



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 October 2024

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Albania*

1. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of Albania¹ at its 41st and 42nd meetings,² held on 16 and 17 September 2024, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 59th meeting, held on 27 September 2024.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State party of its fourth periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues. The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue that it held with the State party's delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken to increase the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party, such as the ratification in 2022 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the adoption of the National Employment and Skills Strategy (2023–2030), the National Strategy on Migration (2024–2030) and its Action Plan (2024–2026) and the National Agenda for Children's Rights (2021–2026), as well as the other measures mentioned in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

4. The Committee reiterates its concern that, while the State party's Constitution affords protection to the rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in two distinct chapters, one of them cannot be invoked directly before the courts. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information on cases in which the Covenant has been invoked before and/or directly applied by domestic courts and the lack of specialized training on the Covenant and the justiciability of the rights therein for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement personnel and other relevant actors.

5. **Recalling its previous concluding observations, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the division of the Covenant's provisions into different chapters of the Constitution does not have an impact on their direct applicability and**

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-sixth session (9–27 September 2024).

¹ [E/C.12/ALB/4](#).

² See [E/C.12/2024/SR.41](#) and [E/C.12/2024/SR.42](#).



enforceability in domestic courts. The Committee also recommends that the State party provide training on a regular basis to judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement officers and other relevant actors concerning the rights enshrined in the Covenant and their direct enforceability in the courts and to provide rights holders with the information they need to demand that those rights be respected. In this respect, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

Free legal aid

6. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party towards guaranteeing access to free legal aid. However, the Committee is concerned that the procedure for obtaining secondary legal aid under Act No. 111/2017 poses significant challenges to accessing timely legal assistance, in particular in domestic violence cases, where the expedited nature of trials requires immediate support. The Committee is also concerned about the insufficient resources allocated to the implementation of this law, as well as the lack of awareness of the availability of free legal aid and of the application procedure, in particular among women and girls in rural areas.

7. The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to make free legal aid available and accessible to all persons in need. In particular, it recommends that the State party:

(a) **Review the procedure for obtaining secondary legal aid under Act No. 111/2017, on legal aid guaranteed by the State, to ensure timely and accessible support for victims, in particular in domestic violence cases;**

(b) **Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to the implementation of Act No. 111/2017;**

(c) **Raise public awareness about the availability of free legal aid and the application procedure, in particular among women and girls in rural areas.**

National human rights institution

8. The Committee notes that the People's Advocate Office was recredited with A status by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2020, with a number of recommendations for further strengthening its independence and effective functioning. The Committee is concerned, in particular, that the level of funding of the People's Advocate Office is insufficient to meet its human resources needs, including to retain full-time staff in its regional offices.

9. The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to enhance the effectiveness and independence of the People's Advocate Office, taking into account the observations and recommendations made by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in December 2020. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party provide the People's Advocate Office with adequate financial and human resources to enable it to fully discharge its mandate, including the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

Civil society organizations

10. The Committee notes the information provided by the State party during the dialogue about its plans to provide an electronic system for the registration of non-governmental organizations. The Committee is concerned about barriers in the registration process for such organizations, which is reportedly complex, costly and centralized in Tirana, making it particularly difficult for individuals living in remote areas to register them. The Committee notes with concern that such restrictions may hinder the establishment of organizations dedicated to human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

11. The Committee recommends that the State party remove any barriers that unduly restrict the registration of non-governmental organizations, including those engaged in the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. In

particular, the Committee recommends that the State party effectively implement the electronic system for the registration of non-governmental organizations and take further measures to simplify procedures, reduce costs and decentralize the process to allow for local registration outside Tirana, in particular for individuals living in remote areas.

Climate change

12. The Committee welcomes the State party's ongoing efforts in climate change mitigation, including plans to expand renewable capacity through new solar and wind power plants. However, the Committee is concerned that the State party's national climate change strategy has not been fully updated to reflect its revised nationally determined contributions target under the Paris Agreement. The Committee is particularly concerned about the limited capacity of the public administration to assess the impacts of climate change and incorporate them into sectoral strategies. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the absence of an emissions register, which significantly hinders the effective implementation of the revised nationally determined contributions target.

