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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fifth periodic report submitted by Egypt under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2018^{*, **}

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Introduction

1. As part of its commitment to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, and in expression of its readiness to fulfil its treaty obligations, Egypt is submitting the present combined fifth and sixth periodic reports, which cover the period since the submission of its previous report. The report covers the most important advances in legislation and practice related to the implementation of the Covenant in the period that has passed since the Committee issued its concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports, on 13 December 2013. In particular, the report focuses on the period between the promulgation of the 2014 Constitution and the end of 2024.
2. The report was drafted by the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights, which started its work at the beginning of 2020. The Committee, which was established by decree of the Prime Minister, includes all ministries and government bodies involved with human rights and is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is responsible for monitoring implementation by Egypt of its international obligations under the relevant international treaties and protocols and for proposing the necessary legislative measures and procedures. The technical secretariat of the Committee collects and analyses data and information to create a database of the recommendations Egypt has received from international and regional mechanisms and to follow up on progress. It also reviews human rights legislation and policies, and follows up on the implementation of national human rights strategies. The Committee also provides technical support to various national authorities, with a particular view of creating specialized human rights units within ministries and in the governorates, and it provides training in disseminating a culture of human rights and incorporating human rights into policies and programmes.
3. In September 2021, Egypt launched its first national human rights strategy (2021–2026). The launch was attended by the President of the Republic, reflecting the importance the State attaches to its commitment to implement its strategic objectives. It was prepared through a consultative process that included ministries, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Meetings were held with civil society representatives, and use was made of international experiences and best practices from countries around the world. The strategy takes a comprehensive and serious approach to the promotion of human rights and basic freedoms, taking account both of opportunities and challenges relating to its targets under the four main themes. It aims to make progress on three parallel and complementary tracks: legislative development, institutional development and human rights capacity-building. The first and second reports on the implementation of the strategy were issued in December 2022 and August 2024, respectively. The third report, which is due out before the end of 2024, will assess progress and identify areas in need of improvement. Economic, social and cultural rights are addressed as part of the second theme of the strategy.

Legislative changes affecting the implementation of the Covenant

4. A number of laws that have a bearing on the implementation of the Covenant were enacted during the period covered by the report. They include the following:
 - Act No. 81 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Act
 - Act No. 82 of 2016 promulgating the Irregular Migration and Migrant Smuggling Act
 - Act No. 197 of 2017 amending certain provisions of Act No. 94 of 2003 establishing the National Council for Human Rights
 - Act No. 213 of 2017 promulgating the Trade Unions Act
 - Act No. 10 of 2018 promulgating the Persons with Disabilities Act
 - Act No. 30 of 2018 promulgating the Act regulating the National Council for Women
 - Act No. 148 of 2019 promulgating the Social Insurance and Pensions Act
 - Act No. 182 of 2023 which reorganizes the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. Amendments to the law have elevated the legal status of the Council and expanded its mandate as an independent constitutional institution.

Policies and measures aimed at providing greater protection of human rights and implementing the Covenant

5. Beginning on 1 July 2021, the Egyptian Government launched the national “dignified life” project for the development of Egyptian rural villages. The project is being implemented over three stages with 4,500 villages and 28,000 subunits in 175 districts across 20 governorates. Around 58 per cent of the population of Egypt is to benefit from the initiative, which aims to improve the quality of life and the level of services. The project envisages a number of articulated interventions, including infrastructure such as drinking water, sanitation and housing, as well as an increased number of schools and health centres, and income-generating schemes to provide decent standards of living for rural communities. The project will also contribute to advancing the national human rights strategy. The first phase of the “dignified life” project – which is due to be completed during 2024 – has been allocated a budget of 400 billion Egyptian pounds (LE) for development projects covering 1,477 villages in 52 districts, benefiting around 19 million persons. The second stage of the project, which will begin in 2024/25 and will cover around 1,667 villages, has been allocated sums amounting to some LE 700 billion. An online system for monitoring the projects that are part of the “dignified life” initiative has been set up as part of the Actions Platform of the Sustainable Development Goals, run by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

6. During the period covered by this report, a number of national strategies have been rolled out and updated to incorporate human rights principles and concepts in various areas. As of May 2024, the “Information and Decision Support Centre” of the Office of the Prime Minister had identified some 90 strategies for assessment, including the following which have been approved and launched:

- The Egypt Vision 2030 sustainable development strategy, which was updated at the end of 2023, places the human being at the centre of development and emphasizes the interconnectedness between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The Egypt Vision incorporates several strategic indicators wherewith to monitor performance and progress.
- The third national strategy on combating and preventing trafficking in persons (2022–2026).
- The national alternative care strategy (2021–2030), which aims to provide family or foster care for the upbringing and protection of children, as an alternative to institutionalization. This is in line with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2009.
- The national strategy for population and development (2023–2030), which aims to strike a balance between population growth and development by promoting reproductive health, empowering women, investing in youth, increasing education opportunities and raising awareness of demographic issues, as well as achieving social and economic well-being for all citizens.
- The national early childhood development strategy (2024–2029) and its associated plan of action.
- The strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (2024–2029), which has been updated to ensure universal access to education, without discrimination, and to improve the quality of education.
- The national anti-corruption strategy (2023–2030), which is entering its third stage.

Constitutional developments affecting the implementation of the Covenant

7. The 2014 Constitution represents a qualitative step forwards in improving human rights in Egypt, as it reflects the nation’s awareness of the universality and indivisibility of human rights and its absolute conviction of the need for equality among all citizens and of

equality of opportunity in the exercise of rights, without discrimination on grounds of religion, belief, sex, origin, race, colour, language, disability, social status, political or geographical affiliation or any other reason. The Constitution guarantees economic, social and cultural rights, and places an obligation on the State to pursue social justice, provide dignified living conditions, ensure equality of rights between men and women and protect women against all forms of violence. The Constitution also enjoins the empowerment of women and the provision of care and protection for mothers and children, and for dependent and elderly women and women in need. Furthermore, it envisages protection for workers' rights, recognizes the right to strike peacefully and includes provision for social insurance and social security for smallholders, agricultural workers, fishermen and unfederated workers.

8. The Constitution includes – for the first time – undertakings to set aside a certain proportion of government spending, amounting to no less than 10 per cent of gross domestic product, of which 3 per cent is to be allocated to the health sector, 4 per cent to general education, 2 per cent to university education and 1 percent to scientific research. Those proportions are then to increase gradually until they match international averages.

9. The freedom to establish democratic and independent trade unions and labour federations is also enshrined in the Constitution. Under the Constitution, moreover, the State is to guarantee adequate, safe and healthy housing, to develop a housing plan and to tackle the problem of informal settlements. In addition, constitutional provisions protect the right to adequate and healthy food and clean water as well as the rights of children to health and to family care, education and emotional and cognitive development. The Constitution also upholds the rights of persons with disabilities and of older persons, and promotes their health and their social, economic and cultural welfare.

10. Under article 151 of the Constitution, the legislature, the judiciary and the executive are required to abide by ratified international treaties as if they were national laws. This means that persons who have suffered harm due to the non-implementation of a treaty provision may appeal to the courts. In this connection, the 2014 Constitution goes further than previous constitutions in that article 93 recognizes a special status for ratified international human rights treaties, conferring upon them force of law and bestowing constitutional protection on the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined therein. Under article 121, laws regulating the exercise of constitutionally protected rights and freedoms are considered to be an integral part of the Constitution itself and, therefore, can be enacted only with the approval of two thirds of members of the House of Representatives. Thus, any concerned party may have recourse to the Supreme Constitutional Court to challenge the constitutionality of a legislative text.

11. Egypt, which acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2019, has a legislative structure replete with laws that reflect the country's commitment to the Covenant. The most significant of these laws will be reviewed in detail below.

The present report is divided into two sections. The first covers developments in the implementation of Covenant (arts. 1 to 15) at the legislative, judicial and administrative levels, accompanied by data relating to the years subsequent to 2014. The second section includes replies and clarifications regarding the concluding observations issued by the Committee following its consideration of the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Egypt in 2013.

