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Third periodic report submitted by Benin under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2010*

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Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Benin, in line with its tradition of promoting human rights, spares no effort to comply with its international commitments. Following its initial report and its second periodic report submitted in 2002 and 2008 respectively, Benin hereby submits to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights its third combined report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which it ratified in March 1992.

2. This report covers the period from 2008 to 2017. It has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of articles 16 (1) and 17 (1), (2) and (3) of the Covenant and the harmonized guidelines on the preparation of reports to the treaty bodies contained in document HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6 of 3 June 2009.

3. The report was prepared by means of an inclusive national consultation process, during which State structures and civil society stakeholders, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), contributed to an information-gathering process coordinated by the Ministry of Human Rights. The procedure comprised:

- An assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of the previous review; sectoral consultations at the ministerial level to identify new developments;
- Recruitment of a consultant to gather data and prepare a preliminary draft report.

4. The document was examined by a committee of experts before being endorsed by the National Committee to Monitor the Implementation of International Human Rights Instruments together with the members of the National Human Rights Advisory Council.

5. The report presents developments related to the legal and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights, and reviews progress made, best practices, challenges and initiatives that could improve the human rights situation on the ground.

Part I: General information

6. During the period covered by the report, a number of legislative and practical measures were adopted, and progress was made in guaranteeing respect for the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

Legislative measures

- Introduction in the National Assembly in March 2017 of a bill amending the Constitution of 11 December 1990;
- Act No. 2016-16 of 4 October 2016 amending and supplementing Act No. 2008-07 of 28 February 2011 on the Code of Civil, Commercial, Social, Administrative and Accounting Procedure of the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2016-15 of 4 October 2016 amending and supplementing Act No. 2001-37 of 10 June 2002 on the organization of the judiciary in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2015-08 of 8 December 2015 on the Children's Code of the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2014-14 of 9 July 2014 on electronic communications and postal services in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2014-22 of 30 September 2014 on digital broadcasting in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2013-01 of 14 August 2013 on the Code concerning Private and State-owned Land in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2012-15 of 18 March 2013 on the Code of Criminal Procedure;

- Act No. 2011-26 of 9 January 2012 on the prevention and punishment of violence against women in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2011-20 of 12 October 2011 on combating corruption and other related offences in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2010-44 of 24 November 2010 on water management in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2010-10 of 22 March 2010 amending and supplementing the provisions of articles 93 and 146 of Act No. 98-019 of 21 March 2003 on the Social Security Code;
- Act No. 2009-09 of 22 May 2009 on the protection of personal data in the Republic of Benin;
- Act No. 2008-07 of 28 February 2011 on the Code of Civil, Commercial, Social, Administrative and Accounting Procedure;
- Act No. 2007-21 of 16 October 2007 on the protection of consumers in the Republic of Benin;
- Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 5 July 2012;
- Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 5 July 2012;
- Act No. 2016-24 of 11 October 2016 on the legal framework for public-private partnerships in the Republic of Benin.

Other measures

- Governance, democracy and the rule of law were strengthened through the organization in March 2016 of presidential elections in line with the principle of alternation of power.
- A legal institution known as the National Anti-Corruption Authority was established in 2013, pursuant to Act No. 2011-20 of 12 October 2011 on combating corruption and other related offences in the Republic of Benin.
- A permanent procedure for gathering household data was established through the Integrated Modular Survey on Household Living Conditions. It is possible, through the baseline and follow-up surveys, to obtain annual indicators on different types of poverty in Benin and to monitor the mobility of impoverished households. These indicators are available at the national, departmental and communal level.
- The Table of Social Indicators was established.
- Beninese evaluation days are held on a regular basis. Launched in 2010, the purpose of the biennial evaluation days is to promote self-assessment by all persons involved in public governance. The fourth Beninese evaluation day, held on 5 September 2016, focused on the theme: “Using the evaluation results to change people’s living conditions”.
- According to the results of the third General Population and Housing Census held in 2013, there were at that time 10,008,749 residents of both genders, including 5,120,929 females, that is to say 51.2 per cent of the total population. Benin has a young population. It is estimated that persons under 20 years of age account for about 56.6 per cent of the population. Life expectancy at birth is 62.6 years for the population as a whole. The life expectancy of women (64.9 years) is higher than that of men (60.2 years). The potentially active population (15 to 64 age group) accounts for 50.9 per cent of the population. The proportion of the population living in urban areas was estimated in 2014 at 46.57 per cent.
- The capitals of the new departments were specified in 2016 and prefects were appointed on the basis of the criteria listed in article 8 of Act No. 97-028 of 15

January 1999 on the organization of territorial administration in the Republic of Benin.

- A number of studies were undertaken during the period under review, for instance on: poverty trends in Benin during the period from 2007 to 2015; household income inequality and polarization; and key sectors of the Beninese economy.
- The Government Programme of Action for the period 2016–2021 was adopted in January 2016. It consists of 45 flagship projects, 95 sectoral projects and 19 institutional reforms. The Programme aims not only to bring about economic and social reform in Benin but also to develop a more balanced democratic framework and to promote good governance.

7. According to the results of these studies, which were published on 30 August 2016, poverty at the national level increased from 33.3 per cent in 2007 to 40.1 per cent in 2015.

Part II: Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant

A. Article 1: Right of peoples to dispose freely of their natural wealth and resources

8. The decentralization process, which was launched during the organization of the communal and municipal elections of December 2002 and January 2003, proceeded with the renewal of communal and municipal councils in 2008 and 2015.

9. The State established the Support Fund for Communal Development in May 2008 as a mechanism for national financing and transfer of resources to the communes. It is run by the National Commission on Local Finance, which is a joint body comprising the State and the communes. The Support Fund receives allocations from both the national budget and development partners. The allocations fall into two categories: allocations for operational purposes and allocations for investment. The State's financial support for local development was boosted through the establishment of the Support Fund. The share of State allocations to communal budgets was quite limited prior to 2005, amounting to barely 10 per cent. Following the establishment of the Support Fund, the share of State allocations rose to 51.4 per cent of the communes' total revenue.

10. The share of communes and decentralized structures in total public expenditure is very low. The central administrative authorities continue to account for almost 94 per cent of the State's overall expenditure. Expenditure by the decentralized services of the sectoral ministries (assigned appropriations) accounts for only 1.7 per cent. Although communal expenditure increased by about 47 per cent between 2004 and 2009, it accounts for just over 5 per cent of total State expenditure, and 2.6 per cent of this amount is funded by transfers and subsidies from the central authorities. As operational expenditure accounts for the bulk of communal expenditure, the amount available for investment expenditure is limited.

11. With a view to supporting decentralization, the Government adopted a devolution policy that has enabled a number of sectoral ministries to introduce services at the departmental level that provide advisory support to the communes.

B. Article 2 and article 3: Non-discrimination and equal rights for men and women

12. The Constitutional Court was requested to assess the constitutionality of discriminatory provisions in the following two laws:

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Act No. 65-17 of 23 June 1965 promulgating the Nationality Code of the Republic of Benin, articles 8, 12 (2), 13 and 18 of which violate the principle of equality between men and women. According to the Constitutional Court, the articles in question “introduce, without justification, distinctions in the attribution or acquisition of Beninese nationality based either on birth in Benin, or on relationship by descent or marriage”. Accordingly, they are discriminatory (Constitutional Court Decision DCC 14-172 of 16 September 2014);

- The Criminal Code, articles 336 to 339 of which create preferential conditions for men in three areas: the Constitution; prosecution; and the penalty prescribed for the offence of adultery. The Constitutional Court therefore declared that these articles were incompatible with article 26 of the Constitution and articles 2 and 3 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Constitutional Court Decision DCC 09-081 of 30 July 2009).