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Intensify its efforts to achieve its nationally determined contributions target under the Paris Agreement, in particular by updating its national climate change strategy to align it with the revised target;**

(b) **Strengthen the public administration's capacity to assess the impacts of climate change and integrate them into sectoral plans;**

(c) **Establish a national emissions register for better monitoring and accountability;**

(d) **Take into consideration the Committee's statement on climate change and the Covenant.³**

Regional disparities

14. The Committee is concerned about the persistent regional disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights that affect communities living in remote areas in particular.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party implement targeted measures to close regional gaps in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, with a particular focus on improving access to healthcare, education and social protection for people living in remote communities.**

Maximum available resources

16. The Committee is concerned about the persistently low budget allocations for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular with regard to access to healthcare, education and social protection. The Committee is also concerned that the overall ratio of tax revenues to gross domestic product remains low, restricting the fiscal space necessary for critical investments. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about inefficiencies in public spending, which may hinder the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase budget allocations to healthcare, education, social protection and other areas relating to the rights covered under the Covenant, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups;**

³ E/C.12/2018/1.

(b) **Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending to maximize its impact on reducing inequality and improving access to essential services, including by addressing instances of resource misallocation and underutilization;**

(c) **Review its taxation system to ensure a more efficient, progressive and just fiscal policy, including by reassessing corporate and personal income tax rates, broadening the tax base and enhancing revenue mobilization to support investments in human and physical capital and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.**

Roma and Egyptians

18. While welcoming the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians (2021–2025), the Committee is concerned about reports that Roma and Egyptians continue to face widespread societal discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantages, including limited access to work, healthcare, education and an adequate standard of living. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of separate disaggregated data on Roma and Egyptians, which hinders an accurate assessment of the specific challenges and barriers they face in accessing economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2 (2)).

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to address widespread societal discrimination and address the socioeconomic disadvantages faced by Roma and Egyptians, with a focus on ensuring their equitable access to work, healthcare, an adequate standard of living and education, in particular for women and girls;**

(b) **Ensure the effective implementation of the National Action Plan for the Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians (2021–2025) and other policies, while conducting regular monitoring and evaluation of their implementation and allocating sufficient resources;**

(c) **Ensure the collection of disaggregated data on Roma and Egyptians, as distinct groups, with full respect for the principle of self-identification, in order to inform policies and address their specific needs related to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights;**

(d) **Be guided by its general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.**

Persons with disabilities

20. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2021–2025) and of all by-laws necessary for the implementation of Act No. 93/2014, on Inclusion and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. However, the Committee is concerned that persons with disabilities still face barriers with regard to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including access to healthcare, owing in particular to the lack of accessible public infrastructure and buildings. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the by-laws required for the implementation of Act No. 15/2019, on Employment Promotion, have not yet been adopted (art. 2 (2)).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the full and effective implementation of Act No. 93/2014, on Inclusion and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, and its related by-laws, and take all measures necessary to improve public infrastructure and buildings in accordance with accessibility standards, with the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the process. The Committee also recommends that the State party adopt the by-laws required for the implementation of Act No. 15/2019, on Employment Promotion, which establishes a 25 to 1 ratio for the employment of persons with disabilities, and establish a robust enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance.**

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

22. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Action Plan for LGBTI+ persons (2021–2027). However, the Committee is concerned that discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons is still prevalent with regard to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is also concerned that, while the State party has made progress in its legislative and policy framework in protecting against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, significant gaps remain in the implementation, particularly due to the lack of public awareness about these protections and insufficient resources. Furthermore, it remains concerned that no provisions have yet been adopted with regard to the recognition of same-sex partnerships or the extension of spousal benefits to same-sex partners. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of legal recognition of the gender identity of transgender persons (art. 2 (2)).

23. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take targeted measures to address the ongoing discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons with regard to access to healthcare, education, employment and housing;**

(b) **Ensure the full implementation of its legislative and policy framework for protection against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, in particular the Action Plan for LGBTI+ persons (2021–2027), by allocating adequate resources, raising public awareness and strengthening monitoring and accountability mechanisms;**

(c) **Expedite the adoption of amendments to the Family Code to ensure the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and the extension of spousal benefits to same-sex partners;**

(d) **Develop and adopt an efficient procedure for legal gender recognition and guarantee the equal enjoyment by transgender persons of the rights covered under the Covenant.**

Equal rights of men and women

24. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan (2021–2030). The Committee is concerned, however, that the persistence of gender stereotypes and certain traditional practices continues to reinforce inequality between men and women with regard to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is particularly concerned that women still face barriers in accessing land ownership, including owing to inheritance practices. It is also concerned about the large gender disparity in labour market participation and the persistent gender pay gap, including due to the horizontal and vertical occupational segregation of women into lower-paying jobs or occupations and lower-level positions without promotion opportunities (art. 3).

25. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Strengthen efforts to combat gender stereotypes and traditional practices that reinforce gender inequality, in particular in relation to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Strengthen measures to ensure that women have equal access to land ownership, including by ensuring the effective implementation of legislation recognizing property gained during marriage as joint property;**

(c) **Increase the level of participation of women in the labour market, including through the promotion of awareness-raising campaigns and good practices to counter and change the perception of gender roles in the family and in society, as well as through an extension of the public network of childcare services and other services for children and other dependants;**

(d) **Take measures to close the gender pay gap by addressing its root causes, including the horizontal and vertical occupational gender segregation in the labour market. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party be guided by**

its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.

Right to work

26. The Committee is concerned that, despite progress in overall employment, young people, in particular young women, continue to face high rates of unemployment and inactivity. Moreover, the State party continues to face significant migration trends, with a considerable portion of its population seeking opportunities abroad. Economic factors, such as high unemployment rates, limited job prospects and low wages, remain primary drivers of emigration. The Committee is particularly concerned about the persistent difficulties that young people encounter in transitioning into the labour market and the lack of alignment between educational programmes and labour market demands. The Committee is also concerned about the large number of workers engaged in the informal economy, in particular in sectors such as agriculture, the wholesale and retail trades, and construction (art. 6).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen measures, including the Youth Guarantee scheme, to address the high rates of unemployment and inactivity among young people, in particular young women, by promoting inclusive labour market policies, creating more employment opportunities, improving productivity and reversing the trends of youth emigration. The Committee also recommends that the State party strengthen the quality of technical and vocational education and training programmes to ensure that qualifications and skills are aligned with the needs of the labour market. Furthermore, it recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to facilitate the transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy, with a particular focus on the agriculture, wholesale and retail trades, and construction sectors. In this context, the Committee refers the State party to its general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work.**

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

28. While the Committee welcomes the ongoing efforts by the State party to enhance the efficiency of labour inspections, it is concerned about the high incidence of fatal work accidents and the underreporting of non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. The Committee is also concerned about the limited capacity of the State Labour Inspectorate to effectively monitor and enforce labour laws, particularly with regard to safety and health standards. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the current minimum wage remains insufficient to ensure a decent living for workers and their families (art. 7).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party, with support and technical assistance from ILO, expedite the adoption and implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Political Document (2024–2030) and enhance the capacity of the State Labour Inspectorate to fulfil its mandate to effectively monitor and enforce labour laws, including by improving safety at work and tackling undeclared work. This would include increasing the number of inspectors, providing them with adequate training and improving coordination with other relevant authorities. The Committee also recommends that the State party increase the minimum wage to a level that ensures a decent living for all workers and their families and regularly review and adjust it, taking into account inflation and the cost of living. In this context, the Committee refers to its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work.**

Trade union rights

30. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Under section 35 of Act No. 152/2013, on Civil Servants, foreign workers without a residence permit do not benefit from trade union rights;

(b) There are restrictions on the right to strike for civil servants working in transport and public television services;

(c) The limitations under section 161 of the Labour Code restrict collective agreements to the enterprise or branch level (art. 8).

31. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take all measures necessary, including legislative measures, to ensure that all foreign workers benefit from trade union rights, whether or not they have a residence or a work permit;**

(b) **Amend section 35 of Act No. 152/2013, on Civil Servants, so as to allow civil servants who do not exercise authority in the name of the State and are working in transport and public television services to exercise the right to strike;**

(c) **Amend section 161 of the Labour Code and take measures to promote voluntary collective agreements at all levels, including the national level.**

Right to social security

32. The Committee is concerned that the State party's social protection system does not provide comprehensive benefit coverage. The Committee is particularly concerned about the absence of cash benefits for children and comprehensive long-term care services for older persons, along with significant coverage gaps in both contributory and non-contributory schemes, leaving disadvantaged and marginalized groups unprotected. The Committee is also concerned that a large number of workers, particularly those in the informal economy and non-standard forms of employment, do not qualify for essential benefits such as disability and employment injury benefits (art. 9).

33. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to expand and strengthen its social protection system, ensuring comprehensive coverage for all disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including the introduction of cash benefits for children and comprehensive long-term care services for older persons. The Committee also recommends extending coverage of disability and employment injury benefits to all workers, in particular those in the informal economy and non-standard forms of employment, to guarantee their full protection under the social security system. In this regard, the Committee refers to its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security.

Protection of the family and children

34. The Committee notes the State party's plans to draft a new legislation dedicated to the guardianship of children without parental care, based on the principle of the best interests of the child. However, the Committee reiterates its concern that the Law on the Status of Orphans guarantees only limited assistance and support to children during the transition from State institutions to an independent adulthood (art. 10).