Section I: Comments regarding the articles of the Covenant

Article 1

The right of peoples to self-determination

12. The Constitution affirms the fact that sovereignty is to be exercised and protected by the people. They alone are the source of authority and the bulwark of national unity which is rooted in principles of equality, justice and equal opportunity for all citizens (art. 4). Furthermore, the Constitution stipulates that sovereignty and the will of the people are to be realized via self-determination and freedom to choose a political system. This is to be

achieved via participation in public life – which is a citizens’ national duty, whether they reside in Egypt or abroad – through voting, running for office and expressing opinion via referendums (arts. 87 and 88). A referendum on the Constitution was held in January 2014 and a referendum on amending certain articles of the Constitution in April 2019. Presidential and legislative elections have been held twice since the Committee issued its concluding observations.

13. Rooted in a belief in the right of the Egyptian people to dispose freely of their natural assets and resources, the Constitution stipulates that the nation’s natural resources belong to the people and that it is incumbent upon the State to preserve those resources, use them responsibly and ensure they are not depleted, with due regard to the rights of future generations. Furthermore, the State is committed to optimizing its use of renewable energy sources and to stimulating investment and encouraging scientific research. In addition, the State is working to industrialize the processing of raw materials and to augment their value, depending upon economic feasibility. It is forbidden to dispose of the public assets of the State, and any right to exploit natural resources or concession of public utilities is to be regulated by law for a period that must not exceed 30 years. The right to exploit quarries, small-scale mines and salt flats, and any concession of public utilities is to be regulated by law for a period that must not exceed 15 years (art. 32 of the Constitution).

Consultation with local communities

14. Under the Constitution, the State is to formulate and implement a comprehensive economic and urban development plan for border areas and deprived areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matruh and the regions of Nuba. The people of those areas are to be involved in, and be the foremost beneficiaries of development projects, which must take due account of the cultural and environmental specificities of local communities (art. 236 of the Constitution).

15. In order to give force to this constitutional provision, the State engages in ongoing consultations with grass-roots organizations. In that connection – and in order to strengthen frameworks of community participation, transparency and accountability – the Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation is running a plan to provide citizens with detailed information about the investments it makes in each governorate, and how these are distributed across different sectors. In 2009, the Ministry launched its “Sharek 2030” app, which acts as an interactive platform between citizens and government and which can be used to raise awareness about development programmes and projects. The app serves as a way for citizens to participate and to propose their own priority initiatives according to their local needs.

16. The State engages in ongoing consultations with local-level organizations. Such consultation falls within the operational framework of the government agencies responsible for drafting public policy on sustainable planning and urban development; i.e., the Supreme Council for Urban Planning, the General Agency for Urban Planning and the State Authority for Urbanistic Coordination. Under Act No. 119 of 2008, urban planning is to be proposed and developed with the involvement of local townships, local councils, competent executive bodies, and representatives of civil society (art. 11 of the Act). Comments from citizens concerning strategic plans for local areas where modernization work is being conducted are collected systematically, at the most every five years, in order to ensure that the plans reflect socioeconomic developments, environmental changes and the local situation (art. 12 of the Act).

17. The Government is implementing its Upper Egypt Local Development Programme (2016–2021). The Programme – which aims to promote sustainable local development, create job opportunities and reduce poverty in the governorates of Sohag and Qena – has a total expenditure estimated at \$957 million. It seeks to engage citizens in all aspects of public services in both governorates.

Article 2

International cooperation and equality in the exercise of the rights protected under the Covenant

18. Inspired by its belief in international development cooperation, Egypt established its Agency for Development Partnership which aims to enhance the efforts the country makes in the field of international cooperation, particularly cooperation among States of the global South in matters relating to sustainable development. The Agency thus works to promote South-South cooperation by supporting priority operations in beneficiary States and sustaining the efforts of African countries towards the implementation of the “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”.

19. The current development portfolio of the Ministry of International Cooperation, with both multilateral and bilateral development partners, amounts to around \$25 billion. This sum has been earmarked for the implementation of 377 projects in various development sectors, all of which promote the implementation of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, development funding contributes directly to the achievement of 14 of the Goals, specifically Goal 9 regarding infrastructure, industrialization and innovation; Goal 11 concerning sustainable cities and human settlements; Goal 6 regarding clean water and sanitation for all; Goal 7 on clean and affordable energy; Goal 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption and production; and Goal 13 regarding climate action.

20. The Investment Act, which reflects developments at the national and international levels, has been promulgated with a view to promoting the role business plays in advancing the rights enshrined in the Covenant. The Act, which aims to encourage and attract the cash flows necessary for development and to reduce rates of unemployment, stresses the importance of gender equality in investment opportunities and seeks to promote the social responsibility of investors by allowing them to allocate up to 10 per cent of their annual net profits to establish community development systems outside the framework of their own investment projects. This can cover areas such as environmental protection and improvement; healthcare services and programmes; social or cultural services or some other field of development; technical education; research funding; campaigns to boost and improve production; and training and scientific research.

Article 2 (2)

Equality in the exercise of the rights protected under the Covenant

21. The preamble and the body text of the Egyptian Constitution constitute a single interdependent and indivisible fabric, a coherent organic unity that guarantees equality and non-discrimination in the exercise of all the rights enshrined in the Covenant, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. The Constitution enjoins the equality of all citizens before the law, with equal rights, freedoms and duties, and without discrimination on grounds of religion, belief, sex, origin, race, colour, language, disability, social status, political affiliation, geographic location, or any other reason. Discrimination and incitement to hatred are crimes punishable by law (art. 53).

22. Economic, social and cultural rights are all guaranteed under the Constitution, which includes special provisions intended to empower women and protect their rights, including female heads of household, older women and women in need. The Constitution also explicitly upholds the rights of children and of persons with disabilities, as well as of smallholders, agricultural workers, fishermen, informal workers, small artisans and older persons in general. And it places the State under an obligation to formulate a comprehensive economic and urban development plan for border areas and deprived areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matruh and the regions of Nuba.

23. The entire body of Egyptian legislation prohibits discrimination on any conceivable grounds. This includes the Criminal Code, which penalizes anyone who performs or fails to perform an action whereby discrimination arises among individuals or against a particular group of persons on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or belief, where such discrimination violates the principle of equality of opportunity or social justice or causes a

breach of the peace. In such cases, the Code envisages a term of imprisonment and/or a fine.¹ Other relevant laws include the Labour Code,² the Civil Service Act,³ the Persons with Disabilities Act,⁴ the Act regulating the activity of civil society associations,⁵ the Trade Unions Act⁶ and the Comprehensive Health Insurance Act.⁷ These dispositions of law offer full protection and judicial remedies against practices on the part of the legislature or the executive that might violate the provisions of the Covenant or of the above-mentioned laws, be it by abrogation, providing compensation or imposing criminal penalties in accordance with the general rules of the Egyptian legal system.

24. The sustainable development strategy known as “Egypt Vision 2030”, launched in 2015, aims to place Egypt among the top 30 countries in the world by 2030 in terms of economic and human development indicators, the quality of basic education, the provision of decent job opportunities for women and young persons and universal healthcare coverage for all citizens. It also aims to make Egyptian society just and cohesive, characterized by an equality of rights that lays the foundations for social justice. As part of the process of defining the targets of the economic and social development plan for the fiscal year 2023/24, a special department was created to review the role that plan has in the implementation of the national human rights strategy (2021–2026) and, in particular, how the projects, programmes and initiatives envisaged in the plan are linked to the principal areas covered by the strategy, notably economic, social and cultural rights and the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and special needs, young persons and older persons. This approach shows how all segments of society have an equal right to benefit from the fruits of development.

25. The Government’s programme of work addresses a number of questions including, inter alia, development gaps and non-discrimination on the basis of gender. This have given rise to numerous area-specific programmes aimed at supporting social, economic and human development, including slum development and development projects in Upper Egypt, social protection programmes, the construction of social housing and of public utilities, a “decent life” programme to develop rural villages and the development of healthcare services, education and employment. In its substantive review of the rights enshrined in the Covenant, the present report will focus on national efforts and policies in this regard. Beginning in the financial year 2021/22, the Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation has been using a “financing formula” when proposing investment plans for the governorates. The formula is important in order to ensure an equitable distribution of government investments among the governorates, to promote economic and social equality between different regions and to advance sustainable development at the national level. Such distribution is regulated by a body of criteria, including poverty and human development indicators in the various governorates, population and average previous investments. Beginning in the year 2023/24, a “financing formula” has also been adopted for the distribution of investments among districts and boroughs within governorates, although this formula currently includes only a population indicator.

