8-per-cent attendance at educational institutions during the monitoring period. In the course of monitoring, three cases were uncovered of citizens being forced to work; in all three cases, administrative measures were taken against the officials responsible for allowing these violations. The findings of the monitoring exercise were brought to the attention of the Senate Parliamentary Commission on the guaranteed labour rights of citizens.

Article 8

106. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 16, to strengthen exercise by workers of their constitutional right to join trade unions, on 25 October 2016 an Act was adopted on ratification of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); and, on 28 November 2016, an Act amending and supplementing the Trade Unions and Trade Union Rights and Safeguards Act. In order to improve the functioning of trade unions still further, there are plans to adopt a new version of the Trade Unions Act in 2019.

107. At present, the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan represents the interests of more than 6.2 million working people, pooling the activities of 14 sectoral and 14 local-level trade union associations and more than 40,000 primary-level trade union organizations covering all sectors of the economy and social services. Social partnerships in employment are forged at a nationwide level on the basis of a framework agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers, the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry on social and economic issues for the period 2017–2019, along with 105 sectoral agreements, 14 local area agreements and more than 171 collective agreements.

108. Over the period 2014–2019, the labour rights of more than 10,000 employees were defended by their trade union organizations. Of these, more than 3,000 persons were reinstated in their jobs; more than 10 billion sum was paid out in compensation to employees; more than 6,000 complaints were reported and consultations provided over the telephone helplines set up in the trade union system; more than 1,000 recommendations were issued to employers; more than 500 complaints were filed with the courts; assistance was provided in the recovery of 72.7 billion sum in unpaid wages; and 1,560 million sum

was paid out by employers in compensation for injuries at work, occupational diseases and the loss of breadwinner.

109. The right to strike enshrined in the Covenant is upheld, provided that it is exercised in conformity with the laws of each country. This right is not explicitly regulated by either the Constitution or the labour law of Uzbekistan. In accordance with article 34 of the Constitution, citizens have the right to conduct social activities in the form of rallies, meetings and demonstrations. Work is currently under way on a bill on rallies, meetings and demonstrations.

110. According to article 259 of the Labour Code, individual labour disputes arising between employers and employees concerning application of the legal statutes on labour issues are considered by the commission on labour disputes, provided that the employees have been unable independently or working in concert with the trade union committee or any other representative body of workers to resolve these differences through direct negotiations with the employers. The commissions on labour disputes are set up on a parity basis by employers and the trade union committees or other bodies that represent workers. Working in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Federation of Trade Unions has adopted recommendations on the organization of the commissions to deal with individual labour disputes, a system which has been in effect since 2015. Collective labour disputes concerning the application of the law on labour issues, including collective treaties and agreements and local statutes adopted by agreement between employers and the trade union committees or other bodies that represent workers, may be considered by the courts on the application of one of the parties to the dispute.

Article 9

111. Sustained measures are being taken in Uzbekistan to raise the standard of living and welfare for socially vulnerable categories of the population, first and foremost, very old people, pensioners and persons with disabilities living alone, on the basis of a programme for the period 2011–2015 approved by the President for the further enhancement of the social protection of citizens in this category. In addition, since 2015, a list of persons is drawn up who are allocated monthly benefits in the payment of rent and utilities, and in 2016 an Act was adopted on social services for the elderly, persons with disabilities and other socially vulnerable categories of the population.

112. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 10, concerted steps are being taken in Uzbekistan to prepare for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; thus, as part of the implementation of the programme of comprehensive measures to upgrade the system of support for persons with disabilities and to strengthen safeguards for the protection of their rights and freedoms, approved by a presidential decree of 1 December 2017, a range of measures have been approved and implemented to prepare for the ratification of the said Convention and these were approved by the Prime Minister on 19 June 2018.

113. In accordance with the package of measures to upgrade the system of State support for the elderly and persons with disabilities over the period 2017–2020, 15,900 elderly people and persons with disabilities living alone and in need of nursing care are now the beneficiaries of home-based welfare services and receiving treatment in sanatoriums and free prosthetic and orthopaedic products and technical aids, provided by the country's district and municipal medical associations. In 2015, there were 11,569 such beneficiaries; in 2016 – 12,185; in 2017 – 23,039; and in 2018 – 38,752.

114. By a presidential order of 12 September 2017, a system of targeted local-level social support programmes for disadvantaged categories of the population was launched for the period 2017–2018, including the granting of microcredit on easy terms to citizens in this category and the provision of non-repayable grant assistance to families living in difficult circumstances for the acquisition of affordable housing, household appliances, and the payment of medical services for those with serious illnesses.

115. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 13, every year, presidential decrees are adopted to raise wages, pensions, bursaries and benefits and to stipulate the minimum level of old-age pensions and allowances for persons with disabilities since childhood, for the elderly and persons lacking the capacity to work and for disabled citizens who have not completed the necessary period of pensionable service. In 2018, a presidential decree was adopted that identified a minimum wage rate of 202,730 sum per month, compared to 172,240 sum in 2017, 149,775 sum in 2016, 130,240 sum in 2015 and 118,400 sum in 2014.