C. Article 4

13. Nothing new to report.

D. Article 5

14. Nothing new to report.

Part III: Issues relating to the specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6 and 7)

A. Article 6: The right to work

General employment situation

15. The informal sector plays a predominant role in Benin in both urban and rural areas. In this context, most workers who are not employed in the informal sector in urban areas tend to be employed in agricultural activities in rural areas. Table 1 shows the distribution of the workforce in terms of occupational category, place of residence and gender. Most workers are self-employed, in both urban and rural areas and regardless of gender: 80 per cent of men and 70.8 per cent of women in rural areas; and 60.5 per cent of men and 73.3 per cent of women in urban areas.

16. These figures also show that the proportion of self-employed women is higher than that of men in urban areas, while the opposite is the case in rural areas. This reversal of the figures for self-employment in terms of gender reflects a key feature of the Beninese economy: the rural environment is dominated by agricultural activities that usually absorb more men than women, while the urban environment is dominated by commercial activities and services that usually absorb a larger proportion of women.

17. Table 1 shows that there are more employees in urban than in rural areas, and that more men are employees than women. Thus, 24.3 per cent of men working in urban areas are employees, compared with 8.7 per cent of women (in rural areas the figures are 5.1 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively).

Table 1
Distribution of the employed labour force by occupational category, place of residence and gender in 2010

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Employees	5.1	1.3	24.3	8.7
Employers	0.8	0.1	3.6	1.1
Self-employed workers	80.1	70.8	60.5	73.3
Apprentices/Home caregivers	14.0	27.7	11.6	16.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE), Integrated Modular Survey on Household Living Conditions (EMICoV), 2010.

18. Table 2 shows the distribution of the employed labour force by age and occupational category. It shows that most young people in the 15 to 24 age group are apprentices or home caregivers (85.5 per cent), while adults (in the 25 to 64 age group) are mostly self-employed (67.5 per cent).

Table 2
Distribution of the employed labour force by age and occupational category in Benin in 2010

<i>Age group</i>	<i>15 to 24 age group</i>	<i>25 to 64 age group</i>
Employees	3.1	7.3
Employers	0.0	0.8
Self-employed workers	11.5	67.5
Apprentices/Home caregivers	85.5	24.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: INSAE, EMICoV, 2010.

Table 3
Distribution of the employed labour force by growth pole and gender in 2010

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Agriculture	682 150	51.7	550 179	37.5	1 232 329	44.3
Cotton-textiles	58 120	4.4	68 786	4.7	126 906	4.6
Trade-logistics	234 635	17.8	533 879	36.4	768 513	27.6
Agrifood	9 416	0.7	39 590	2.7	49 006	1.8
Public works and construction materials	74 153	5.6	4 456	0.3	78 609	2.8
Culture and tourism	39 011	3.0	176 518	12.0	215 529	7.7
Other industrial and handicraft activities	66 629	5.1	7 676	0.5	74 305	2.7
Other services	137 580	10.4	71 955	4.9	209 536	7.5
Undeclared	16 698	1.3	12 735	0.9	29 433	1.1
Total	1 318 390	100.0	1 465 775	100.0	2 784 165	100.0

Source: INSAE, EMICoV, 2010.

19. This table shows that the labour force of 2,784,165 workers is composed as follows: 1,232,329, or 44.3 per cent, in agriculture; 126,906 in cotton-textiles; 768,513, or 27.6 per cent, in trade and logistics; and 215,529, or 7.7 per cent, in cultural activities and tourism.

20. An analysis of Table 3 in terms of gender shows that more than two thirds of both the male and female labour force are employed in agriculture and trade/logistics. In fact, 51.7 per cent of men work in agriculture and 17.8 per cent in trade/logistics, while the corresponding figures for women are 37.5 per cent and 36.4 per cent respectively. Aside from agricultural activities, men are employed in public works and the manufacturing of building materials, as well as in industrial and handicraft activities, which account respectively for 5.6 per cent and 5.1 per cent of employees. Women are employed in cultural activities and tourism, which account for 12.0 per cent of women employees.

Public employment

21. The State is still the main employer in Benin. The civil service is composed of two categories of officials: permanent State employees and contractual State employees. The evolution of the workforce of these employees is as follows:

Table 4

Development in the number of State employees in terms of status

Year	Number		
	Permanent State employees	Contractual State employees	Total
2008	35 022	12 153	47 175
2009	35 247	12 388	47 635
2010	35 434	15 670	51 104
2011	31 247	34 897	66 144
2012	29 274	41 201	70 475
2013	25 492	44 835	70 327
2014	24 076	44 965	69 041
2015	23 247	49 843	73 090

Source: FUR, 2015.

22. Although this table shows that there has been a steady increase in the number of civil servants in Benin, the administrative authorities are nonetheless faced with a shortage of all categories of staff. There are diverse reasons for this situation, including the freeze on recruitment for several years and the huge number of retirees. The following table shows the estimated number of retirements during the period from 2016 to 2020.

Table 5

Estimated number of retirements during the period from 2016 to 2020

Year	Permanent State employees	Contractual State employees	Total
2016	3 351	79	5 446
2017	2 703	105	4 825
2018	351	127	2 496
2019	258	162	2 439
2020	312	268	2 600
Total	6 975	741	7 716

Source: FUR, 2015.

23. The payroll is the main component of operating expenses (40 per cent on average during the period from 2000 to 2010). It tripled from 74.8 billion CFA francs (CFAF) in 2000 to CFAF 253.2 billion in 2011. The salary bill increased in real terms by 14.7 per cent on average during the period from 2007 to 2009.

24. The ratio of the payroll to tax revenue exceeded the ceiling of the West African Economic and Monetary Union convergence criterion. Thus, compared with the target of a maximum of 35 per cent of tax revenue, the Benin payroll amounted to 45.1 per cent of tax revenue in 2009, compared with 38.9 per cent on average in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. The increase is attributable, inter alia, to the increase in staff and the payment of higher wages in certain areas of public administration (education, health, finance, etc.). The process of transferring casual workers to public administration posts has greatly increased the number of employees since 2007. In addition, a 3.5 salary ratio increase was granted to higher education teachers and a ratio of 1.25 was gradually granted to the staff of other public administration units. The introduction of a number of bonuses also contributed to the payroll increase.

Specific measures on behalf of young people

25. Specific steps have been taken to promote youth employment. They include State programmes implemented by the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment, easier access to credit facilities, the Micro-credit Programme for the Poorest People, and the establishment of a National Corps of Young Volunteers for Development in the Republic of Benin.

26. The National Agency for the Promotion of Employment is mandated “to contribute to the development and implementation of the national employment policy of Benin” through four programmes: the Wage-based Employment Support Programme; the Self-employment Support Programme; Capacity-building for Job Seekers; and the Decentralized Partnership for Employment at the local level. They serve as intermediaries between labour-market supply and demand, which is the core remit of the National Agency as a public-service entity. The implementation of these programmes helps to promote youth employment. Mention may be made, for example, of the renewal in 2016 of 6,494 trainees from the 2015 project, the recruitment of about 2,000 trainees who will benefit from the National Agency’s programmes, the operationalization of 9 Business Promotion Centres that focus on promoting employment, and the conversion of 3 of the Centres into incubation facilities that will host about 200 enterprises for a two-year period.

27. Measures to facilitate access to loans fall within the remit of the National Fund for the Promotion of Youth Enterprise and Employment. The Fund was established to facilitate access to loans for young promoters of small and medium-sized enterprises in order to finance activities conducive to economic growth and employment or identified as such. They include the agrifood and agro-industrial sectors, handicrafts, tourism, public works and construction, the metal industry, and information and communication technology. The National Fund focuses on granting loans to small and medium-sized enterprises and projects designed by young people, managing programmes designed and implemented by jobseekers that are duly monitored by the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment, constituting and boosting young promoters’ funds, controlling and monitoring beneficiaries of loans, and facilitating beneficiaries’ access to National Fund loans and access for risk coverage to the National Guarantee and Assistance Fund for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

28. The aim of the Micro-credit Programme for the Poorest People is to encourage the neediest population groups, especially women, to become economically active by establishing micro-credit facilities and various support programmes. The employment of women enables households to emerge from dependence on social benefits and from poverty. The programme seeks to provide women with training services that build their capacity to manage income-generating activities and to provide them with microcredit for the development of such activities.