Article 2 (3)

Enjoyment by non-citizens of the rights enshrined in the Covenant

26. The rights of non-citizens (foreigners) as envisaged in the Covenant are also duly regulated by Egyptian law. These rights – which include the right to work, to own property and to social insurance and social security – are governed by the Labour Code, the Social Insurance Act⁸ and the Social Security Act.⁹ In all cases, Egypt adheres to the principle of reciprocity in international relations while admitting a number of exceptions for the nationals

¹ Article 161 bis (a) of Act No. 126 of 2011 amending certain provisions of the Criminal Code.

² Promulgated by Act No. 12 of 2003.

³ Promulgated by Act No. 81 of 2016.

⁴ Promulgated by Act No. 10 of 2018.

⁵ Promulgated by Act No. 149 of 2019.

⁶ Promulgated by Act No. 213 of 2017.

⁷ Promulgated by Act No. 2 of 2018.

⁸ Promulgated by Act No. 135 of 2010.

⁹ Promulgated by Act No. 137 of 2010.

of certain States, depending upon national considerations to be determined by decree of the President of the Republic.

27. As of August 2022, Egypt was hosting an estimated 9 million foreigners – including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – or around 8.7 per cent of Egyptian inhabitants. As of August 2024, 760,581 foreign refugees and asylum-seekers of 62 different nationalities were registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Migrants and refugees residing in the country enjoy access to primary healthcare services and vaccinations on an equal footing with Egyptians, and they have been included in various health campaigns. They have also been integrated into the national polio campaign, campaigns against intestinal parasite infections for school students and an initiative for the early detection of obesity and stunting diseases among primary school pupils. In the context of its efforts to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and to distribute vaccines, the Government provided protection and support to the migrants and foreigners present on national territory and made health and medical services available to them on an equal footing with citizens.

Article 3: Equality of rights between men and women

28. The Government wishes to reiterate that all citizens are equal before the law, with equal rights, freedoms and duties, and without discrimination on grounds of religion, belief, sex, origin, race, colour, language, disability, social status, political affiliation, geographic location, or any other reason. Discrimination and incitement to hatred are crimes punishable by law. The State, moreover, is to take the necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination (art. 53 of the Constitution). Under several provisions of the Constitution, the State is required to achieve equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and to take steps to ensure that women are adequately represented in elected assemblies and have the right to hold public office and senior management positions in the State and to be appointed to judicial bodies, without discrimination. The State is also obligated to protect women against all forms of violence, to ensure that they are able to reconcile family duties with work requirements and to provide care and protection for mothers, children and women in general.

29. The State has launched the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women (2016–2030), which is consistent with the Constitution and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal. In addition, 2017 was declared the Year of Egyptian Women and was marked by efforts towards women's political, social and economic empowerment. Also in 2017, the National Council for Women was established, as was the Egypt National Observatory for Women which is a mechanism to oversee the achievement of targets relating to the advancement of women in the period 2017–2030. The Observatory also serves as a tool to monitor the indicators of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women.

30. The Observatory publishes a set of periodic reports on the status of women in areas such as health, information technology, economic issues, leadership positions, marriage and divorce. It has also engaged in a number of in-depth studies on subjects including disability, welfare and women's involvement in the labour force.

Governmental efforts to close the gender gap

31. Several regulations and pieces of legislation have been enacted – notably the Civil Service Act – which prohibit gender-based discrimination among government functionaries. The Act envisages benefits for working mothers, such as four months of childbirth leave on full pay and four months of maternity leave on full pay. Moreover, female functionaries are entitled to unpaid leave to care for their offspring for a maximum of two years at a time and for up to a total of six years during the course of their civil service career. Another piece of legislation is the Investment Act No. 72 of 2017, which enjoins gender equality in investment-linked opportunities and rights, as well as support for small and medium-sized enterprises and for female entrepreneurs. For its part, Act No. 219 of 2017 amending certain

provisions of the Inheritance Act No. 77 of 1948 envisages the application of sharia principles in matters relating to inheritance by males and females. Lastly, under a 2018 decree of the Ministry of Housing, female heads of household have been added as priority beneficiaries for housing units in social housing projects.

32. The third annual sustainable development plan 2020/21 includes provisions aimed at promoting the involvement of women in the labour market, notably in small-scale and micro income-generating projects for female breadwinners, particularly in rural areas. The Government allocates programme budgets and performance-based budgets with a view to achieving gender-equality. In fact, 14 per cent of the State's general budget between 2015/16 and 2019/20 was channelled directly to women's issues.

33. Equal opportunities units inside ministries (264 units in all) are one of the mechanisms that aim to establish the principle of gender equality and equality of opportunity across all institutions, the purpose being to improve the lot of Egyptian women, to help women reach leadership and decision-making roles and to narrow the gender gap. The equal opportunities units gather statistical data on women in leadership positions, facilitate access for women to projects being run by ministries and ministerial agencies and integrate the principle of gender equality and equality of opportunity into the preparation, planning, supervision and evaluation of national strategies and plans. The units also conduct studies and research on women's empowerment, raise awareness about the principle of gender equality and promote gender-sensitive budgeting.

Articles 4 and 5

Limitations on the rights envisaged in the Covenant

34. The Constitution places a restriction on legislators' work to regulate the exercise of rights and freedoms, stipulating that those rights and freedoms that are intrinsic to the citizen as a person are not to be curtailed or suspended. No law, in fact, that regulates the exercise of rights and freedoms may restrict them in such a way as to infringe upon their origin and essence (art. 93). Any violation of the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution is a crime to which no statute of limitations applies, be it for civil or criminal proceedings. Injured parties who have suffered a violation of their rights or freedoms have the right to bring direct criminal action, and the State is to guarantee fair compensation for victims of violations (art. 99). One important safeguard lies in the fact that the laws that govern rights and freedoms are considered to be complementary to the Constitution, meaning that any amendment to those laws requires a majority of two-thirds of members of the House of Representatives (art. 121). This means that the rights guaranteed under the Covenant – which are likewise guaranteed under the Constitution – are not subject to the political fluctuations that are required in order to obtain a parliamentary majority for the promulgation of other laws.

Article 6

Right to work

Employment programmes

35. The Government has managed to reduce the unemployment rate from 13 per cent in 2014 to 6.5 per cent in 2024 and, in 2022, launched a national plan to promote gender equality in the workplace. The Government has also developed a national employment strategy which envisages job creation mechanisms and infrastructure to regulate the supply and demand of Egyptian labour on the labour market at home and abroad. In addition, it had launched the "Career 2030" project, which aims to train 1 million persons in the professions most in demand on the national and international labour market. More than 30,000 persons with disabilities have been hired over the past 10 years, including 14,000 since the beginning of 2023.

36. The Government is striving to create 900,000 jobs per year over the next four years, while the Ministry of Labour has launched its National Employment Gazette, which shows all available job openings in the private sector.

Youth employment

37. Unemployment rates among young people of both sexes have fallen. The Ministry of Labour has employed 593,859 young men and women through the National Employment Gazette, and it has made around 91,000 foreign job openings available for young people via the country's labour offices abroad. It has also provided thousands of young persons with training in 49 different professions that are in demand on the labour market. The training, which was delivered at 75 vocational training centres, is part of the presidential "dignified life" initiative.

38. The State Authority for the Development of Medium-Size, Small and Micro-Businesses has provided funding and services to set up projects of interest to young people, which are being launched by youthful entrepreneurs. In addition to this, a national community, human and local development plan known as "Your Enterprise" has contributed to the implementation of more than 198,000 projects, with loans amounting to LE 25.2 billion. These projects have created around 1.9 million job openings for young persons. In a related context, the Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation has launched its "1 million entrepreneurs" campaign as part of the "Rowad 2030" project. By June 2023, 50,000 young trainees had signed up for the campaign, which aims to instruct 1 million entrepreneurs by 2030. Another goal of the campaign is to empower young deaf and non-verbal persons to enter the labour market. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has rolled out a system of grants to train 20,000 young people of both sexes to work on freelancing platforms. The initiative focuses on building the capacities of Egyptian youth and enhancing their skills in various fields to help them obtain jobs via such platforms.