116. Under the law, there may be no differences in pay for men and women for equal work. As stipulated by the Labour Code, the monthly salary of workers who have satisfactorily discharged their work duties may not be lower than that established by law for the first step on the unified wage rate scale (in December 2018 this was 501,900 sum). The average nominal monthly wage in Uzbekistan over the period January–December 2018 was 1,822,000 sum, a 25-per-cent increase over that for the same period in 2017. At the same time, sustained measures are being taken to increase the wages of employees of medical, educational and scientific institutions, organizations in the sports and fitness domain and other areas with a large proportion of women employees.

117. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 14, under goal 1 of the national sustainable development goals for the period up to 2030, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 20 October 2018, a number of poverty indicators have been identified for Uzbekistan. These include indicator 1.1.1: Level of extreme poverty according to the international assessment of extreme poverty (\$1.25 per day in terms of purchasing power parity), and indicator 1.2.1: poverty level (by region and place of residence: urban vs. rural).

118. According to a presidential decree of 12 December 2018, with effect from 1 January 2019, pensions are paid in full to pensioners remaining in employment and are calculated on the basis of ten times the minimum wage. Since 1 March 2019, mothers of children with disabilities since birth receive a social benefit that is paid until the children reach retirement age, in cases where they do not complete the necessary period of pensionable service. Measures to reduce to 12 per cent contributions to the universal social fund and to abolish mandatory contributions to State special-purpose funds, levied on the turnover (revenue) of legal entities, have created conditions enabling businesses to accumulate additional funds.

119. A system has been set in place with a view to raising living standards and increasing government support for socially vulnerable citizens. The following forms of social assistance are provided: first, pensions and benefits for old age and disability; second, benefits on the loss of a breadwinner; on temporary incapacity to work (for government-funded organizations); on loss of employment; and in the event of injury at work (for government-funded organizations); third, lump-sum maternity payments; fourth, benefits paid to low-income mothers for child-care up to the age of two years and to low-income families with children under the age of 14; fifth, the provision of material assistance to low-income families, the monthly provision, free of charge, of a range of basic food products and toiletries to elderly persons and persons with disabilities living alone and in need of nursing care and the provision of cash grants for the payment of utilities to certain categories of socially vulnerable population groups (combat and home-front veterans of the 1941–1945 war, persons with categories 1 and 2 disabilities, elderly persons and persons with disabilities living alone and in need of nursing care, and others); sixth, exemption from parental payment for children from low-income families attending State childcare facilities and the issuance of textbooks free of charge to children from low-income families in secondary educational institutions (schools); and, seventh, lump-sum material assistance for victims of human-caused and natural emergencies, in the form of cash and commodities, the provision of prescription drugs free of charge to persons in designated beneficiary categories undergoing outpatient treatment and the exemption from payment for food for persons in designated beneficiary categories undergoing hospital treatment and for patients suffering from illnesses included on lists approved by government decisions.

120. Thanks to the social and economic reform process, the proportion of low-income members of the population has steadily declined: by 13.3 per cent in 2014; by 12.8 per cent in 2015; by 12.3 per cent in 2016; and by 11.9 per cent in 2017.

Article 10

121. By a presidential order of 27 June 2018, an outline plan was approved for measures to strengthen the institution of the family, aimed at upgrading the country's law in the sphere of family and marital relations, providing comprehensive support for families, mothers and children, enhancing the well-being of families and setting in place an effective system for the provision of effective guidance and practical assistance to families in raising their children.

122. Over the period 2016–2018, additional legislative measures have been adopted relating to the protection of the institution of the family. Currently, according to the Family Code (art. 99), the amount of maintenance paid for every child is no less than 75 per cent of the minimum wage, and failure to make maintenance payments for minor children or persons lacking capacity to work for more than two months after the imposition of an administrative penalty for the same offence incurs criminal liability. Criminal liability has been established for the unlawful gathering or dissemination of information about persons' private lives which constitutes their personal or family secrets, without their consent, if an administrative penalty has already been handed for the same acts (Criminal Code, art. 1411), and also for the manufacture or import into the territory of Uzbekistan, for the purpose of their dissemination, advertisement or demonstration, of products that promote a cult of violence or cruelty and for the dissemination, advertisement or demonstration of such products, when such acts are committed after the imposition of an administrative penalty for the same acts (Criminal Code, art. 1301). Amendments have been made to the Family Code, to establish an equal marriageable age of marriage for women and men.

123. By a presidential order of 11 February 2019, the wages of employees of the Mehribonlik homes (Benevolence orphanages) have been increased by a factor of 1.5, with effect from 1 March 2019; since 1 October 2019, the pay scales of employees with higher education at Mehribonlik homes have been brought into line with the pay scales of employees at general education schools; since 1 March 2019, the allowances paid for children fostered by families have been increased by a factor of 1.33 and now amount to 820,000 sum; with effect from 1 October 2019, officials and educators at State specialized educational establishments for children with physical or mental developmental challenges will be paid monthly bonuses of at least 75 per cent of their wages; employees of the tutorship and guardianship agencies are compensated for their travel expenses to an amount of 170,000 sum, and other benefits.

124. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 22 April 2019, children left without parental care receive social services of all types regardless of their place of residence and citizenship; they may directly petition the public authorities, and their applications receive mandatory attention and may not be shelved without consideration on the grounds that the children submitting them have not reached the age of full legal capacity. If there is no arrangement between the parents on the payment of child support for children under the age of 18 or in the event of wilful failure to make such child support payments, and also in cases where neither parent has brought an action in the courts for the payment of child support, children who have reached the age of 14 have the right to file claims for the recovery of payment of their support from either the father or the mother and, in cases where the parents are separated, concurrently from each parent to the amount established by law. Children have the right to express their views in family decision-making on any matter affecting their interests and to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings. In such cases, the authorities (or individuals) responsible for taking decisions to settle issues affecting the interests of children should give due consideration to the views of children capable of reasonable and independent thinking, irrespective of their age, and should take their decisions on the basis of the children's best interests.

125. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 17, in conformity with article 1251 of the Criminal Code, criminal liability is incurred for engaging in de facto marital relations with a person who has not reached the marriageable age, if an administrative penalty has already been handed down for the same offence, and by parents or persons acting in loco parentis, for arranging the marriage of a person who is not of marriageable age, if an administrative penalty has already been handed down for the

same offence (Criminal Code, art. 1251, para. 3); and for performing a religious ceremony to conclude marriage with a person who has not attained the marriageable age, if an administrative penalty has already been handed down for the same offence (Criminal Code, art. 1251, para. 5). In 2017, 10 convictions were handed down under article 1251 of the Criminal Code. With the aim of preventing early marriages and promoting a healthy lifestyle among members of the population, the procuratorial authorities conducted more than 22,523 outreach events, and prevented more than 2,499 early marriages; and administrative proceedings have been brought against 136 persons in response to 66 identified cases of early marriage.

126. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 20, measures have been taken to strengthen criminal liability for violence against, and the ill-treatment of, children, including the amendment of the Criminal Code in 2017, with new versions of article 103, on driving or attempting to drive a person to suicide by means of threats, cruel treatment or systematic violation of that person's honour and dignity; of article 1031, on incitement to suicide; and of article 110, on systematic battery or other acts of the nature of torture, if they do not have the effects provided for in articles 104 and 105 of the Criminal Code, with the stiffening of penalties for the same acts committed against, first, minors; second, women known by the perpetrators to be pregnant; and, third, persons known by the perpetrators to be in a state of helplessness. In 2014, 81 convictions were handed down against 73 persons under article 103 of the Criminal Code; in 2015 – 65 convictions against 63 persons; in 2016 – 45 convictions against 42 persons; in 2017 – 35 convictions against 31 persons; and in 2018 – 32 convictions against 30 persons. In 2014, 90 convictions were handed down against 67 persons under article 110 of the Criminal Code; in 2015 – 40 convictions against 34 persons; in 2016 – 65 convictions against 52 persons; in 2017 – 35 convictions against 33 persons; and in 2018 – 36 convictions against 35 persons.

127. Article 235 of the Criminal Code (on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) has been brought into conformity with article 1 of the Convention against Torture. Acts committed against an elderly person or a person in a helpless state, a minor or a woman known by the perpetrator to be pregnant are punishable by deprivation of liberty for periods of between five and seven years, with forfeiture of a specified right.

128. In order to prevent violence against children in the Mehribonlik homes and other children's institutions, posts for psychologists have been introduced in all such establishments. In addition, it is planned by 1 June 2019 to adopt a programme of measures for the period 2023–2019 to deinstitutionalize the Mehribonlik homes and a road map has been approved for action to strengthen the social protection of orphans and children deprived of parental care. With effect from 1 June 2019, all institutions are to be equipped with video surveillance cameras; the tutorship and guardianship authorities will be exempted from paying State duties and fees when applying to the respective authorities, including the courts, for the placement in homes of orphans and children without parental care; and a road map, approved by presidential decree of 29 April 2019, has been drawn up for the implementation of the outline plan for the development over the period until 2030 of the Uzbek national education system and to ensure the conduct in educational establishments of programmes for the prevention of violence among students.

Article 11

129. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 21, the necessary conditions are being set in place in Uzbekistan to ensure the balanced development of agriculture, food security, the enhanced management of agriculture and water resources and improved land reclamation programmes. By a presidential decree of 4 August 2017, measures have been taken to improve the functioning of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Management and, on 17 April 2018, a presidential decree was adopted on measures to upgrade the system of agricultural and water resource governance and an order was passed by the Cabinet of Ministers on 21 November 2018 setting out the tasks of an agency for the implementation of projects in the agribusiness and food sectors. By a presidential decree of 17 April 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture was specifically

mandated to introduce a cluster system for agribusiness and, to that end, a research and production centre for agriculture and the food industry has been set up under the authority of the Ministry.

130. The needs of the various population groups for healthy nutrition are met by ensuring a healthy diet for pregnant and lactating women, and also for children up to the age of 3, by expanding the domestic production of foodstuffs and by upgrading the food quality control system. The government commission on the organization and monitoring of healthy nutrition was set up by a Cabinet of Ministers order of 25 April 2015 and, by an order of 29 August 2015, an outline plan for the period 2015–2020 and a package of measures were approved for the promotion of healthy nutrition in Uzbekistan, including the creation of a food science centre at the Tashkent Medical Academy.