29. The National Corps of Young Volunteers for Development in the Republic of Benin was established by Decree No. 2010-666 of 31 December 2010. It brings together young people who have been trained, incorporated and accredited for a civil service mission of general interest through the Benevolent Volunteer Programme or the Professional Expertise Volunteer Programme.

30. Despite these efforts, the youth employment situation is far from satisfactory, given that 30.4 per cent of young people are manifestly underemployed in terms of their working hours and 63.2 per cent are covertly underemployed in terms of precarious and indecent remuneration.

31. Given the difficulties of gaining access to the formal labour market, which is generally a source of wage-based employment, most young people are opting for self-employment in the informal sector. At least 94 per cent of workers in the 15 to 34 age group are self-employed and more than 83 per cent are in vulnerable jobs.

32. A gender-based analysis shows that the situation of young women is of greater concern than that of young men. There are more women than men in vulnerable jobs (89.6 per cent compared with 76.0 per cent). The proportion of young men in paid employment is almost three times greater than that of women (4.4 per cent compared with 12.7 per cent). More women than men are self-employed (65 per cent compared with 58.6 per cent). On the other hand, the proportion of young men in precarious jobs is greater than that of women (17.7 per cent compared with 13.7 per cent).

33. According to an analysis by age group, young people in the 25 to 34 age group earn higher wages than younger people (9.2 per cent compared with 6.9 per cent for the 20 to 24 age group). Their labour-market situation is also more precarious. Young people in the 25 to 34 age group record the highest self-employment rate of 75.1 per cent, compared with 49.3 per cent for young people in the 20 to 24 age group. Almost 87.8 per cent of working young people in the 25 to 34 age group are in vulnerable employment. The high proportion of self-employed young people in that age group is perhaps attributable to the fact that, after several unsuccessful attempts at securing paid employment, they eventually decide to set up their own business, usually in the informal sector. At the national level, 95 per cent of young people work in the informal sector. An analysis by place of residence shows that young workers in rural areas are more vulnerable to informality than those in urban areas (98 per cent compared with 90 per cent).

34. An analysis of youth unemployment shows that 1.7 per cent of young people are unemployed at the national level. However, there are major disparities in unemployment in terms of place of residence and age. There are nearly three times as many unemployed young people in urban areas than in rural areas (2.7 per cent compared with 0.9 per cent). Similarly, an analysis in terms of age shows that young people in the 20 to 24 age group are more affected by unemployment than those in other age groups (for instance, 3.1 per cent compared with 1.4 per cent for young people in the 25 to 34 age group). When it comes to the duration of unemployment, the data show that young people remain unemployed, on average, for more than three years (37.9 months).

B. Article 7: Right to just and favourable conditions of work

35. Act No. 98-004 on the Labour Code is being revised. The planned changes relate, inter alia, to labour conventions, working conditions and the settlement of labour disputes.

36. The civil service has 64 labour inspectors who are distributed as follows: General Directorate of Labour: 20; Department of Atlantique/Littoral: 13; Department of Atacora/Donga: 7; Department of Borgou/Alibori: 6; Department of Mono/Couffo: 6; Department of Ouémé/Plateau: 6; Department of Zou/Collines: 6.

37. On 17 April 2014, the guaranteed minimum wage was raised by 26.48 per cent from CFAF 31,625 to CFAF 40,000.

38. The following table presents an overview of work-related accidents and occupational illnesses during the past 10 years:

Table 6
Work-related accidents and occupational illnesses

<i>Year</i>	<i>Work-related accidents</i>	<i>Commuting accidents</i>	<i>Occupational illnesses</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
2008	426	450	08	876	10
2009	523	442	01	973	11
2010	471	486	01	958	09
2011	534	459	01	994	19
2012	454	502	00	956	09
2013	488	421	03	912	08
2014	612	433	00	1 045	07
2015	341	568	00	99	06

Source: National Social Security Fund, 2016.

39. Data concerning work-related accidents and occupational illnesses fluctuate unevenly and are mostly related to non-compliance with prescribed preventive measures.

40. The role of the judiciary has recently been strengthened through the establishment of commercial courts. In the context of improvements in the Beninese business environment, the Government launched an organizational reform of the judiciary, which led to the adoption of the above-mentioned Act No. 2016-15 and Act No. 2016-16. The former amends and supplements Act No. 2001-37 of 27 August 2002 on the organization of the judiciary in the Republic of Benin; the latter amends and supplements Act No. 2008-07 of 28 February 2011 on the Code of Civil, Commercial, Social, Administrative and Accounting Procedure. The commercial courts will have jurisdiction to hear commercial disputes that previously fell within the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. The purpose of this measure is to decongest the docket of the ordinary courts and to ensure the expeditious processing of commercial cases.

C. Article 8: Trade union rights

41. Trade union rights are exercised freely, in compliance with the regulations in force.

42. A national framework for social dialogue was established through the signing, on 3 August 2016, of a National Charter on Social Dialogue by the Government, the National Employers Council and trade unions.

43. The aims of the Charter include: prevention and management of social conflicts in accordance with laws, regulations and collective agreements; strengthening of the democratic process; and promotion of good governance in the public and private sectors.

44. In addition, a sectoral committee for social dialogue has been established in each ministry.

D. Article 9: Right to social security

45. On 21 March 2003, Benin adopted Act No. 98-019 on the Social Security Code. As noted in the second periodic report, the social security system is run by the National Social Security Fund and ties the concept of social security to workers' status (regardless of whether they are wage-earners). However, the Act was amended by two laws aimed at improving the conditions of insured persons. The following laws introduced the amendments:

- Act No. 2007-02 of 26 March 2007 amending the provisions of articles 10, 89, 93, 94, 95 and 101 of Act No. 98-019 of 21 March 2003 on the Social Security Code;

- Act No. 2010-10 of 22 March 2010 amending and supplementing the provisions of articles 93 and 146 of Act No. 98-019 of 21 March 2003 on the Social Security Code of the Republic of Benin.

46. According to the new provision of article 93.1, insured persons who reach the age of 60 years are entitled to an old-age pension if they have been insured by the Fund for at least 180 months and have ceased all wage-earning activities. Pursuant to article 93.2, persons who have been insured for at least 12 months and who, having reached the age of 60 years, cease all wage-earning activities are entitled to an old-age allowance in the form of a lump sum, since they fail to meet the conditions entitling them to an old-age pension. According to the new provisions of article 94:

- Paragraph 1: Insured workers who become disabled before reaching the age of 60 are entitled to a disability pension provided that they have been insured for at least 60 months, 6 of which must be during the 12 calendar months preceding the onset of the condition leading to disability;
- Paragraph 5: The disability pension is replaced by an old-age pension of the same amount when the beneficiary reaches the age of 60 years.

47. According to the new provision of article 95, the minimum monthly amount of the old-age or disability pension must be equal to 30 per cent of the average monthly remuneration.

E. Article 10: Protection of the family, mothers and children

48. With regard to the protection of the family, mothers and children, the following key measures were adopted during the period under review:

- Adoption of the Children's Code, which comprises 423 articles and is divided into seven sections. The aim of the Code is to create a beneficial environment for Beninese children. Its enactment terminates the applicability of obsolescent legal texts that previously governed such matters in Benin. It enhances children's substantive and procedural rights, which are already guaranteed by the Personal and Family Code and the new Code of Criminal Procedure;
- The adoption of Decree No. 2011-029 of 31 January 2011 listing hazardous types of work that are prohibited for minors, and the establishment in two pilot jurisdictions of "child-friendly" courts in 2014;
- The establishment of the Central Office for the Protection of Minors and Families and for the Prevention of Human Trafficking;
- The development of the National Action Plan for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Benin (2012–2015). The Plan focuses on the following six key areas: harmonization of the legal framework; information, awareness-raising and mobilization; education and training; reduction of the socioeconomic vulnerability of households; protection, care and oversight of child victims of the worst forms of child labour; and promotion of knowledge bases and institutional mechanisms for the implementation and sustainability of the National Action Plan.