Employment of women and girls

39. Numerous policies and programmes seek to promote the empowerment of women and to engage them in the labour market, and a national plan to promote gender equality in the workplace was rolled out in 2022. The unemployment rate among women decreased from 24.2 per cent in 2015 to 17.8 per cent in 2021 as the State ran production projects to provide suitable job opportunities for women. The percentage of women-oriented small businesses increased from 22.5 per cent in 2015 to 64.5 per cent in 2019. A total of LE 48.3 billion has been made available to finance 192,716 small businesses, creating 481,347 jobs, as well as 1,713,513 micro-businesses for women, creating 2,530,452 jobs. Microloans to women rose from 45 per cent in 2015 to 48.8 per cent in 2019. At the same time, the amount of financing for women-oriented micro- and small businesses rose from LE 719 million in 2014 to LE 1.884 billion in 2018. The Nasser Social Bank has run funding programmes that have benefited 19,000 women.

40. The State is also running a number of other projects, including one to enhance employment opportunities for women in agroindustry, which aims to reach out to 19,500 women, both directly and indirectly. Another initiative is the "SWEET" project, which seeks to build the capacity of women entrepreneurs and of female workers in the handmade carpet industry, while digital savings programmes seek to advance the economic and financial inclusion of women. The programmes, which have reached 1.2 million women over three years, helped to increase the number of women with bank accounts to 20.3 million in December 2023.

Employment and training for women and girls

41. More than 14,000 jobs for persons with disabilities were created between January 2023 and July 2024. Also, between October 2023 and the first half of 2024, the Ministry of Labour ran a comprehensive project to train and employ persons with disabilities. In all, 17,800 businesses (out of a total of 24,000) employing more than 20 workers were evaluated, and it emerged that, in order to meet the legal requirement for the employment of persons with disabilities, the businesses in question needed to create 134,440 openings. Of these posts, 75,500 were already occupied by workers leaving a further 47,583 persons with disabilities to be employed, through the good offices of the Central Unit for Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

Work in the informal economy

42. The State has taken action to integrate the informal labour market into the formal economy. In fact, as part of its sustainable development strategy known as Egypt Vision 2030, the Government aims to integrate the informal sector into the broader economy, to which end it is seeking to reduce the magnitude of informal employment and informal activities. The State provides mechanisms and incentives to facilitate integration and to eliminate obstacles that stand in its way. At the same time, the national projects being run by the Government, its encouragement of small and medium-size businesses and its reforms to the regulatory, legislative and institutional economic environment have contributed significantly to absorbing workers out of the informal economy and integrating them into the formal economy, also helping to provide more real job opportunities within the Egyptian economy and thus giving the workers concerned greater protection and social security and guaranteeing them a dignified life.

43. The State provides support for irregular workers. In fact, it disbursed LE 6.261 billion, or six instalments of LE 500 to each irregular worker affected by coronavirus. In addition to this, 213,422 insurance policies were issued for this category of workers at a cost of LE 13 million, covering cases of partial or total disability, or death. Also, 48,889 safety certificates were awarded to irregular workers at a cost of LE 24,444,500, while 22,000 insurance policies were issued for the same number of fishermen in five different governorates at a cost of LE 1.32 million. One hundred thousand irregular workers in Alamein, the Administrative Capital and Port Said have been registered and 53,000 national identity cards have been issued, indicating the workers' real profession. They have also been provided, free of charge, with skills certificates and licences to work as a way of encouraging them to allow themselves to be recorded in the database. The cost of this operation was LE 6 million.

44. In a related context, the State has borne the cost of paying the salaries of workers in economic sectors affected by coronavirus. The total amount disbursed in this regard over the past two years amounts to LE 1,020,517,000, which was distributed between the tourism, textile and other sectors.

45. The State has begun a census of irregular workers to prepare the ground for providing them with a living allowance, social security and health insurance, and it has developed a comprehensive vision for the integration of such workers into the formal economy. The fact that irregular workers were registered in the context of the financial grants disbursed during the COVID-19 pandemic has helped produce accurate data concerning them. In addition to this, incentivization programmes have been designed to encourage the informal sector to integrate into the formal sector and efforts have been made to improve conditions for workers, to guarantee their rights and to make them aware of the importance this has in raising product quality and improving survival potential in a competitive market. Work has also focused on facilitating and standardizing procedures for interacting with government bodies while also emphasizing that the Government deals only with persons who are on the commercial registration and hold a tax card.

Legal safeguards to protect workers against arbitrary dismissal

46. On the subject of arbitrary dismissal, the Labour Code specifies the minimum amount of compensation to which a worker is entitled if the employment contract is arbitrarily terminated. This is without prejudice to judges' authority to award compensation in excess of that amount in the light of a court assessment of the severity of the damage caused to a worker as a result of the early and unjustified termination of a contract of employment. This helps to ensure that workers have financial resources until they can find another job.

Technical and vocational training

47. A comprehensive strategy has been rolled out for the development of centres to deliver vocational training to young people in line with the requirements of the labour market. The purpose is to create a system of training and qualifications for young persons that remains linked to the labour market and thereby to create 2 million job opportunities over 5 years. A national "training for employment" plan has been adopted, the implementation of which

involves 22 government agencies, and there are 72 vocational training centres across the country, including 38 permanent centres in 25 governorates and 27 mobile training units. The total cost of these facilities amounts to LE 54 million. A total of 36 training curricula have been developed and the training centres have run 334 workshops. Under the State plan for socioeconomic development during the fiscal year 2022/23, LE 56.8 million has been allocated to develop centres to train productive families. Also, around LE 149 million has been channelled into a programme for the reform of technical education and vocational training (Ministry of Commerce and Industry), LE 24 million into developing artisanal training centres (Ministry of Population) and LE 9 million into developing and equipping vocational centres belonging to the Ministry of Labour. All this has helped to supply the local and foreign labour market with its requirements in terms of young people trained in the use of the most modern machines, equipment and skills.

Article 7 of the Covenant

48. Workers' rights, protection against workplace hazards, the provision of safe and healthy working conditions, the creation of well-balanced labour relations, equality of opportunity, the fair distribution of the fruits of development, the reduction of income disparity, a minimum wage to live a life of dignity and a maximum wage for persons working in State institutions are all upheld under the Constitution (arts. 13 and 27). These values are duly reflected in the laws that regulate workers' rights and in the Government's efforts to maintain fair and fulfilling working conditions.

49. As concerns the criteria for determining and the mechanism for altering the minimum wage, the National Wage Council was established under Prime Ministerial Decree No. 983 of 2003 and is headed by the Minister of Planning. The Council was reconstituted and its terms of reference redefined in 2011 and in 2020.

50. The Council is responsible for setting the national minimum wage, taking due account of the cost of living while also pursuing means and finding measures to strike a balance between wages and prices. Fixing and amending the minimum wage takes place within the framework of the State's commitment to protect workers' rights and interests, to preserve the gains they have made, to enable them to live lives of dignity in the light of new developments and economic changes at home and abroad, and to balance the interests of the two parties in the production process (employers and workers). In fact, the minimum wage has been raised several times in both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, it was raised from LE 1,200 in March 2019, to LE 3,500 in March 2023, to LE 4,000 in September 2023 and finally to LE 6,000 in March 2024. The minimum wage for private sector workers, which stood at LE 2,400 in January 2022, was raised to LE 2,700 in January 2023, to LE 3,000 in July 2023, to LE 3,500 in January 2024 and to LE 6,000 in March 2024.

Promotions

51. The Civil Service Act No. 81 of 2016 contains general rules that regulate the promotion of workers, without discrimination, within the administrative apparatus of the State. Under those rules, all workers are promoted from the lowest grade to the first grade on the exclusive criterion of seniority; i.e., on the basis of the date they occupied the post. By contrast, leadership positions and supervisory roles are allocated on the basis of competence and merit. In accordance with the general rules regulating the Egyptian legal system, any worker has the right to challenge a promotion decision before the courts, if that decision violates the principle of equality and equal opportunities in promotion to higher job grades.