35. Recalling its previous concluding observations,⁴ the Committee recommends that the State party amend the Law on the Status of Orphans to guarantee adequate assistance and support to children during the transition from State institutions to an independent adulthood.

36. While the Committee notes the existence of a legal framework in the State party aimed at ensuring equal access to services to migrants and asylum-seekers, notably unaccompanied foreign children and survivors of trafficking, the Committee is concerned that these children face significant barriers to their economic, social and cultural rights as they often lack access to adequate housing, healthcare and education due to the absence of long-term host structures and insufficient coordination among authorities (art. 10).

37. The Committee recommends that the State party take steps towards the full and effective implementation of legislation to integrate immigrants into society, focusing on providing essential services and opportunities for social inclusion. The Committee also recommends that the State party take steps to establish long-term host structures for unaccompanied foreign children and improve coordination among relevant authorities,

⁴ E/C.12/ALB/CO/2-3, para. 26.

including child protection units, social services and education and healthcare institutions. It also recommends that the State ensure that these children have access to adequate housing, healthcare and education, as well as other essential services. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the State party develop tailored educational programmes and vocational training for unaccompanied foreign children to facilitate their transition into adulthood and promote their dignity and well-being.

38. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to address gender-based violence, including amendments to Act No. 9669/2006, on measures against domestic violence, and amendments to the Criminal Code criminalizing psychological violence and protecting women from gender-based violence by intimate partners or former intimate partners. However, the Committee is concerned that various forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and online and technology-facilitated violence, are still prevalent (art. 10).

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen efforts to raise awareness about gender stereotypes and gender-based violence at all levels of society, paying particular attention to women and girls facing or at risk of intersectional discrimination, including through targeted campaigns, educational programmes and community outreach initiatives;**

(b) **Provide gender-sensitive training to law enforcement, judiciary personnel, healthcare providers and education professionals on identifying and addressing all forms of violence against women, including violence in digital spaces;**

(c) **Take effective measures to facilitate and encourage the reporting of gender-based violence, ensuring that all cases are promptly and thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators are held accountable and subjected to penalties that are commensurate with the gravity of the offences;**

(d) **Provide comprehensive support to victims, including access to safe temporary shelters, free legal assistance and psychological support services.**

Poverty

40. The Committee is concerned about the high incidence of poverty in the State party, particularly affecting families with dependent children, with over 20 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and over 36 per cent at risk of poverty in 2022 (art. 11).

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to reduce poverty, with a specific focus on families with dependent children, by enhancing social protection schemes and expanding targeted financial assistance.**

Right to adequate housing

42. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Social Housing Strategy for 2016–2025 and the amendment to Act No. 22/2018, on Social Housing, which determines that at least 5 per cent of the beneficiaries of any social housing programme must belong to the Roma and Egyptian communities. However, the Committee is concerned that lack of access to adequate housing remains a prevalent issue in the State party, exacerbated by the destruction caused by the earthquake on 26 November 2019. The Committee is concerned about the persistent gaps in the implementation of the State party's legal and policy framework on access to adequate housing, in particular for Roma, Egyptians and low-income households, including due to administrative barriers to accessing housing subsidies and social housing, discrimination in the housing market and instances of forced evictions being carried out without the provision of adequate alternative housing. The Committee is particularly concerned that many Roma and Egyptian communities continue to experience substandard living conditions in informal settlements, which have inadequate access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and electricity (art. 11).

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expand the availability of adequate and affordable housing, in particular by increasing the supply of social housing, and revise the eligibility criteria to account for income from informal work in the income-verification process;**

(b) **Strengthen enforcement of the 5 per cent quota for social housing beneficiaries from Roma and Egyptian communities by implementing effective monitoring mechanisms, ensuring transparency in allocation and conducting awareness campaigns to improve access;**

(c) **Ensure that evictions, when unavoidable, are carried out in accordance with due process of law, are preceded by consultation with the persons concerned and consideration of alternatives, are subject to appeal and result in adequate compensation or the provision of adequate alternative housing;**

(d) **Be guided by its general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.**

Right to health

44. The Committee welcomes the adoption by the State party of the National Health Strategy (2021–2030), which is aimed at increasing funding for public health, improving service quality and expanding health programmes. However, the Committee is concerned about the inadequacies in healthcare infrastructure, the shortage of healthcare personnel, the lack of access to specialized services for sexual and reproductive health and the long distances to reach healthcare facilities due to the unequal distribution of healthcare services, in particular in rural and remote areas. The Committee is also concerned that, despite the low prevalence of HIV in the State party, there is a high number of HIV-related deaths, and about reports indicating shortages of antiretroviral medications (art. 12).