131. On 18 February 2016, the holding company O'zbekoziqovqatxolding was created by presidential decree to develop modern technologies for the processing of fruit, vegetables, milk, meat and other food commodities. On 23 July 2017, a presidential order was adopted on urgent measures to ensure the provision to the population of the principal food staples, on 16 January 2018, a presidential decree was passed on further measures to ensure the country's food security and, on 12 July 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers passed an order ratifying the general technical regulations on food safety, with regard in particular to its labelling. The presidential decree of 16 January 2018 on further measures to ensure the country's food security abolished customs duty for certain types of food products, while a Cabinet of Ministers order of 13 September 2018 introduced allowances for low-income families to help them meet the costs of purchasing flour and bread, which came into effect from 1 October 2018 and amount to 10 per cent of the minimum wage.

132. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 22, in Uzbekistan, close attention is paid to the upholding of citizens' rights to housing, which are governed by the Housing Code and other statutory instruments. Over recent years, priority measures have been undertaken to address the housing needs of socially vulnerable categories of the population, including women, young people, orphans and children deprived of parental care and others.

133. A Cabinet of Ministers order of 12 September 2017 was adopted to give effect to the right of young families to obtain homes in apartment buildings of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, through the provision by commercial banks of mortgages on easy terms, with repayment periods of 20 years, including a five-year grace period with no repayments and no initial deposit, and an interest rate equivalent to a 50-per-cent refinancing rate.

134. In 2018, in fulfilment of a presidential order of 18 January 2018 on measures for the effective implementation of targeted housing programmes, 28,583 affordable new homes were built in rural areas of the country, including 16,246 for families in need of better housing and 658 for young families. In addition, following visits by the President to the different regions, the construction has been launched of an additional 5,276 affordable housing units for families in need of better housing, including 1,170 new homes for certain categories of citizens. In 2016, a total of 15,000 affordable housing units were built.

135. By a presidential decree of 2 February 2018 on radical measures to upgrade work in support of women and to strengthen the institution of the family, targeted local-level programmes were approved for the construction of affordable decent housing for women living in precarious circumstances, including women with disabilities and low-income mothers raising children in single-parent families.

136. Pursuant to a presidential order of 18 July 2018, those participating in a building project for affordable housing, developed on the basis of updated model projects in rural areas, are required to make an initial down payment of 10 per cent, for two-room and three-room apartments in two, three, four and five-storey apartment buildings and for two and three-room affordable one-storey houses, built on 0.02 hectare plots, and over the period from 1 July 2018 to 1 January 2020 will be accorded 20-year mortgages with three-year grace periods at an annual interest rate of 7 per cent for the first five years and at the Central Bank refinancing rate for subsequent years.

137. By a presidential order of 11 February 2019 on additional measures to strengthen the social protection of orphans and children left without parental care, provision is made for commercial banks to grant orphans and children left without parental care, including individuals in that category between the ages of 18 and 23, mortgages on easy terms to buy homes in apartment buildings under the conditions stipulated for young families, and also to provide business start-up loans. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 22 April 2019, children left without parental care before the age of 18 have the right to future residence in the housing where they previously lived with their guardian or in a Mehribonlik home.

138. Under the State programme for affordable housing for the period 2017–2021, 1,136 multi-storey buildings were constructed in 2016, including more than 100 homes in rural areas, 24,000 thousand homes were built in rural areas in 2017 and 187 in cities, and the following essential utilities were provided: 415 km of water-supply lines; 320 km of gas pipelines; 300 km of electricity cable; and drinking water supplied to more than 350,000 people. In 2018, more than 21,500 families moved into affordable housing and, in 2019, it is planned to provide affordable housing on easy-term mortgages to 1,600 women living in difficult circumstances.

139. Currently, to provide citizens in rural areas with housing, 15,010 apartment buildings are being erected in rural areas and 15,635 in towns and cities, 355 of which are designated for citizens in socially vulnerable categories.

140. As part of the implementation of the new housing policy, provision is made under a presidential decree of 10 January 2019 for special measures to support investments in housing and utilities, including housing accessible to low and middle-income families. On 28 January 2019, an order was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers laying down the procedure for the provision of land and exercise of the right to the inheritance of individual plots, which are passed on for the recipient's lifetime for the construction of private housing. Under that procedure, only the families of deceased military personnel and citizens with ownership of the land who have ceded their dwellings in the country's private or State housing stock to district or municipal hokimiyats may put parcels of land up for sale for designated purposes on online auctions or without auction.

141. Since 1 April 2019, individuals and legal entities have been entitled to gain private ownership of the landholdings on which buildings and infrastructure belonging to them stand and, since 1 June 2019, work has been in progress on the drafting of a presidential order ratifying basic forecast parameters for comprehensive State housing construction programmes for the period 2020–2025 and a road map to regulate the process of urbanization in Uzbekistan and to upgrade the Uzbek housing and land codes.

142. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 25, to protect environmental rights, ensure a high level of protection of the environment and provide public water-supply and sanitation services, the Health and Epidemiological Welfare of the Population Act was adopted on 26 August 2015, laying out sanitary rules and regulations and hygiene standards that are fully aligned with the requirements of international medical and sanitary regulations. By a presidential decree of 21 April 2017, the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection was established, to monitor compliance with the law on the use of land, the subsoil, water resources, the forests and natural protected areas and protection of the ecological system. In addition, inspectorates were set up, with branches in the various regions, to oversee the collection, recycling and management of waste and to monitor the protection and use of biodiversity and natural protected areas, and an ecological, environmental and waste-management fund was established.

143. By a presidential order of 20 April 2017, a programme of measures was approved for the comprehensive development and upgrading of drinking water supply and sanitation over the period 2017–2021, aimed at improving access to safe drinking water, in particular in rural areas, and the laying of new and refurbishment of existing water mains, sewerage systems and water-supply networks. In order further to improve the quality of water and sanitation services, a presidential order was passed on 30 November 2018 on additional measures for the development of the drinking water-supply and sanitation system in

Uzbekistan. Under the State programme for affordable housing construction in rural areas, 529.9 km of drinking-water lines were laid in 2017 and 476.3 km in 2018.

Article 12

144. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 23, in accordance with a presidential decree of 7 December 2018 on comprehensive measures for the radical upgrading of the health-care system in Uzbekistan, measures to improve the quality of health services and protection of patients' rights have been identified as critical areas in the reform of the Uzbek health-care system. The decree focuses on the development of private health care, public-private partnerships and medical tourism, the creation of an enabling environment to attract investment in health care, the further development of the pharmaceutical industry and the mainstreaming of the e-health system.

145. By a presidential order of 1 April 2017, measures have been taken to develop the private health sector programme and a programme of incentives has been approved for such facilities. Pursuant to a presidential order of 21 April 2018, measures have been taken to improve the system of emergency medical care, which is provided free of charge in all health establishments, regardless of their form of ownership, and it is forbidden to withhold emergency assistance from persons living in precarious circumstances. The order also approved a programme of measures to strengthen logistic support for the National Research Centre for Emergency Medicine and its regional branches. It is also planned to adopt immediately applicable laws on the nutrition of infants and young children and on exercise of the medical profession and compulsory liability insurance for medical practitioners. In addition, work is under way on the Uzbek Health Code and on orders to be issued by the Cabinet of Ministers on guaranteed levels of free medical assistance, funded from the State budget.

146. In order to ensure the accessibility and free circulation of pharmaceuticals, an agency has been set up under the Ministry of Health with responsibility for the development of the pharmaceutical industry and free economic zones have been established, on the territories of which five projects have been launched to a total amount of \$41.7 million, and the necessary measures implemented to create a network of community pharmacies. Thus, the establishment of 75 community pharmacies has been launched in Surxondaryo province, under public-private partnership arrangements. By a presidential order of 14 February 2018, a road map has been approved for the creation of conditions propitious to the accelerated development of the pharmaceutical industry, with a programme of measures to promote the cultivation of medicinal plants in Uzbekistan, to develop a network of community pharmacies and an online system for the location of the nearest such pharmacies and the ordering of medicines in real time, and to set up a public commission to examine and overcome problems experienced by the population in obtaining medication.

147. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 7 December 2018, an outline plan has been approved for development of the health-care system in Uzbekistan over the period 2019–2025, aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO). Provision has also been made for the phased introduction in Uzbekistan, beginning on 1 January 2021, of compulsory health insurance and for the drafting of a bill on compulsory medical insurance, setting out the underlying legal principles, working arrangements and successive phases for the introduction of such a system. Pursuant to a presidential order of 5 January 2019, the office has been created of Deputy Minister of Health with responsibility for the promotion of best foreign practices and the WHO recommendations on health care. By a presidential order of 16 April 2019, regulations have been approved on public-private partnerships in the health sector and, by a presidential order of 19 April 2019, a national programme approved for the period 2019–2021 to improve endocrinological care for the population, with a particular focus on health care for patients with diabetes.

148. There has been an increase in State budget outlays on health: budget allocations in 2018 are 3.2 times higher than those in 2012 and 1.4 times higher than those in 2017,

representing 2.9 per cent of GDP and 14.9 per cent of total budget expenditure; by 2025, these will rise to 4.1 per cent of GDP. In the 2019 budget, a total of 12.1 trillion sum was allocated to health. In 2018, a total of 111.9 billion sum was spent on primary health care, medicines and health-care products and, in 2019, 130.9 billion sum, representing average per capita expenditure across the country of 3,970 sum. In 2018, expenditure on medicines in multidisciplinary facilities at district and urban levels amounted to 153.3 billion sum, compared to 181.3 billion sum in 2019, on food – 43.7 billion sum (87.1 billion sum in 2019), and on the provision of medical supplies to persons in the designated beneficiary categories for outpatient treatment – 388.3 billion sum.

149. In accordance with the Psychiatric Care Act, a presidential order of 16 March 2018 was adopted to ensure round-the-clock emergency assistance for persons at risk of suicide; with effect from 1 May 2018, private medical organizations were authorized to diagnose specific mental health services; since 1 October 2018, a consolidated register of persons under medical observation has been kept; since 1 April 2018, the internal affairs agencies have notified the psychiatric services of suicide risk cases and a programme of priority measures has been approved for further improvement of the system for the provision of psychiatric care for the population, for the provision of the necessary equipment to psychiatric institutions; and for the construction and renovation of psychiatric institutions over the period 2018–2020. By a presidential order of 13 February 2019, an outline plan has been approved for the development over the period 2019–2025 of a psychiatric health-care service for the population in Uzbekistan, together with a package of measures for its implementation, whose prime objective is to prevent the stigmatization of, and discrimination against, people on the basis of mental disorders and to uphold the right of such persons to receive free legal aid.