F. Article 11: Right to an adequate standard of living

Right to the continuous improvement of living conditions

49. The human development index in Benin was 0.5 in 2010, 0.4 in 2012 and 0.476 in 2013. Benin was one of the four member States of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger) that recorded an increase in their real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita between 2013 and 2014. The situation in Benin has thus become more comfortable in terms of real GDP per capita, which stood at US\$ 825 in 2014, compared with US\$ 805 in 2013. Benin currently ranks second in the West African Economic and Monetary Union, after Senegal (US\$ 998 in 2014, compared with US\$ 1,047 in 2013).

The right to adequate food

50. The country's sound economic growth during the past 10 years (5 per cent on average) is largely due to its agricultural performance. As the proportion of the population deemed to be suffering from hunger was 11.2 per cent in 2014, Benin achieved Millennium Development Goal 1.C, which reads: "Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger". Since the second report of Benin on its implementation of the Covenant, which was submitted in 2008, the performance in terms of agricultural production seems to have remained the same. Agricultural production focuses on two categories of crops, namely food crops and cash crops, which are dominated by cotton. Food crops consist largely of roots and tubers, the output of which totalled 7,325,318 tonnes in 2014, compared with 6,937,180 tonnes in 2013. The 5.6 per cent increase was attributable to high levels of rainfall, which are beneficial for crops of this type. Cereal crops are next in line. Their output totalled 1,714,040 tonnes in 2014, compared with 1,636,242 tonnes in 2013, an increase of 4.8 per cent. The output of maize, which is the principal grain crop, has increased steadily during the past 14 years. Maize production increased from 1,316,598 tonnes in 2013 to 1,354,344 tonnes in 2014.

51. Fish production increased by 15.2 per cent between 2013 and 2014. The production comprises inland fisheries, sea fishing and aquaculture. During the period from 2006 to 2014, fish production in Benin is estimated to have totalled, on average, 39,813 tonnes per year. The output for 2014 was 43,820.7 tonnes, an increase of 2.9 per cent compared with 2013. Furthermore, fish production is dominated by inland fisheries, which accounted for 67.8 per cent of the sector's output in 2014, compared with 66.2 per cent in 2013. According to the "BENIN Agenda 2025", the agrifood sector (fisheries, fruit and vegetables, foodstuffs, non-wood products, etc.) ranks first in terms of foreign direct investment (69 per cent of such investment in the country) and second in terms of exports.

52. Notwithstanding this performance, Benin is still ranked among the world's nations in which the prevalence of hunger is a source of concern. In 2013, a national survey based on the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis showed that the food consumption of 23 per cent of households did not permit them to lead an active and healthy life. In addition, Benin has recorded "losses" in terms of human development, amounting to almost 35 per cent of its potential, owing to various types of inequality, including access to food. Nobody can therefore remain indifferent to the food security situation. In the absence of an improvement, the prospects for thousands if not millions of Beninese, in terms of living conditions, means of subsistence and human development, will remain stagnant.

Right to water

53. The State, with the support of technical and financial partners, has been unceasing in its efforts to increase the population's access to drinking water.

54. According to statistics for the past five years, the rate of access to drinking water has changed considerably. At the national level, the rate stood at 68.2 per cent in 2014, compared with 65.7 per cent in 2013. Nevertheless, there are huge disparities between departments. The rates recorded for the departments of Borgou (63 per cent), Atlantique (55.1 per cent) and Ouémé (45.0 per cent) are lower than the national average. Laudable efforts by the State have promoted access to drinking water, primarily for communities in the most remote areas. The number of water points installed by the Government in 2014 is estimated at 28,873, compared with 27,403 in 2013, which is equivalent to an increase of 5.4 per cent. The operating rate of the water points is estimated at 87.4 per cent in 2014, compared with 85.2 per cent in 2013, so that about 13 out of 100 water points were non-functional in 2014.

55. The number of people obtaining drinking water from the Benin Water Corporation (SONEB) has been increasing from year to year. Thus, the situation in 2014 was better than that in 2013, and the situation in 2015 was better than that in 2014. To be precise, according to recent statistics, the number of subscribers to the Benin Water Corporation's distribution network stood at 205,888 in 2014, compared with 194,814 in 2013, so that the company's water supply rate rose to 72 per cent.

56. It should also be noted that some households prefer to obtain their water supply from boreholes. The numerous grounds for this choice include the need to refrain from paying SONEB bills, which are sometimes quite high, and ensuring access to drinking water (for people in remote areas).

57. In short, considerable efforts are being made, but ensuring permanent access to high-quality water remains a challenge.

The right to decent housing

58. The demand for housing in Benin far outstrips the supply. In both rural and urban areas, the Beninese population continues to face difficulties with regard to access to housing.

59. The public authorities have launched initiatives aimed at promoting social housing, but not all have proved successful for a variety of economic reasons (the high cost of housing), geographical reasons (areas are frequently non-viable for housing development) and sociological reasons (the Beninese people prefer to build their homes themselves at their own pace).

60. In view of the speculative practice of landlords, a number of bills have been drafted by members of parliament to regulate the sector. In October 2015 the Law Commission launched a study of two bills aimed at regulating rents in Benin. One regulates residential tenancy, and the other regulates rent deposits and advances for residential dwellings.

61. The new Code on Private and State-owned Land has brought about real change in terms of enhancing land tenure security. New land management agencies have been created (the National Estate and Land Agency, the Land Manager and Registry). The handling of land disputes has been reformed through the establishment of a pretrial phase, a new statute of limitations applicable to land matters and a new framework for the enforcement of judgments in such matters. In addition, new tools for proving ownership have been developed (a landownership certificate and a rural land certificate).

Access to electronic telecommunication and postal services

62. The electronic communications and postal sector is governed by Act No. 2014-14 of 9 July 2014 on electronic communications and postal services in the Republic of Benin. A number of operators and service providers are active in the Beninese electronic communications and postal market.

The fixed telephony market

63. Benin Telecom SA, the incumbent operator, is the sole actor in this market. It is a public corporation established by Decree No. 2004-260 of 5 May 2004, and stems from a split of the former Post and Telecommunications Office into two separate entities comprising, on the one hand, postal activities and, on the other, telecommunication activities. Fixed telephone coverage was estimated, as of 30 June 2014, at 61 per cent. The landline network is largely confined to urban areas and is virtually non-existent in rural areas. The number of landline subscribers has been growing at an average annual rate of 9.5 per cent, from 77,342 in 2006 to 159,443 in 2013. The growth in the number of subscribers is entirely due to the increase in code-division multiple access (CDMA) subscribers, which stood at 137,766 on 30 June 2014. Fixed call rates in Benin are equivalent, on average, to those recorded in other parts of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, apart from relatively high international call rates.

The mobile telephone market

64. Five companies operate in the mobile telecommunications market: Libercom, Bell Bénin Communications (BBCOM), Etisalat Bénin, Spacetel Bénin and Glo Mobile Bénin. The situation in terms of coverage differs quite sharply from one operator to another. MTN and MOOV have the widest coverage in terms of population or territory. According to the data provided by these two operators in their 2013 progress report, the geographical coverage rate for the MTN operator was estimated at 96.50 per cent, while the population

coverage ratio was 92.95 per cent as at 31 December 2013. The geographical coverage rate for the MOOV operator was estimated at 89.69 per cent, while the population coverage ratio was 97.07 per cent as at 31 December 2013.

65. At the end of June 2014, the mobile market had 10.3 million registered customers (i.e. a 101.40 per cent penetration rate). If one calculates the number of active subscribers (subscribers who were active in recent months), the penetration rate was only 75.32 per cent at the end of December 2013, compared with 96.43 per cent for the total number of registered customers on the same date. After rising very sharply between 2009 and 2012, a decline in mobile density was recorded between December 2013 and June 2014.