Leisure time and holidays

52. Working hours, hours of rest, paid holidays, occupational health and safety rules and workplace protection for women, children, and persons with disabilities are all defined in the Civil Service Act No. 81 of 2016 and in the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003). Those provisions are applicable to all workers, irrespective of their nationality. Under Egyptian law, the Ministry of Labour is to inspect all places of work to ensure that workers are duly enjoying their rights and that their contracts incorporate the benefits envisaged under national

legislation. Under the Children's Act, working women who are foster mothers or who care for an infant under the age of 6 months are granted 4 months of paid childcare leave. The Act gives them the same right as birth mothers with regard to the length of breastfeeding breaks and childcare leave. The Labour Code recognizes the right of working women to 90 days of maternity leave with compensation equivalent to their full pay.

53. The Persons with Disabilities Act reduces working hours by one hour per day, with pay, for workers with disabilities of various kinds or for those who are caring for a first-degree relative with a disability. In regard of this norm – which is applicable to any business in the private sector that employs 20 workers or more – Egypt makes reference to the report it submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

54. Many businesses and enterprises have workplace nurseries to make it easier for mothers to care for their children at work. The Ministry of Social Solidarity has established a domestic helpers' service association to protect female domestic workers, and it has set up service centres for working women, which seek to ease the burdens such women have to bear and to provide them with the services they require. There are 39 such centres in 22 governorates, with 41 units that, between 2008 and 2017, benefited 1,855,235 persons.

Occupational safety and health

55. The Ministry of Labour launched its national strategy for occupational safety and health and a secure working environment (2011–2020), the fundamental aim of which is to reduce the number of persons who are injured or killed in the workplace and to bring workplace accident rates down by at least 40 per cent. In recent years, Egypt has been able to achieve concrete progress and to make occupational health and safety conditions in Egypt compliant with international standards, as has been recognized by a number of international organizations. Thanks to this, the Ministry of Labour was able to register with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in Sweden, for the first time, in 2018. The Ministry was also involved in the discussions on a new global standard for occupational safety and health (ISO 45001). The Ministry of Labour is in the process of developing an integrated national strategy intended to disseminate a culture of occupational health and safety.

56. Action has been taken to improve the technical effectiveness of the inspection system by training 536 inspectors and office managers in 19 governorates. In addition, the bureaux responsible for conducting occupational health and safety inspection are being upgraded to switch to online inspections by computerizing 26 bureaux in 11 governorates. The checklist for occupational health and safety inspections is being expanded to cover all the points that inspectors must verify during the course of their visits. This helps to standardize the tours of inspection and to make them more effective, just as it helps the business concerned to conduct self-appraisals and to align their internal conditions with the requirements set forth in the law.

57. Act No. 185 of 2023 and Act No. 50 of 2014 – which amend certain provisions of the Criminal Code – are intended to ensure a working environment free from sexual harassment. They envisage increased penalties for such harassment if the perpetrator has functional authority over the victim or takes advantage of existing circumstances to apply pressure against the victim. The Act also expands the concept of the crime of harassment to include actions, suggestions or insinuations of a sexual or pornographic nature – be it by gesture word or any other means, including the communications media.

Article 8

The right to exercise trade union activity and to form trade unions

58. The core provisions of the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are all enshrined in the 2014 Constitution, article 76 of which stipulates: "The establishment of democratic unions and federations is a right guaranteed by the law. Such entities are to have legal personality, to exercise their activities freely and to contribute to honing the skills of their members, while defending their rights and protecting their interests. The State guarantees the independence of unions and federations, the boards of

which may not be dissolved save by a court ruling.” Act No. 213 of 2017 promulgating the Trade Unions Act, as amended, is consistent with international standards for the formation of unions and grants all trade union organizations – whether a trade union committee, a general trade union or a trade union federation – legal personality. Article 10 of the Act sets forth the different levels of trade union activity, which are: trade union committees, general trade unions and trade union federations, and it places no requirement on unions of a lower level to join those of a higher level. The right of workers to form, join or withdraw from trade unions is enshrined in articles 4 and 21 of the Act, and workers who practise more than one profession have the right to join more than one trade union organization.

59. Under amendments to the Trade Unions Act, which were enacted pursuant to Act No. 142 of 2019, the minimum number of workers required to form a trade union committee was reduced from 150 to 50. If that minimum cannot be attained or in the case of business employing fewer than 50 workers, the minimum quota can be reached by joining with workers engaged in professional groups or industries that are similar or related, or that are involved in producing the same goods. Also under the amendments, the number of trade union committees required to form a general trade union was reduced from 15 to 10 and the number of members from 20,000 workers to 15,000. Similarly, the number of general trade unions required to establish a trade union federation was reduced from 10 to 7, and the number of members from 200,000 workers to 150,000. The Act places no restrictions on trade union activity other than by prohibiting the formation of union organizations on grounds of religion, belief, party affiliation, ethnicity or political views. Under Egyptian law, trade unions have the status of an administrative body that acts on behalf of the State by meeting many financial and social obligations towards their members, while the unions themselves rely partly on the State for their funding.

60. The Trade Unions Act grants unions – whether a trade union committee, a general trade union or a trade union federation – legal personality from the date the necessary documentation is deposited with the competent administrative authority. As of that date, unions have the right to exercise their activities. In order to ensure the independence of trade union organizations in the conduct of their affairs, articles 59 and 64 of the Act stipulate that such organizations are to be financially and administratively independent and free of oversight or supervision by union federations or trade union committees. Article 7 of the Act states that the board of a trade union organization cannot be dissolved save by a court ruling, while article 30 affirms that the general assembly is the organization’s supreme authority, which sets policy and supervises all matters in accordance with union statutes.

61. The Act allows trade union organizations to take the measures necessary to protect the legitimate rights of their members. This includes participation in discussions on draft laws and on economic and social development plans as well as the right to organize strikes, to conclude collective labour agreements and to conduct collective bargaining. Trade union organizations also have the right to take court action to defend the rights and interests of their members. Trade union elections were held under the Act in 2018, following a 12-year hiatus. The elections resulted in a change of 80 per cent of union members on around 2,500 committees, of which 145 are not affiliated with the General Federation. People do not face criminal prosecution for criticizing the General Federation, but only for committing criminal offenses unrelated to their right to exercise trade union activity.

Collective bargaining mechanisms

62. A number of mechanisms for the settlement of the labour disputes that might arise between workers and employers are envisaged in the Labour Code, including collective bargaining. The Code, in fact, includes rules governing collective bargaining and its role in settling labour disputes. According to the Code, collective bargaining is the dialogue and discussion that takes place between trade union organizations and employers or employers’ organizations in order to improve the terms and conditions of work and employment; the cooperation between the two sides to achieve social development for both workers and the business concerned; and the settlement of disputes between workers and employers. In the collective bargaining process, employers are under an obligation to provide the trade union representatives with whatever business-related data and information they may request. The employers or the trade union representatives may, depending upon the circumstances, request

that information from their own organizations. In the year prior to the drafting of the present report, a total of 16 collective labour agreements were concluded between employers and representatives of trade unions or trade union committees. The agreements reached benefited 18,158 workers.

Right to strike

63. The constitutional right to strike without prior approval from a higher authority is regulated under the Trade Unions Act No. 142 of 2019. A number of court rulings have been handed down upholding the right of workers to strike, and such rulings serve both to confirm the legitimacy of strike action and to govern its use, while balancing the public interest with the rights of workers. The courts in Egypt have established that the right to strike exists for State workers and for workers beyond the government sector.

Article 9

The right to insurance and social security

64. According to the Constitution, the State is to guarantee the provision of social insurance services, while citizens who are not covered by the social insurance system have the right to social security, in order to ensure a decent life, if they are unable to support themselves and their families and in cases of incapacity, old age or unemployment. The Social Insurance and Pensions Act No. 148 of 2019 serves to develop and update social insurance systems; to ensure that they keep pace with global changes and comply with relevant international and regional agreements; and to unify the benefits such systems provide across all groups in society in order to uphold the principle of equity and equality of opportunity. The Act also addresses the disparity between pensions and incomes and it envisages pensions in cases of old age, disability, injury and death, as well as insurance for sickness and unemployment. In addition, the Act discriminates positively in favour of certain vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, apprentices and informal workers of all kinds. This positive discrimination takes the form of incentives to encourage insurance, such as having the employer's quota paid out of public funds and a mechanism whereby pensions are increased in line with the rate of inflation (up to a maximum increase of 15 per cent) with the costs to be borne by the social insurance system.