150. By a presidential order of 18 December 2018 on measures to prevent non-communicable diseases, to support healthy lifestyles and to promote physical activity, an outline plan was approved for the prevention of non-communicable diseases, support for healthy lifestyles and the promotion of physical activity over the period 2019–2022, along with a corresponding programme of action for the same period.

151. On 13 January 2019, a presidential order was adopted on measures to improve the system for the provision of specialized assistance for the treatment of tuberculosis and lung disease, which employs, as the primary lever for the prevention of tuberculosis among children, systematic vaccination campaigns, which have achieved a coverage rate of 98–99 per cent of all children. Every year, to control tuberculosis in areas with outbreaks of infection, the persons constituting the source of infection are hospitalized, while 95–97 per cent of children from the area are placed in children's tuberculosis sanatoriums, where they remain while chemoprophylaxis campaigns are carried out. Uzbekistan has 364 photofluorographic units for the early detection of tuberculosis, including 33 that are mobile and 330 fixed, and a set of measures has been approved for the period 2013–2021 to prevent the spread of tuberculosis and non-specific lung diseases.

152. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 24, considerable attention is paid to boosting the number of children that are exclusively breastfed during the first six months of life. Thus, over the period from 2014 to 2017, the proportion of such children among all newborn children has risen to 98.7–98.8 per cent and classes are included in motherhood courses on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for children up to six months. In addition, World Breastfeeding Week is observed every year from 1 to 7 August.

153. Vaccination and revaccination programmes are conducted for the population in accordance with a countrywide schedule of preventive vaccinations against 12 controllable infections. Every year, as many as 700,000 children (more than 98–99 per cent) are covered by the vaccination programme. Furthermore, every year 230,000 people receive preventive inoculations against tetanus in emergency cases, some 600,000 are vaccinated against rabies, more than 500,000 against influenza and 400,000 against viral hepatitis A. A total of 673,330 children have been vaccinated against measles, representing a coverage of 99.8 per cent. By a Ministry of Health order of 2 September 2015, every year preventive medical examinations are conducted by specialist physicians in schools. Thus, between 2014 and 2017, between 97.4 and 99.0 per cent of all schoolchildren underwent such examinations

and 99.5 per cent of children with identified diseases were assigned for treatment in outpatient and inpatient facilities at their places of residence.

154. The reforms carried out in the health sector over the period 1991–2017 have led to a 20-per-cent drop in the overall mortality rate, while maternal and infant mortality have declined by a factor of 3.1. Since 1995, life expectancy has risen by 4.6 years to 73.7. According to figures from the State Statistical Committee, the maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births declined from 19.1 in 2014 to 17.7 in 2017. The infant mortality rate in Uzbekistan fell from 10.8 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 9.8 live births in 2018, and the mortality rate for children under 5 years of age from 13.9 per 1,000 in 2014 to 11.3 per 1,000 in 2018.

155. Core health indicators have shown a downward trend and there have been no recorded cases of particularly dangerous infections (plague, cholera), or of polio, diphtheria, neonatal tetanus, measles and rubella, and morbidity rates have declined for a number of infectious diseases, including meningococcal disease – by 28 per cent, mumps – by 27 per cent, and viral hepatitis A – by 13 per cent. The effectiveness of tuberculosis treatment has risen to over 85 per cent, thanks to the use of new technologies for treatment, in line with the expansion of outpatient treatment, the extensive use of surgical approaches to treatment, and also the approval of new tuberculosis drugs.

156. By a presidential order of 25 January 2018, a State programme for 2018 was approved on measures to counter the spread of HIV infection in Uzbekistan and a comparable programme was adopted in 2019. In total, more than 50,435 consultations on HIV infection have been conducted among vulnerable groups and more than 3.2 million pre and post HIV test counselling sessions have been held with the general population, with the result that more than 5.2 million people have now attended awareness-raising measures on the prevention of HIV infection. Where the proportion of reported cases of HIV infection is concerned, as at 1 January 2019, the number of people living with HIV stands at 40,376 (0.12 per cent).

157. The Reproductive Health Act of 11 March 2019 regulates medical intervention procedures during pregnancy, which may only be conducted with the consent of both spouses. Refusal of such interventions, with an indication of the possible implications of such refusal, is noted in the relevant medical records. Women may not be forced into pregnancy, to undergo abortion or to use contraception. The Act contains provisions on systems to protect the reproductive rights of men, on the protection of minors, the use of contraception, medically assisted procreation, rules of abortion and other matters. On 2 July 2018, an Act was adopted restricting the smoking of shisha pipes and electronic cigarettes in public places and setting out tobacco control measures to limit the smoking of such pipes and cigarettes and to prohibit their advertisement and popularization.