66. Furthermore, the mobile tariffs of the five operators are now identical, namely CFAF 60 per minute. Alongside this development, the principle of per-second charges, driven by ARCEP-BENIN, has become widespread and is now the default tariff plan for all mobile subscribers.

The Internet market

67. The Internet market is run by three categories of operators. In the fixed Internet service segment, five Internet access providers, in addition to the incumbent operator Bénin Télécom, are authorized to establish and operate a network providing access to the Internet. Three of the five access providers are operational, namely: Isocel Telecom, Omnium des Télécommunications et de l'Internet (OTI), and Espace Informatique et Télécommunications (EIT). All mobile telephone operators in the mobile Internet segment provide Internet services to consumers except for Bell Bénin Communications (BBCOM). As of 30 June 2014, the total number of mobile Internet subscribers in Benin was estimated at 1,725,863, or 40 times more than the number of fixed Internet subscribers. Services are provided on the basis of diverse tariff plans (CFAF per megabyte, CFAF per gigabyte or package rates). The fixed Internet penetration rate was estimated at 0.42 per cent on the same date.

68. Internet subscribers to Bénin Télécom were estimated at 42,968 at the end of June 2014. More than 87 per cent were CDMA subscribers and 10 per cent were ADSL subscribers. After progressing sharply following the deployment of CDMA, the growth in the subscriber base stalled. Thus, the growth rate, which was almost 110.36 per cent in 2009 and 40 per cent in 2011, had sunk to 0.31 per cent during the first six months of 2014. The number of subscribers to the two other Internet service providers (OTI and Isocel Télécom) is unclear, since ARCEP-BENIN has not yet compiled statistics on these operators. According to interviews conducted with them, each of the two Internet access providers has between 1,000 and 1,500 subscribers.

69. Bénin Télécom and two other Internet service providers offer relatively low-speed services. The offer that has attracted the most subscribers proposes a speed of 512 Kbps. The rates proposed by Bénin Télécom and its two competitors for a 512 Kbps connection are between CFAF 25,000 and CFAF 35,000 per month.

The postal market

70. There are three main categories of service providers: La Poste du Bénin and authorized operators:

- La Poste du Benin is the operator responsible for the universal postal service: it offers services such as express mail and financial postal services (postal cheques, national savings bank, money orders and money transfers); there are also private postal operators and informal actors.
- Authorized operators: a number of postal operators have obtained permits from the competent Ministry to provide postal services under postal law, but in the absence of any regulations, as an exception to the exclusive authority granted to the public operator. Although these permits should be accompanied, in principle, by a set of terms and conditions, this was not the case until quite recently. In 2011 ARCEP-Bénin took steps to streamline the market segment by adopting Decision No. 2011-060 of 25 July 2011, which established the regulations governing commercial postal services which are open to competition. On the basis of this decision, ARCEP-Bénin

developed model operating agreements and regulations to be signed by authorized operators.

G. Article 12: Right to physical and mental health

71. The system is managed at the central level by the Ministry of Health, which is responsible for implementing the Government's health policy. To that end, it launches health-care activities, develops action plans, and coordinates and controls the implementation of the specified tasks. Central health-care facilities include the National University Hospital Centre and the Lagune Mother and Child Hospital.

72. At the regional level, the national health policy is implemented by the Departmental Health Directorates, whose activities are in line with the central strategy. There are five departmental hospitals in the departments of Ouémé, Borgou, Atacora, Zou and Mono. The National University Hospital Centre serves, alongside its national role, as the departmental hospital in Littoral.

73. The most decentralized operational entities of the Beninese health-care system are located in health zones established in outlying areas. The health zone is composed of a network of first aid services: a village health unit, a maternity ward and dispensary, a health-care centre and private health-care facilities, all of which are supported by a public or private first-referral hospital (a zone-based hospital) designed to serve an area with between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants.

74. In 2014 there were 28 health zones with referral hospitals, 12 of which played their role to the full. The strategy facilitates the provision of viable and efficient services, while promoting decentralization, community participation and public-private partnerships.

75. Notwithstanding the State's vigorous action, the geographic accessibility of health-care services depends on the proportion of the population who live within 5 kilometres of a health-care centre. Under the National Health Development Plan: Benin 2009–2018, 66 per cent of households have access to a health-care facility within a radius of 5 kilometres.

76. With regard to access to first-referral health-care facilities, it should be noted that more than 50 per cent of the population have access to a first-referral hospital in case of need. Nevertheless, 13 per cent of the population still live more than 30 kilometres from a first-referral hospital. The majority of rural communities are located more than 5 kilometres from the nearest hospital (34 per cent of communities in rural areas, compared with 77 per cent of communities in urban areas).

Availability of health-care personnel (doctor, nurse, midwife)

77. Health-care coverage is still inadequate in Benin, since there is a shortage of medical personnel. The number of inhabitants per physician was 6,628 in 2014, 6,418 in 2013 and 5,849 in 2012. There were 2,006 inhabitants per nurse in 2013, 1,823 in 2012 and 2,072 in 2014, so that there was also a deterioration in the availability of nursing staff. A marked increase was recorded between 2006 and 2014 in the number of women of childbearing age per midwife. The rate had increased to 1,563 women per midwife by 2009 and 2010. A further increase in 2011 to 1,712 per midwife was followed by a decline of 11 per cent in 2012. The rate increased to 1,699 in 2014, compared with 1,645 in 2013.

Major infections and recurring diseases

78. Communicable diseases are still the main causes of morbidity and mortality. They are followed by anaemia, which may have infectious and nutritional causes. Malaria and acute respiratory infections (ARI) are predominant in consultations, but in recent years certain viruses, such as Lassa and Ebola, have also emerged.

Malaria, acute respiratory infections and other ailments that led most frequently to consultations in 2014

79. From an epidemiological standpoint, patients are motivated by a number of ailments to visit health-care centres for consultations. Almost two thirds of patients have sought consultations since 2006 for the three of the main diseases affecting the population (malaria, acute respiratory infections and gastrointestinal diseases). The percentage of consultations due to these three categories of disease increased to 72.8 per cent in 2010, compared with 60.1 per cent in 2006. It then declined in 2011 (by 9.8 percentage points) and in 2012 (by 2.8 percentage points), recorded a slight increase in 2013 (60.7 per cent, compared with 60.2 per cent in 2012) and a slight decrease to 60.1 per cent in 2014. Malaria is the most widespread disease in Benin; the percentage of consultations due to malaria was 40.6 per cent in 2014 and 2013 and 41.4 per cent in 2012. It is followed by acute respiratory infections (12.9 per cent in 2014, 13.3 per cent in 2013 and 12.3 per cent in 2012). Gastrointestinal infections affected only 6.6 per cent of patients in 2014, 6.8 per cent in 2013 and 6.5 per cent in 2012. In addition, 192 leprosy cases were detected in 2014 and 254 in 2013, reflecting a decline from 2008 when 298 leprosy cases were detected. The State and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) take continuous action to reduce the rate of malaria by organizing seminars to raise public awareness and, in particular, by distributing insecticide-treated mosquito nets free of charge.

80. Vigorous material and financial measures have achieved a significant decline in infectious diseases such as leprosy and onchocerciasis, and have eradicated dracunculiasis (guinea-worm disease). Yet despite these satisfactory results, the fight against malaria still presents a major challenge. An Accelerated Malaria Control Plan (LAPA) was launched with the aim of reducing the number of deaths due to malaria by 50 per cent by 2025 (by 30 per cent between 2010 and 2015, and by 20 per cent between 2015 and 2025). It is hoped to achieve similar reductions in the morbidity rate and the socioeconomic impact of malaria by 2025. Many sociological and monetary factors, such as lack of confidence in modern medicine and low income levels, tended for a lengthy period to block people's hospitalization, especially in rural areas.