65. In 2024, a total of 13.8 million persons were contributing to the social insurance system, while recipients of pensions and other benefits amounted to 11.2 million. Annual expenditure on insurance amounted to LE 105.3 billion in 2014 and to LE 434 billion in 2024. On 1 March 2024, pension recipients were given an annual increase of 15 per cent, which entailed an annual expenditure of LE 66 billion. The minimum pension has increased from LE 450 in 2014 to LE 1,300 in 2024. The minimum insurance contribution was raised from LE 142 in 2014 to LE 2,000 in 2024, while the maximum contribution was raised from LE 2,603 in 2014 to LE 120,600 in 2024. The State treasury has undertaken to pay an annual quota for the coming 50 years, of which LE 903.2 billion has been disbursed until the fiscal year 2023/24, under the provisions of the Social Insurance and Pensions Act.

Non-contribution-based cash support and social assistance programmes

66. The State launched its "Takaful" and "Karama" social protection programmes in 2015. The "Takaful" programme is a conditional cash transfer scheme that provides income support to poor families with children under the age of 18. In order to benefit from the programme, the children are required to attend school regularly and to make use of healthcare facilities. The programme particularly targets poor women and families. The "Karama" programme envisages unconditional cash transfers to the poor, to older persons (over the age of 65) and to persons with severe disabilities. In 2014/15 a total of 2.5 million families, comprising 9.3 million individuals, benefited from the programmes, at a cost of LE 6.7. By 2024 this had increased to 5.3 million families, comprising 22 million individuals, at a cost of LE 41 billion. Sixty per cent of beneficiaries are in the "Takaful" programme and 40 per cent in "Karama".

67. In a related context, a database of poor families in Egypt has been developed, which currently includes 11.8 million families, or 42.5 million citizens, while cash assistance is

provided on an irregular basis to 4.5 million families facing difficulties, with a monthly average of LE 400. In addition to this, 500,000 families were funded by organizations belonging to the National Alliance for Civil Development in the fiscal year 2023/24.

68. The State has also rolled out programmes to protect the rights of workers in the informal sector, with the introduction of the “Aman” certificate in 2018 the main aim of which is to provide insurance cover and to ensure family stability in case of death for seasonal and temporary workers, workers who do not have a fixed income and single women. A fund has been established to support irregular workers against risks of various kinds. Its purpose is to provide grants – “income replacement subsidies” – for such persons if their income is interrupted as a result of extraordinary economic conditions or epidemics and to address shortcomings in unemployment insurance for irregular workers and small-scale employers. The fund is also intended to benefit persons for whom the Ministry of Social Solidarity holds detailed data but who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the “Takaful” and “Karama” programmes.

69. The State is increasing the amount of public spending it allocates to social protection, which went up from LE 327.7 billion in the financial year 2019/20 to LE 635.9 billion in the budget for the financial year 2024/25, an increase of 94 per cent. Social protection programmes include food subsidies, social and health insurance, social housing, and cash transfer programmes (“Takaful” and “Karama”).

Article 10

Protection of the family

70. The family is enshrined in article 10 of the Constitution as the cornerstone of society, and the State must undertake to ensure its cohesion and stability and consolidate its values. The Constitution also serves to empower women and to ensure that they are able to reconcile their family duties with the needs of work; it underscores the State’s obligation to protect motherhood and childhood, female breadwinners, older women and women in need; and it ensures comprehensive legal protection against any discriminatory act. Childhood is defined as lasting until a person reaches the age of 18, which is consistent with the Covenant. National legislation – in particular the Children’s Act, the Criminal Code and the Civil Status Code – includes provisions that address violence in all its forms, including domestic violence, child marriage and forced marriage.

71. The State remains determined to protect families. Under the law, both parties to a marital relationship have rights that are counterpoised so as to achieve a fair and just balance between them. Under the Egyptian legislative system, the woman has the right to choose her husband, and a marriage contract is a consensual agreement that is offered and accepted. A contract of marriage cannot be concluded if one of the two contracting parties has not reached the age of 18. With the best interests of minors in view, the law specifies that the custody of young children lies with women and that custody can then continue after the child reaches the legally prescribed age if the child chooses to remain with the mother. For his part, the man is required to meet the costs of the custody, provide appropriate accommodation for the mother and defray all the expenses incurred by the children during that period. All this serves to uphold the rights of the child. Egyptian law also guarantees children’s financial rights by recognizing their portion of inheritance while they are still in the womb. The State has set up the Family Insurance Fund as part of the Nasser Social Bank to guarantee the enforcement of rulings granting payment to divorced wives and children, if the convicted party fails to pay.

72. The State has set up the Family Insurance Fund as part of the Nasser Social Bank to guarantee the enforcement of rulings granting payment to divorced wives and children, if the convicted party fails to pay. The Ministry of Social Solidarity runs services in the form of family guidance and family counselling bureaux, which are intended to strengthen family structures. For their part, the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood run hotlines offering psychological and legal counselling and support.

73. Any person under the age of 18 is considered to be a child. Persons have the right to dispose freely of their assets from the age of 21. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood is evaluating the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood 2018–2030 to bring it into line with changes on the ground, while ensuring that it continues to cover all categories of children. In that connection, a plan has been drafted for the implementation of the Framework 2024–2030. In cooperation with stakeholders, the Council has also drafted a national strategy for early childhood development, using a framework that is based on interaction and mutual reinforcement in the areas of healthcare, nutrition, early education, child protection, social protection and the provision of care responsive to the needs of children. The Children’s Code envisages increased protection for children against violence and abuse, as well as more severe penalties for offences committed by an adult against a child, particularly a parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver or a person with authority over a child.

Protecting maternity

74. On the subject of protection for maternity and of leave for working mothers, reference is made to paragraph 52 of the present report, which concerns rest periods and holidays for working women. The law also envisages a reduction of working hours by one hour per day for workers who are breastfeeding their children up to the age of two.

Protecting childhood

75. A child is any person under the age of 18, and all children have the right to a name and identity documents, to free mandatory vaccination, to healthcare, to care in a family or foster family, to basic nutrition and to safe shelter. The State is to guarantee the rights of children with disabilities, their habilitation and integration into society. The State, moreover, is to care for and protect children against all forms of violence and abuse (art. 80). The Constitution designates the rights of child victims and requires the State to establish a special judicial system for them and for child witnesses. In addition, children cannot be criminally prosecuted or detained save in accordance with the law and for the legally specified period. Also, children have to be provided with legal assistance and to be held in appropriate facilities, separate from those in which adults are detained. Both the Constitution and the law prohibit the employment of children under the age of 15 and the training of children under the age of 13, just as they prohibit the employment of children in work that may endanger their health, safety or morals. Furthermore, children cannot be made to work for more than six hours a day, including rest hours, and they cannot work overtime or on rest days. The Ministry of Labour has amended the decree containing the list of hazardous jobs and professions in which children under 18 cannot be employed or trained. A comprehensive review of the Labour Code is currently underway.

76. In cooperation with the Council, the Ministry of Labour has rolled out a national plan to combat the worst forms of child labour 2018–2025, the aim of which is to eradicate child labour by 2025. The Ministry conducts unannounced inspection campaigns on establishments where children work. Inspections have been carried out in a total of 44,388 businesses, of which 31,850 were found to be compliant, warnings were issued to 11,339 businesses and 997 reports were drafted. Thanks to these campaigns, protection was extended to 50,549 children.

77. The children’s rights section of the national human rights strategy aims to achieve a number of outcomes, including consolidating the principle of the best interests of the child among all stakeholders who work with children; protecting children against abuse, exploitation, neglect and all forms of violence; supporting the work of child protection committees; strengthening the mechanisms whereby children have access to full healthcare; reducing the persistence of practices that constitute the worst forms of child labour; reinforcing the enforcement of laws regulating the employment of children; and rolling out oversight mechanisms for social welfare institutions for children who are deprived of family care.