Articles 13 and 14

158. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 26, far-reaching reforms have been carried out in Uzbekistan to improve government administration of the education sector. In 2017, presidential enactments were adopted with a view to upgrading the performance of specialized secondary and vocational educational institutions, with the adoption of a programme of measures to improve their effectiveness, and for the further development of higher education, with the adoption of a programme and a package of measures for the development of the higher education system over the period 2017–2021.

159. A number of presidential enactments have been adopted with a view to upgrading the operation of the public testing centre under the Cabinet of Ministers, and the work of the government inspectorate for supervision of the quality of education. Major improvements have been made to the preschool education system, in line with a road map for the upgrading of the system and its local-level establishments; a Ministry of Preschool Education has been established; since 1 January 2018, new nutritional standards have been followed for children's meals in nursery schools; and steps have been taken to develop non-

governmental educational facilities, with their exemption until 1 January 2021 from all forms of taxation and compulsory contributions to public funds.

160. The total number of preschool educational establishments stood at 5,150 in 2014; 5,126 in 2015; 5,138 in 2016; and 4,288 in 2017. The number of children attending preschools stood at 732,852 in 2017 (representing an increase of 41,877 over 2018), 52.2 per cent of them boys and 47.8 per cent girls; by ages, the numbers attending preschools were as follows: up to the age of 2 – 27,528; aged 3 – 145,349; aged 4 – 161,464; aged 5 – 168,930; aged 6 – 171,677; and aged 7 – 57,904.

161. In 2018 and 2019, a fund was created to support reforms in public education and an office was created within the Ministry of Education for the monitoring of education quality, social protection and support for children. On 1 January 2019, a system was introduced for rating the performance of educational institutions and, on 1 March 2019, a process initiated whereby children are enrolled in State educational institutions through the Public Services Centre or via the consolidated portal of interactive public services. By a presidential order of 3 May 2019, a department was established in the Ministry of Education for work with gifted children and arrangements made for schoolchildren who win awards in the International Science Olympiads to be admitted to university without further testing or exams.

162. At the beginning of the 2018/19 school year, there were 9,774 general educational establishments in Uzbekistan, of which 6,044 (62 per cent) were in rural areas and 3,730 (38 per cent) in towns and cities, an increase of 56 (0.6 per cent) over the previous school year. By language, there were 8,853 schools using Uzbek as the medium of instruction (4,981,511 pupils); 862 using Russian (581,881 pupils); 366 using Karakalpak (115,656 pupils); 244 using Tajik (69,385 pupils); 370 using Kazakh (54,926 pupils); 42 using Kyrgyz (7,859 pupils); and 43 using Turkmen (10,643 pupils). The following numbers of children received education in their mother tongue: in the 2014/15 school year – 3,877,592; in 2015/16 – 3,987,443; in 2016/17 – 4,116,420; in 2017/18 – 4,488,733; and in 2018/19 – 4,981,694.¹³

163. As at 1 November 2018, there were 1,537 special secondary and vocational training institutions in Uzbekistan, including 123 academic high schools, 1,415 colleges and universities, attended by over 360,200 students, 159,400 of whom were girls. Of these students, 22.1 per cent are on government grants and 77.9 per cent are fee-paying. In total, there are 3,243 foreign nationals and stateless persons studying at institutions of higher education in Uzbekistan.

164. On 29 April 2019, by presidential decree, an outline plan was approved for the development over the period up to 2030 of the national education system in Uzbekistan, which is aimed at achieving the placement of Uzbekistan among the world's top 30 countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rating.

Article 15

165. On 28 November 2018, by a presidential order, an outline plan was approved for the further development of the folk culture of Uzbekistan, together with a road map for its implementation over the period 2020–2019 and a programme of measures to roll out the plan in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston and Tashkent. Cultural centres have been established in all regions, delivering cultural services in line with the programme of measures for the further development and upgrading of the performance of cultural centres over the period 2020–2019. Pursuant to the order, it is planned to draft a culture bill by 1 June 2019, enshrining the rights and freedoms of citizens in the domain of culture. On 3 May 2019, a presidential order was adopted to enhance the effectiveness of cultural and awareness-raising work, which specified the mandate of the National Council for Spiritual Enlightenment and approved a programme of measures aimed at improving the performance of local-level councils with responsibility for these and other issues.

¹³ Further details may be found in the country's tenth, eleventh and twelfth national reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

166. The Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan is the State administrative authority in the domain of culture, with responsibility for 37 theatres and 96 State museums and their branches, including 3 heritage sites and 35 major museums. There are three theatres performing in the Karakalpak language and seven in Russian, along with other folk theatres for the country's multi-ethnic population. A total of 572 billion sum has been allocated for the construction, renovation, refurbishment and equipping of the State museums.

167. Pursuant to a presidential order of 31 May 2017 on measures for the further development and improvement of the cultural and artistic sector, and a Cabinet of Ministers order of 5 January 2018, a programme of activities is being unrolled over the period 2018–2022 for the logistic strengthening of State theatres and the development of their activities. Under 28 separate projects forming part of the programme, more than 189.2 billion sum has been allocated for the renovation, construction, refurbishment, furnishing and fitting out of the State theatre buildings.