81. The most recent death due to the Lassa virus was recorded on 3 March 2016 at the Djougou zone hospital.

Reduction in the cost of health-care services

82. A number of organizational reforms of the health sector have been implemented since 2010. They include the following:

- Reform of the Essential Medicines Purchasing Centre (CAME);
- The Universal Health Insurance Scheme (RAMU)/promotion of mutual insurance associations;
- Issuance of contracts/results-based management;
- Decentralization/devolution in the sector;
- Practical arrangements for the construction of a modern regional referral hospital;
- Free caesarean sections.

83. The purpose of these diverse governmental measures is to assist and promote the good health of the entire population, especially the most disadvantaged sectors.

84. It should be noted that the Universal Health Insurance Scheme enables the population, especially disadvantaged sectors, to benefit from lower-cost health-care services. The initial experiment targets only part of the population.

85. The free caesarean section initiative was launched by the Government to alleviate medical expenses for women who require surgery to give birth. The mortality rate of pregnant women was found to have increased for a simple reason: exorbitant medical costs that many families were unable to cover. With a view to surmounting these difficulties, hospitals were specially designated to provide free caesarean sections in order to help women in need. A total of 44 hospitals throughout the country have been designated for the

purpose. The initiative is being implemented in hospitals located in all departments of Benin: 11 in Atlantique Littoral, 6 in Ouémé-Plateau, 6 in Mono-Couffo, 5 in Zou-Collines, 6 in Atacora-Donga and 10 in Borgou-Alibori. However, the system needs to be improved to enable mothers who have had a caesarean section to receive further treatment after the operation in the event of complications. The free caesarean section initiative makes no provision for the alleviation of side effects.

86. In the area of reproductive health, the results of the Demographic and Health Survey (EDS IV, 2011–2012) showed that the percentage of women receiving antenatal care was 86 per cent, compared with 88 per cent in 2006. The proportion of women who gave birth in a health-care facility increased from 78 per cent in 2006 to 87 per cent in 2011–2012. The proportion of women whose delivery was overseen by skilled health-care personnel increased from 74 per cent in 2006 to 81 per cent in 2011–2012. With regard to infant mortality, the results of the survey show that 42 infants out of every 1,000 die before reaching their first birthday (23 per thousand by the end of the first month and 19 per thousand between the first and twelfth months). As the corresponding rate was estimated at 45 per thousand for EDS III (2006), Benin achieved major progress in reducing infant mortality during the subsequent five years. Thus, the mortality rate declined by 16 points during the 15 years prior to EDS III, dropping from 83 per thousand to 67 per thousand, compared with just 3 points for EDS IV.

Prevalence of HIV/AIDS

87. Special emphasis is placed, in the case of transmissible infections, on the fight against AIDS. The prevalence rate of AIDS obtained from sentinel sites stood at 2.16 per cent in 2014, compared with 1.9 per cent in 2013 for the country as a whole, with marked disparities in terms of place of residence. HIV prevalence is low in Benin, but the increase recorded in some departments, such as Littoral (3.05 per cent), Atlantique (2.79 per cent), Mono (2.76 per cent) and Ouémé (2.72 per cent), remains a source of concern.

Table 7

Prevalence of HIV by department in 2011, 2013 and 2014

Department	2011			2013			2014		
	Urban	Rural	General	Urban	Rural	General	Urban	Rural	General
Alibori	0.8	0.8	0.8	1	0.6	0.77	1	0.6	1
Atacora	1.7	0.6	1	1.59	1.9	1.77	1.59	1.9	1.59
Atlantique	2.9	0.7	1.5	2.79	0.67	1.58	2.79	0.67	2.79
Borgou	1.3	0.8	1	1.25	1.07	1.14	1.25	1.07	1.25
Collines	1.3	0.9	1	0.67	0.75	0.72	0.67	0.75	0.67
Couffo	5	2.4	2.9	2.53	1.8	2.1	2.53	1.8	2.53
Donga	2.3	1.8	1.9	1.99	1.99	1.99	1.99	1.99	1.99
Littoral	3.1	-	3.1	3.05	0	3.05	3.05	0	3.05
Mono	2.1	2	2	2.76	3.59	3.27	2.76	3.59	2.76
Ouémé	1.7	3.5	2.5	2.72	3.17	2.98	2.72	3.17	2.72
Plateau	2	0.9	1.2	2.21	1	1.49	2.21	1	2.21
Zou	1.1	0.5	0.7	1.95	0.5	1.1	1.95	0.5	1.95
Benin	2.2	1.8	1.9	2.16	1.44	1.9	2.16	1.44	2.16

Source: Yearbooks of Health Statistics (2011, 2013 and 2014).

Immunization coverage by type of vaccine

88. Vaccine delivery is important and has received special attention since the development a few years ago of the Expanded Programme of Immunization. The calculated rates only cover persons targeted by the Programme, that is to say children under 1 year of age.

89. According to the health statistics, the coverage rate for Bacillus Calmette-Guérin vaccine (BCG) stood at 122.5 per cent in 2014, compared with 113.0 per cent in 2013 and 119.1 per cent in 2012. At the national level, the coverage rate of infants aged 0 to 11 months for Penta-3 vaccine (third dose of pentavalent) reached 115.6 per cent, compared with a relatively low rate of 101 per cent in 2013. The average measles vaccine coverage rate throughout the country was 109 per cent in 2014, compared with 96.1 per cent in 2013 and 94.7 per cent in 2012.

90. With regard to preventive measures, no vaccines are available for the Ebola and Lassa viruses. Therapeutic measures are the only option. Awareness-raising campaigns are therefore organized by the Ministry of Health and widely disseminated on television and radio channels in order to alert the population to the measures that should be taken if symptoms are detected.

The rate of recourse to health-care services remained low in 2014

91. The proportion of the population who had recourse to health-care services was estimated at 50.4 per cent in 2014, which represents a decline of 2.3 per cent compared with the rate recorded in 2013. The rate increased between 2013 and 2014 in the departments of Donga (from 59.0 to 60.2 per cent), Atacora (from 45.2 to 46.8 per cent) and Atlantique (from 47 to 48.9 per cent). The rate declined in the departments of Borgou (82.3 to 76.1 per cent), Ouémé (from 54.3 to 43.3 per cent) and Littoral (from 70.1 to 66.2 per cent). In 2014 the lowest rates of recourse to health-care services were recorded in the departments of Couffo (28 per cent), Plateau (28.7 per cent) and Collines (37.6 per cent). The antenatal coverage rate ranged from 96 per cent in 2007 to 101 per cent in 2012, 98.9 per cent in 2013 and 98 per cent in 2014. The postnatal consultation rate declined between 2007 (43 per cent) and 2011 (38.9 per cent), recovered slightly in 2012 (41.1 per cent) but declined again in 2014 (37.7 per cent, compared with 40 per cent in 2013). The proportion of deliveries assisted by health-care personnel was estimated at 91.8 per cent in 2013, compared with 90.3 per cent in 2014.

H. Article 13: The right to education

92. Benin's commitment to making education accessible for all has been gradually achieved during the past 10 years. A number of private institutions are acting in conjunction with State schools and other establishments in order to guarantee the right to education. The Ten-year Development Plan for the Education Sector: Stage 3 (2013–2015) includes a detailed study of the Beninese education system and proposes diverse approaches. A State recruitment target of 20,835 teachers for nursery, primary and secondary schools and for technical and vocational training was set for the period from 2013 to 2020. A total of 1,977 teachers were to be recruited at the preschool or nursery school level, 10,444 teachers at the primary level, 6,268 teachers for the first cycle of secondary education and 1,400 teachers for the second cycle. The recruitment target for technical education was 523 and for vocational training 223.

93. The Beninese education system consists of four main cycles: nursery, primary, secondary (general and technical education) and higher education. In addition, vocational training, literacy education, special education and teacher training respond to the specific needs of certain professional groups.