Article 11:

Right to continuous improvement in living conditions

78. The Egypt Vision 2030 sustainable development strategy was updated at the end of 2023 to incorporate four governing principles: human centred development, justice and inclusion, resilience and adaptation, and sustainability. As its strategic objectives, the Vision aims to enhance quality of life and standards of living, social justice and equality, an integrated and sustainable ecosystem, a diversified and competitive knowledge-based economy, advanced infrastructure, and governance and partnerships. In pursuing those objectives, the Vision underscores the interconnectedness between the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The Egypt Vision 2030 and its overall strategic goals are being implemented in a manner consistent with the United Nations 2030 sustainable development agenda.

79. Successive short-term sustainable development plans have included a body of programmes and initiatives concerned with spatial development, with integration between development activities in rural and urban areas, with closing development gaps between different regions and with gender-responsive planning that provides equity and equality of opportunity among social groups and serves the priority issues of women, children and persons with disabilities. Egypt uses evidence-based research to guide policy and, in fact, significant efforts and resources are being invested in improving the accessibility and quality of data. In particular, the State supports quantitative research that has clear policy implications, such as research on poverty and incomes. This has led to a reduction in poverty for the first time in 20 years (29.7 per cent in 2020 as compared to 32.5 per cent in 2018). In February 2024, the government approved a new urgent social protection package, the sixth in two years, worth LE 180 billion.

Right to adequate food

80. The State has continued to subsidize foodstuffs. Its subsidies in that regard reached LE 134.2 billion in the budget for the financial year 2024/25 budget, up from LE 35.5 billion in 2013/14. Similarly, the per capita allocation on the ration card increased to LE 50 in 2022, up from LE 15 in 2014, and an exceptional subsidy was disbursed from September 2022 to June 2023, with an additional LE 100 on a single-family card, LE 200 on a two- or three-family card and LE 300 on cards for more than three families. This represented a 333-per-cent increase and cost LE 85 billion. At the same time, the number of beneficiaries of the subsidized bread scheme has reached 70.9 million so far, up from 62.8 million. The Government provides basic foodstuffs at discounted prices via a distribution network consisting of 1,172 outlets of companies affiliated with the Ministry of Supply, covering all governorates. This is in addition to other projects, such as the “Gomiati” initiative which has 4,605 food distribution outlets.

81. The State expanded its free school meals programmes, which benefited 13,673,540 students in 2023/24, as compared with 11,498,891 in 2018/19.

82. Since 2014, the Egyptian Government has been focusing a great deal of attention on agriculture with a view to developing crop and livestock production and to encouraging agro-industry. The State undertakes to provide the products necessary for crop and livestock farming and to purchase basic agricultural crops at an appropriate price that leaves a margin of profit for the farmer. Government investments in the agriculture sector have increased over recent years, and the last nine years have seen the implementation of several major national-level projects, which fall within the framework of State-sponsored efforts to increase the horizontal extent of agricultural zones. The most significant projects set in train between 2014 and 2023 include the New Delta Project, a national project to reclaim 1.5 million feddan of land, a project to develop northern and central Sinai and a project to develop around 1 million feddan at Lake Nasser, as well as other initiatives aimed increasing the extent of agricultural zones and boosting crop production.

83. Between 2014 and 2023, the State also strove to increase the vertical expansion of strategic crops through the introduction of more than 150 new improved varieties, the use of certified seeds, the promotion of agricultural extension, a national greenhouse project, the

provision of facilitated loans to farmers and contract farming. In addition to this, programmes were run to increase livestock, poultry and fisheries resources. Thanks to these efforts, reclaimed agricultural land has grown by 1.7 million feddan since 2014 with the aim being to reclaim a total of 2.1 million feddan by 2025 at a total cost of LE 46 billion over the period 2014–2023.

Right to suitable accommodation

84. Under the Constitution, the State is to guarantee citizens the right to suitable, safe and healthy housing, in order to preserve human dignity and achieve social justice. The State is also required to develop a comprehensive national plan to confront the problem of informal housing. The plan is to address replanning, provision of infrastructure and facilities, improvement of quality of life and public health and provision of the resources necessary for implementation within a specified time frame. The State is also to formulate and implement a comprehensive economic and urban development plan for border areas and deprived areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matruh and the regions of Nuba. The people of those areas are to be involved in, and be the foremost beneficiaries of development projects, which must take due account of the cultural and environmental specificities of local communities. The State has also pursued a series of legislative reforms, notably the Real Estate Financing Act and the Social Housing and Real Estate Financing Subsidy Act.

85. The Egypt Vision 2030 sustainable development strategy duly addresses the issue of housing, at the level both of the individual and the community. At the individual level, the Vision seeks to ensure that suitable housing is available for Egyptians at prices that suit all groups, while at the community level, it aims to build cities with modern infrastructure and ample green spaces. The Egypt Vision 2030 seeks to provide decent housing for all Egyptians without exception, and to put an end to insecure housing zones and informal housing by providing legitimate alternatives that are consistent with development plans, improving the effectiveness of basic services in residential areas, and increasing the per capita share of open areas and green spaces.

86. The State launched its housing strategy for Egypt in 2020, the aim of which is to provide suitable accommodation for all citizens while also taking account of the rights of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, upholding the principles of social justice and equality of opportunity and avoiding any form of discrimination or marginalization. The right to decent housing is also contemplated in the national human rights strategy (2021–2026). In 2014, the Government launched its national strategic plan for urban development, which aims to transform Egypt into an advanced and globally competitive country. The aim of the plan is to double the urbanized portion of Egypt from 7 per cent to 14 per cent.

87. The State has been continuing its efforts to provide decent housing, especially for low- and middle-income groups, as part of its “housing for all Egyptians” initiative, which has now delivered 1 million housing units, in addition to a further 300,000 units in unsafe housing areas. This project – which is intended to meet the needs of young persons as well as of low- and middle-income groups – has benefited 7.5 million citizens, with 5 per cent of the units allocated to persons with disabilities. Thus, by the end of 2022, Egypt was able to declare itself free of unsafe informal settlements. Its efforts in this regard drew praise from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in 2020 while, in 2022, the United Nations ranked Egypt as one of the top performing countries in reducing slum dwellers as a proportion of the total urban population.

Improving slums and unsafe housing areas

88. Over recent years, the State has been seeking to make breakthroughs in the development of informal settlements and infrastructure, which account for 37.5 per cent of all urbanized areas in cities, with 152,000 feddan. In all, 60 areas have been developed to the benefit of the 468,000 families dwelling there, at a total cost of LE 318 billion. This includes 31 areas in Cairo alone, benefiting 263 families at a total cost of LE 350 million. A total of 342 unsafe housing areas were developed between 2014 and 2022 while, in the period 2014–2023, the total cost of development projects in unsafe housing areas amounted to LE 67.8 billion.

Social housing

89. This is one of the most important projects being implemented by the State, because it has gone a significant way to resolving – by up to 60 per cent – the housing crisis suffered by persons on low-incomes. The total cost of social housing units over the period 2014–2023 amounted to LE 193 million; 630,500 units have been completed and 229,800 units are under construction.

Article 12

Right to health

90. The right of all citizens to health and to integrated healthcare that meets due quality standards is enshrined in the Constitution, which also enjoins the State to support and maintain public healthcare facilities, to improve the effectiveness of such facilities and to ensure a fair geographical distribution. The Constitution also requires the State to create a comprehensive health insurance system for all Egyptians, covering all diseases (art. 18). The healthcare component of the Egypt Vision 2030 strategy aims to ensure that all Egyptians are able to enjoy their right to a safe and healthy life, thanks to an integrated health system that is accessible, high quality and non-discriminatory. The right to health is also reflected in the State budget, which envisages increased allocations for public spending on health. Those allocations went up to LE 496 billion in the financial year 2024/25, an increase of LE 465 billion compared to the budget for the financial year 2013/14.

91. A national health strategy for the Arab Republic of Egypt 2024–2030 has been launched with the aim of improving demographic characteristics, reaching an overall fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman and pursuing human development. Egypt has made considerable progress in its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality rates, and in October 2024 the country received certification of malaria-free status from the World Health Organization (WHO). Also, in October 2023, Egypt was recognized by WHO for having reached the gold tier on the path to eliminating hepatitis C, the first country to achieve that status. In fact, Egypt has diagnosed 87 per cent of people living with hepatitis C and has provided curative treatment to 93 per cent of those diagnosed.