168. During Museum Week, held every year from 2 to 8 September, members of the public may visit museums and enjoy their exhibitions free of charge. With a view to familiarizing young people with the country's cultural and historical heritage preserved in the country's museum collections, every Tuesday and Friday, children and teenagers up to the age of 18 and their accompanying parents may also visit museums free of charge.

169. With regard to implementation of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 27, currently, representatives of more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups living in Uzbekistan are able, through 137 ethnic cultural centres and 35 friendship associations, to carry out activities designed to promote the principles of inter-ethnic harmony, to foster a culture of camaraderie among peoples, and to preserve and develop the traditions, language and culture of all nations and nationalities.

170. A leading role in the preservation and full development of the history, culture, spiritual values, traditions and customs of all nations, nationalities and ethnic diasporas in Uzbekistan is played by the Cabinet of Ministers committee for international relations and friendship ties with foreign countries, established by presidential decree of 19 May 2017.

171. The national television and radio corporation of Uzbekistan broadcasts programmes in 12 languages. More than 20 television and radio programmes go out on air in the languages of the nationalities and ethnic groups living in the country, including Uzbek, Karakalpak, Tajik, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Korean, Tatar, Uighur and others. A comprehensive system of cultural institutions operates in the Republic of Qoraqalpog'iston, employing the Karakalpak language, and some 40 newspapers and 7 magazines are published in Karakalpak. A large variety of special programmes on such topics as the theatre, the rights of citizens to relaxation and leisure and cultural development are aired on television.

172. Over the period 2015–2018, new versions were adopted of the Physical Culture and Sport Act, more than 15 presidential decrees and orders and 44 orders of the Cabinet of Ministers were passed on the development of physical culture and sport in Uzbekistan and the State University of Physical Culture and Sport was established, together with regional centres for physical culture and sport. The university also operates a correspondence department and has another campus in the city of Nukus.

173. By a presidential order of 3 June 2017, a programme was approved for measures to upgrade physical culture and sport in Uzbekistan. Since 2018, to encourage the broadest possible engagement in sporting activities by the population, a system of special weeks has been introduced, such as Schools and Colleges Week, Women's Week, Mahallas Week and Youth Week, and more than 11,000 sport events have been held, with the participation of 2.4 million young people. Facilities have been provided for young people outside organized clubs and institutions to engage in sport, reaching a total of 872,236 youngsters.

174. Pursuant to a Cabinet of Ministers order of 14 August 2018, special fee concessions are granted to parents for their children's attendance at sports schools for Olympic trainees. By a decision of 1 February 2019, low-income families are granted a 50-per-cent reduction in the fees for the use of public sports facilities and a 70-per-cent reduction if they have two

or more children living in the same household. It is also planned to introduce certain benefits for persons with disabilities.

175. On 13 February 2019, by an order of the Cabinet of Ministers, an outline plan was approved for the development over the period 2023–2019 of physical culture and mass sport in Uzbekistan, together with a programme of measures for its implementation, aimed at the inclusion of all segments of the population, in particular young people, in physical culture and sport, the strengthening of the equipment and infrastructure of sports facilities, the provision of support for athletes and players and for training staff, for the development of sports medicine, and other objectives.

176. In 2018, 51,306 sports facilities were used by a total of 2,061,300 persons, including 1,020,700 in rural areas, and the numbers of people attending fitness classes rose to 6,465,100, including 5,179,500 in general education institutions, 1,062,500 in vocational colleges, 139,400 in universities, and 83,600 in academies. Fitness classes were attended by 3,310,500 girls and 3,154,500 boys, and 802,100 persons joined fitness clubs. The number of such groups and clubs has grown to 120,700, attended by 2,624,300 persons, 1,031,900 of them women.

177. In recent years, major steps have been taken to promote the development of tourism in the country. By a presidential order of 6 February 2018 on measures to promote inbound tourism, since 1 March 2018, a system of short-term entry visas has been in operation for foreign nationals for familiarization tours of up to 72 hours, a road map has been adopted for measure to boost tourism arrivals to Uzbekistan and a call centre has been set up by the State Tourism Committee for the assistance of tourists. A presidential order of 7 February 2018 was adopted to ratify a plan of practical measures for the promotion of domestic tourism and measures have been adopted to organize tours of various kinds to the different regions of the country. Efforts are being made to popularize domestic tourism as widely as possible over the media and a presidential decree was adopted on 5 January 2019, ratifying an outline plan for the development of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan over the period 2019–2025, with a schedule for its implementation in 2019, and publishing a list of the countries whose nationals may enter the country visa-free for a period of 30 days, effective from 1 February 2019. A presidential order was adopted on 5 January 2019 approving targets for hotel construction in all the regions of Uzbekistan, for the period 2021–2019, and, among other provisions, listing cultural facilities and institutions in which state-of-the-art information technology is to be installed.

178. As at 1 March 2019, visa-free travel for up to 30 days has been introduced for nationals of 45 foreign countries, and for those of 76 others, an online electronic visa system has been established. Nationals of 109 countries have been accorded the right to obtain a residence permit subject to the acquisition of property in Uzbekistan. Tourism flows to Uzbekistan during the reporting period increased by 42 per cent, totalling 1.38 million, and 40 new hotels were brought into operation, with capacity for 2,000 guests.