Preschool education

94. In 2013 about 119,138 children were enrolled in preschool education, compared with 109,449 in 2011, that is to say an increase of approximately 9,689 children in two years. That increase is small, however, compared with the increase recorded between 2010 and 2011. The preschool education sector caters mostly for children in the 3 to 5 age group. The gender ratio was 100.4 in 2013, that is to say 59,705 girls, compared with 59,433 boys.

95. The number of teachers was estimated at 4,556 for 1,843 schools in 2013. There was a slight decline in the gross preschool enrolment rate from 12.1 per cent in 2013 to 11.33 per cent in 2011, with a higher rate for girls (12.3 per cent) than for boys (11.8 per cent).

Primary education

96. Education at the primary level exists in virtually all regions of the country. Primary education has the highest rates of enrolment and comprises, in principle, children in the 6 to 11 age group, according to Beninese legislation. A different approach has been adopted at this level of education in recent years from that experienced by pupils during the period from 1990 to 2005. The approach, called “The New Study Programme”, is designed to render pupils more active and alert. The pedagogical approach is given precedence in this context over the curriculum itself. Thus, the skills-based approach is a training procedure that relies on the development of skills defined as “complex expertise stemming from the integration, mobilization and organization of a body of knowledge in circumstances of a general nature”. The following three categories of skills are envisaged under the new programmes: cross-curricular skills, transdisciplinary skills and disciplinary skills.

97. The State is taking action to guarantee free primary education. The role played by various organizations that give high priority to child school enrolment has proved highly beneficial for the population. This is clearly discernible in the increased enrolment of schoolchildren in recent years. For example, an increase of 69,299 was recorded between 2013 and 2014.

98. Total primary school enrolment rose from 2,064,031 pupils in 2013 to 2,133,330 pupils in 2014, which is equivalent to an increase of 3.4 per cent. In addition, the gender ratio stood at 89.0 in 2013 and 2014, that is to say 1,010,029 girls and 1,123,301 boys in 2014, and 972,325 girls and 1,091,706 boys in 2013. In 2008, a total of 872,159 boys were enrolled in primary education, compared with 728,987 girls, so that there was an increase in enrolment of 28.8 per cent for boys and 38.6 per cent for girls between 2008 and 2014.

99. There were 46,454 teachers (including 10,457 women) at this level of education in 2014, compared with 47,201 teachers (including 10,321 women) in 2013. A slight increase was recorded in the pupil-teacher ratio between 2013 and 2014. The ratio was 45.9 pupils per teacher in 2014, compared with 43.7 pupils per teacher in 2013. Permanent State employees accounted for 19.4 per cent of teachers in 2014, compared with 21.2 per cent in 2013. This was due to retirements and a decline in the number of contractual employees from 18,754 in 2013 to 17,818 in 2014.

100. In 2014 the gross admission rate (ratio of new pupils to the 6-year-old population) stood at 145.28 per cent, which is a relatively high level compared to that recorded for 2013 (142.74 per cent). The gross admission rate for boys (146.81 per cent) was higher than that for girls (143.65 per cent) in 2014. The high level of the indicator reflects the presence of new pupils who were over or under 6 years of age. The gross admission rate stood at 142.96 per cent in 2008, but an increase was recorded between 2008 and 2014.

101. A slight increase was recorded in the primary education completion rate from 76.85 per cent in 2013 to 77.61 per cent in 2014. The completion rate in 2014 was higher for boys (81.28 per cent) than for girls (73.66 per cent).

102. During the period from 2011 to 2014, the gross enrolment rate recorded a slight rise each year: 122.0 per cent in 2014, compared with 121.1 per cent in 2013, 119.7 per cent in 2012 and 112.6 per cent in 2011. The rate was higher for boys than for girls each year.

Table 8

Performance indicators by gender for primary education from 2011 to 2014

Indicators	2011			2012			2013			2014		
	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G
Admission rate	130.7	133.7	127.5	143.6	145.9	141.2	142.7	144.7	140.7	145.28	146.81	143.65
Completion rate	67.86	73.15	73.15	71.49	76.8	65.77	76.85	81.6	71.72	77.61	81.28	73.66
Gross enrolment rate	112.6	115.9	109.1	119.7	122.5	116.8	121.13	123.4	118.7	122	123.68	120.18
Repeat rate	13.27	13.3	13.23	11.9	11.83	11.88	11.61	11.44	11.53	11.53	11.53	11.33

Indicators	2011			2012			2013			2014		
	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G
Dropout rate	14.41	13.63	15.31	13.39	12.97	13.86	13;76	13.48	14.07	11.65	11.55	11.76

Source: Programming and Planning Directorate/Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Programming and Planning Directorate/Ministry of Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Education, Retraining and Youth Integration; Programming and Planning Directorate/Ministry of Pre-school and Primary Education (B: boys; G: girls; T: total).

Secondary education

General secondary education

103. The skills-based programmes that have been introduced into the system enable students to participate actively in the learning process, thereby garnering a better understanding of the concepts. The programmes thus aim at the acquisition and integration of learning and skills that can be reinvested in everyday life.

104. General education colleges and secondary schools exist in virtually all parts of the country. However, the inadequacy of classrooms and furniture constitutes an impediment to the learning process, as demonstrated by the figures for the number of teaching groups per classroom and the number of students per seat, which stand at 1.6 and 1.3 respectively.

105. A First Cycle Study Certificate (BEPC) is awarded on completion of secondary school. The statistics for 2016, which are among the lowest (16 per cent) during the period under review, are shown in the following table:

Table 9
BEPC statistics by department for 2016

Departments	Percentages
Atlantique-Littoral	21.08 %
Borgou-Alibori	15.58 %
Oueme-Plateau	14.47 %
Zou-Collines	13.48 %
Mono-Couffo	13.18 %
Atacora-Donga	11.98 %
All departments	16 %

Source: Directorate of Examinations and Competitions, 2016.

Technical and vocational education

Technical education

106. This is a component of the technical education and vocational training sub-sector. Its fundamental aim is to promote students' employability and labour-market prospects. A number of comments may be made on the situation of technical education in public and private establishments during the year 2013/14.

107. The number of first-cycle students in public establishments totalled 1,444, including 294 girls. On the other hand, the number of first-cycle students in private-sector establishments totalled 627, including 329 girls. There are thus twice as many students enrolled in public establishments than in private establishments. The number of second-cycle students in public establishments totalled 10,959, which is seven times the figure of 1,444 recorded for the first cycle and three times the number of women students, which totalled 2,819. The number of second-cycle students in private-sector establishments totalled 8,885, including 4,823 girls. According to the latest statistics, enrolment in technical education in 2013/14 totalled 21,915 students, including 8,265 girls.

108. It should be noted that technical education is composed of the following five courses:

- Industrial science and technology;
- Administration and management;
- Agricultural science and technology;
- Medical and social science and technology;
- Applied social science, tourism and hotel management.

109. As the last training course is provided in public establishments in only three departments, national coverage is inadequate. The number of first-cycle students in public establishments totalled 67, including 59 girls. The corresponding number of students in private establishments totalled 109, including 63 girls. The course is therefore less popular among males.

110. The agricultural science and technology course, on the other hand, attracts a far larger number of males, with girls accounting for only 167 out of a total of 759 students. In general, there are about three times as many male students as female students. The administration and management course attracts a majority of female students. The number of first-cycle students enrolled in the industrial science and technology course totalled 612, including 43 girls. The number of students enrolled in the second cycle totalled 3,493, including 259 girls. It is therefore dominated by males. There is no first cycle for the course in medical and social science and technology, which is confined to the department of Borgou. Females are thus predominant, accounting for 337 of the 522 second-cycle students enrolled in public establishments.

111. According to the statistics for the five technical education training courses in public establishments, the agricultural science and technology course attracted the largest number of students: 759 for the first cycle and 4,357 for the second cycle. It was followed by the industrial science and technology course: 612 students for the first cycle and 3,493 students for the second cycle. The two courses retain their numerical standing among students enrolled in public technical education establishments. This is perhaps attributable to the facilities for access to employment that are available to students who complete these courses. The facilities take the form of credit granted by governmental structures or development agencies, particularly UNDP.