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to improve healthcare infrastructure and access to specialized services for sexual and reproductive health, increase the number of healthcare personnel, particularly in rural areas, and ensure the equitable distribution of healthcare facilities and resources. It also recommends that the State party provide adequate transportation solutions and, where necessary, establish support facilities to accommodate individuals, in particular those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, who must travel long distances for essential healthcare. The Committee further recommends that the State party strengthen the public healthcare system to provide comprehensive HIV-related services, including prevention, treatment and care, while addressing the shortage of antiretroviral medications.**

Drug policy

46. The Committee is concerned about the enforcement of punitive measures for drug-related behaviour, including drug possession for personal use, and the lack of adequate harm reduction programmes available for persons who use drugs (art. 12).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its legal framework to ensure a human rights-based approach to drug use, ensuring that harm reduction programmes, health care and services, psychological support and rehabilitation for persons who use drugs are available and accessible, and eliminate obstacles that might limit access to them.**

Right to education

48. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party towards the realization of the right to education, including policies for the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children in schools and the increase in the number of teaching assistants dedicated to working with and assisting children with disabilities in schools. However, the Committee is concerned about:

- (a) Shortcomings in terms of quality education, in particular in remote areas;
- (b) High dropout rates in primary and secondary education, in particular in rural areas and among Roma and Egyptian children;
- (c) De facto school segregation where Roma and Egyptian students constitute the overwhelming majority of attendees, as recognized in the judgment rendered by the European Court of Human Rights on 31 August 2022 in *X and Others v. Albania*;
- (d) The existence of de facto school segregation in several areas of the country as a result of socioeconomic factors, including housing segregation and discrimination in the housing market;
- (e) Shortcomings in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities (art. 13).

49. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) **Strengthen its efforts to improve the quality of education, in particular in remote areas, and address low educational outcomes, in particular in mathematics, reading and science, including through sustained investment in training and improved working conditions for teachers;**
- (b) **Intensify its efforts to reduce the high dropout rates in primary and secondary schools and to address the root causes thereof, in particular among Roma and Egyptian children and children living in rural areas;**
- (c) **Strengthen the measures to implement the judgment rendered by the European Court of Human Rights in *X and Others v. Albania*;**
- (d) **Adopt a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to ensure the effective desegregation of affected schools throughout the country and prevent further school segregation, and take into account and address socioeconomic factors, including housing segregation and discrimination in the housing market;**
- (e) **Ensure inclusive quality education for children with disabilities by improving educational infrastructure to make schools fully accessible and ensuring the provision of accessible and adapted materials, inclusive curricula and individualized support and accommodation;**
- (f) **Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.**

Cultural rights

50. While the right to minority language education is provided for by the Act on the Protection of National Minorities, the Committee is concerned that the demand for such education is not thoroughly assessed across the State party and that the implementation of the threshold requirement of 20 per cent of the population in the administrative units that is applied by the authorities leads to unequal access to minority language education across the State party.

51. The Committee recommends that the State party properly assess the demand for minority language education across the State party and review the implementation of the threshold requirement of 20 per cent in the administrative units in order to ensure equal access to minority language education. The Committee encourages the State party to consider ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Right to participate in and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress

52. The Committee is concerned that a lack of digital skills and access to technology continues to prevent disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in particular Roma and Egyptian communities, from fully enjoying their rights and accessing public services, which are increasingly digital. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of investment in scientific research and associated measures in the State party (art. 15).

53. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to narrow the digital divide for the benefit of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in particular Roma and Egyptian communities, by expanding access to digital technologies and the Internet. It also recommends developing targeted programmes to enhance digital literacy and skills within these communities, ensuring that they are equipped to access and benefit from increasingly digital public services. The Committee further recommends that the State party significantly increase investment in scientific research and implement targeted measures to enhance national research and innovation capacity, including through collaboration among academic institutions, the private sector and government agencies, as well as by ensuring adequate funding.

D. Other recommendations

54. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

55. The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

56. The Committee also recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.⁵

57. The Committee further recommends that the State party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State party to, *inter alia*, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁶

58. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, regional and local levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State party to continue engaging with its national human rights institutions and to engage with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

59. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 October 2026), information on

⁵ [E/C.12/2019/1](#).

⁶ [HRI/MC/2008/3](#).

the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 7 (a) (free legal aid), 13 (a) (climate change) and 27 (right to work) above.

60. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fifth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 October 2029, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. In addition, it invites the State party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties.⁷

⁷ [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I.