Vocational training

112. Two categories of training (vocational training leading to a diploma and vocational training leading to a trade certificate) are provided in vocational training centres in public and private secondary schools. Training centres for dressmaking and hairdressing are the most prevalent throughout the country. It should be noted that the departments of Atacora and Ouémé rank first in terms of the number of training centres. Table 10 presents statistics for trade certificate examinations during the period from 2013 to 2015.

Table 10
Statistics for trade certificate examinations (2013–2015)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
October 2013 session	1 190	1 188	1 143	96.21%
April 2014 session	2 780	2 777	2 326	83.75%
October 2014 session	2 802	2 800	2 574	91%
April 2015 session	3 997	3 992	3 863	96.76%

Source: Directorate of Examinations and Competitions, 2016.

113. On completing their secondary education, students sit for the baccalaureate examination, the results of which fluctuated during the period under review: 30.13 per cent (2016); 34.43 per cent (2015); 23.72 per cent (2014); 32.46 per cent (2013) and 37.18 per cent (2012).

Higher education

114. Pursuant to the resolution adopted by the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) in 2006 and the Directive issued by the West African Economic and Monetary Union in 2007, Benin took steps to reconfigure university programmes and reorganize universities and schools in line with the bachelor's/master's/doctorate academic model. This model is scheduled to become the international reference system for all higher education.

115. The following table shows the situation of higher education establishments during the period from 2009 to 2016.

Table 11

Number of institutions in terms of status from 2009/10 to 2015/16

Academic year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Public universities	2	2	2	2	4	4	7
Private universities	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Public university institutions	33	37	38	39	58	58	58
Private university institutions	35	35	35	35	36	36	36
Private higher education centres	64	69	74	82	88	93	93
Private university institutions + private higher education centres	99	104	109	117	124	129	129

Source: Directorate of Examinations and Competitions, 2016.

116. The number of public universities increased from two in 2000/01 to seven in 2015/16. At the beginning of the 2016/17 academic year, a restructuring of the university system made it possible to reduce the number of public universities to four: two multidisciplinary universities (Abomey-Calavi University and Parakou University) and two thematic universities (Porto-Novo Agricultural University and Abomey Polytechnic University).

117. Since the launching in 1997 of the experiment involving the authorization of private higher education institutions, their number has been growing steadily. There are two categories of private higher education institutions: private universities and private higher education centres. Seven private universities have been authorized to date by the Ministry of Higher Education. The seven universities comprise 34 university institutions.

118. The Ministry of Higher Education has authorized 120 private higher education centres. They are based primarily in the southern part of Benin and some of them have established regional branches. The training courses provided in private higher education centres cover diverse areas. In addition to the predominant course leading to a higher technical studies certificate, they offer courses leading to professional bachelor's and master's degrees, university diplomas in technology, higher technical studies diplomas and specialized higher education diplomas.

119. At the institutional level, reforms have led to the approval of a number of training programmes run by such institutions and the joint signature of their diplomas by the Ministry.

Students

120. Students are enrolled in public and private institutions.

Table 12

Number of students enrolled in public institutions from 2007/08 to 2014/15

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>National universities of Benin</i>		
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
2007/08	9 563	34 321	43 884
2008/09	12 484	42 373	54 857
2009/10	17 030	53 852	70 882
2010/11	17 392	56 638	74 030
2011/12	20 448	59 391	79 839
2012/13	22 409	74 739	97 148
2013/14	26 609	82 334	108 943
2014/15	23 175	68 234	92 508

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016.

N.B. The data for 2013/14 and 2014/15 are provisional.

121. Higher education is not entirely free of charge. Only students without scholarships have been exempt from tuition fees until 2015/16. Students who receive scholarship or assistance grants pay a lump sum of CFAF 15,000, which is deducted directly from their grants.

122. Students who have been granted scholarships or who are beneficiaries of State aid attend public universities. The majority are enrolled at the first level (84.91 per cent), followed by the second level (14.78 per cent) and the third level (0.30 per cent).

Table 13

Number of students enrolled in private institutions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
2007/08	6 454	9 785	16 239
2008/09	8 744	11 694	20 438
2009/10	11 029	16 628	27 657
2010/11	10 615	14 365	24 980
2011/12	5 380	8 027	13 407
2012/13	-	-	12 999

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016.

N.B. The data for 2011/12 and 2012/13 on students enrolled in private institutions are unreliable, since the institutions concerned failed to provide data in accordance with the required procedures.

Table 14

Number of teaching staff in public universities from 2007/08 to 2015/16

<i>Year</i>	<i>Professors</i>	<i>Senior lecturers</i>	<i>Lecturers</i>	<i>Assistants</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
2007/08	56	101	243	347	164	911
2008/09	62	116	251	339	163	931
2009/10	67	75	255	288	323	1 008
2010/11	69	134	314	433	127	1 077
2011/12	81	163	326	312	242	1 124
2012/13	88	190	270	340	142	1 030

<i>Year</i>	<i>Professors</i>	<i>Senior lecturers</i>	<i>Lecturers</i>	<i>Assistants</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
2013/14	106	212	364	345	159	1 186
2014/15	-	-	-	-	-	1 269
2015/16	-	-	-	-	-	1 269

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016.
N.B. The data for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 are provisional.

123. The number of permanent teaching staff at Beninese public universities totals 1,114. As there are 99,460 students, the student-teacher ratio is 87. This ratio varies from one university to another. For instance, the ratio for Abomey-Calavi University is 82 and the ratio for Parakou University is 136. The available data cannot be used to calculate the status of permanent and temporary teaching staff in terms of working hours. The total can be calculated by adding the number of permanent staff to the number of temporary staff “treated as permanent staff in terms of the number of hours worked”.

I. Article 14

124. There is nothing to report.

J. Article 15: Right to take part in cultural life

125. A number of public and private initiatives have promoted citizens’ right to take part in cultural life. The following are some of the key initiatives:

- Adoption of Decree No. 2015-486 of 7 September 2015 concerning the establishment, functions, organization and implementation of the Cultural Support Fund, “which repeals all previous conflicting provisions, including those contained in Decree No. 2008-112 of 12 March 2008 endorsing the Statutes of the Cultural Support Fund”. It seeks, *inter alia*, to amend the procedure for appointing representatives of cultural bodies to the Board of Directors of the Fund. Contrary to the repealed Decree, which granted associations the right to vote, the federations will henceforth be required to designate voters. The Cultural Support Fund provides financial support for initiatives launched by cultural organizations and stakeholders.
- Adoption of Decree No. 2011-322 of 2 April 2011 concerning the status of artists in the Republic of Benin;
- The organization of a number of events, including: the Benin International Theatre Festival, the Ouidah International Film Festival (Quintessence), the Cotonou documentary film festival (Lagunimages), the Star of African Cultural Integration (SICA), and the traditional Batombou festival known as Gaani, which is held in Nikki in the north of the country;
- The dynamism of cultural associations also helps to promote culture. They are active in many different areas, ranging from artistic creativity to artistic training, and including the promotion and dissemination of cultural products. They also remain at the forefront when it comes to defending the interests of cultural stakeholders in Benin. The establishment of associations composed of activists in various branches of culture constitutes a step towards the ultimate goal of establishing a confederation. Mention may be made in this connection of the Federation of Artists’ Associations of Benin (Faaben), the Federation of Musicians of Benin (FMB), the National Theatre Federation (Fénath), the African League of Theatre Professionals (Laprothéâtre), the Federation of Women Artists of Benin, etc.

126. In addition, the Government of Benin submitted a request to the French authorities on 27 July 2016 for the return to Benin of cultural property that was removed from the country during the period of colonization. The Beninese Government intends to enter into negotiations with the French authorities and the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) with a view to securing the restitution of the cultural property, which is distributed among museums and private collections.