92. The number of primary care units and centres in urban and rural areas went up from 4,988 in 2014 to 9,162 in 2021, an increase of 83.7 per cent, while the number of dialysis units increased by 16 per cent, from 576 in 2014 to 668 in 2022. The number of intensive care beds in public and district hospitals went up from 1,634 in 2014 to 2,389 in 2021, an increase of 46.2 per cent. Lastly, the number of family planning units went from 5,242 in 2014 to 5,431 in 2021, which constitutes an increase of 3.6 per cent.

Medical treatment at State expense

93. Medical treatment at State expense has been increasing constantly as, between 2014 and 2024, 32.5 million treatment orders were issued at a total cost of LE 102.3 billion, benefiting 18.8 million citizens. In the context of its initiative to support women's health, the Ministry of Health and Population has – between July 2019, when the initiative was launched, and June 2024 – organized more than 50 million visits by women for testing and awareness-raising services. Seventeen million women receive periodic follow-up services. Under the initiative, more than 637,000 women have benefited from modern testing and examinations, delivered free of charge via 3,633 units at the governorate level.

Public health initiatives

94. The State has rolled out a raft of initiatives to promote the right to health as part of its “100 million healths” initiative, the aim of which is to provide comprehensive healthcare for all citizens while ensuring ease of access to the services available. The scheme includes initiatives to eliminate hepatitis C; to detect non-communicable diseases; to ensure the early detection of anaemia, obesity and stunting; to support the health of Egyptian women; to support maternal and foetal health; to detect and treat hearing loss in newborn infants; to detect and treat chronic diseases and to ensure the early detection of kidney disease.

95. More than 50 million citizens have been tested as part of the project for the early detection of non-communicable diseases, and treatment was given to 1.8 million persons with diabetes and 10 million with high blood pressure. In the context of the scheme intended to ensure the early detection of anaemia, obesity and stunting, 22 million schoolchildren were tested, with treatment then being provided via 300 clinics connected to the scheme's online network. More than 1.25 million infants have been tested since the initiative to detect and treat hearing loss in newborn infants was launched in September 2019. In addition to this, 2,410 foreign children residing in Egypt have been examined at the 3,500 healthcare units distributed across the country, and an integrated infrastructure for the early detection of hearing loss has been developed at a cost of LE 120 million.

96. The initiative to support the health of Egyptian women aims to reduce breast-cancer mortality rates via early detection, the promotion of health education, the training of medical service providers to provide high-quality services consistent with global standards and the improvement of tumour-treatment infrastructures. More than 11 million women have been examined since the initiative was launched in July 2019. In addition, medical services have been provided free of charge to 683,000 women under an initiative to support maternal and foetal health, which was launched in March 2020. In the context of the initiative, an integrated system has been created, at a cost of LE 31 million, for the early detection of mother-to-child transmissible diseases. The initiative – which has operational and supply costs amounting to LE 30 million – aims to reduce mother-to-foetus transmission rates from 45 per cent to 2 per cent. Under the initiative to detect and treat chronic diseases and to ensure the early detection of kidney disease, 24 million citizens have been screened and provided with free treatment free of charge, 180 dialysis units have been replaced or renewed and 2,600 dialysis machines have been provided, at a total cost of LE 714 million.

97. A national anti-tuberculosis programme has helped to achieve recovery rates of 87 per cent, and medical services were provided to 2 million citizens in thoracic clinics during the course of 2020. Overall, the incidence of tuberculosis in Egypt fell by 20 per cent in 2020. In addition to this, 13 new treatment centres have been opened under a national anti-HIV/AIDS programme, bringing the total number of treatment centres to 27.

Indicators of life expectancy at birth and child mortality

98. Care services have been provided for pregnant women, breastfeeding is being encouraged and promoted and the use of formula milk is being rationalized. At the same time, children between the ages of 6 and 54 months are being provided with vitamin A supplements. In addition, a number of presidential initiatives have been launched, including one for the early detection of genetic diseases in premature babies in intensive care units and another for the early detection of hearing impairments. All newborn infants attending primary care units are screened – testing their basic vital functions, growth indicators and comprehensive evaluation of vital body systems – with a view to the early detection of birth defects. As a result of government efforts, average life expectancy at birth in Egypt increased from 70.3 years in 2010 to 71.8 years in 2018. Also, between 2010 and 2019, the under-5 mortality rate decreased from 28.8 to 20.8 children per 1,000 births.

Comprehensive health insurance

99. The country took a big step forwards with the promulgation of the Comprehensive Health Insurance Act No. 2 of 2018, which envisages mandatory coverage for all citizens residing inside the country, plus provision for optional extension to citizens living abroad. Under the Act, the State is required to provide a body of services: public health, preventive treatment, ambulance services, family planning, free health services during disasters and epidemics and workplace injury services. The Act is being applied gradually across the governorates to ensure its financial sustainability and actuarial balance. It also requires the State to upgrade the efficiency of its health facilities on an incremental basis before beginning to implement the new comprehensive health insurance system, the philosophy of which is based on compulsion and on social solidarity, with the State bearing the cost of persons who are unable to pay. The system – in which financing, on the one hand, is separate from service provision, on the other – is financed and administered by the General Authority for

Comprehensive Health Insurance. At the same time, the General Authority for Healthcare is responsible for providing healthcare and treatment services inside and outside hospitals.

100. The Government is working to reach 100 per cent health insurance coverage by 2030. Its current programme of action aims to achieve 85 per cent coverage by 2026/27. The transition period between the old health insurance scheme and comprehensive health insurance will see – in the light of an annual budget increase of 20 per cent – a 35 per cent increase in coverage that will include farmers, agricultural workers, irregular workers and other vulnerable groups. The second stage of the comprehensive health insurance scheme will see coverage extended to five new governorates and a further 12.8 million citizens.

Efforts to improve healthcare facilities

101. The national “model hospitals” project has the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the services that hospitals provide. Under the project, there is to be a model hospital in each governorate until such time as the governorate is integrated into the comprehensive health insurance system. Twenty-nine hospitals in governorates across the country have been selected to become model hospitals, providing citizens with medical services of the highest level with no increase in current prices. The Ministry of Health has adopted a plan to develop the equipment and services offered by healthcare structures while, between 2014 and 2023 a number of university hospitals were established and existing ones were developed and upgraded. In fact, the number of university hospitals rose to 125 in 2023, as compared to 88 in 2014, while the number of beds increased to 36,900 in 2023, at a cost of LE 27.5 billion, as compared to 28,900 beds in 2014. Likewise, the number of intensive care beds went up to 5,030, at a cost of LE 2 billion, as compared to 3,000 in 2014. In addition to this, a total of 535 mobile medical clinics have benefited 303,500 persons, and 30 model hospitals have been fitted out and equipped. A fully automated national complex for serums and vaccines was inaugurated in 2021, at a cost of LE 142 million, to enable scientists to conduct research and to combat both infectious and non-infectious diseases. The Vacsera vaccine-production facility was completed in June 2021 at a cost of LE 347.8 million.

Efforts on the part of the State to provide clean drinking water

102. The government has developed a plan for the provision of drinking water that revolves around four main goals: minimizing losses, increasing water pressure, replacing and renewing networks and increasing the effectiveness of services provided to citizens. At a national level, drinking water coverage currently stands at around 98.7 per cent (100 per cent in urban areas and 97.4 per cent in rural areas). Over the past two years, 75 drinking-water projects have been rolled out, with a capacity of 1,747 thousand cubic metres per day over a 1,200-kilometre-long network. Around 10 million citizens have benefited from the recent drinking-water projects, which cost some LE 10 billion. In addition, a plan has been put in place to draw attention to the importance of rationalizing consumption and minimizing water losses in all areas, in order to preserve this vital resource.

Efforts on the part of the State to provide sanitation

103. The government programme of action aims to achieve 100 per cent sanitation coverage in urban areas and 60 per cent in rural areas by the end of 2022. Current sanitation coverage is 96 per cent in urban areas (up from 79.2 per cent in 2014) and 38 per cent in rural areas (up from 12 per cent in 2014). The estimated cost for achieving 100 per cent sanitation coverage in all rural areas across the country is LE 300 billion. Recent sanitation projects have benefited 16 million citizens, at a total cost of LE 15 billion, and the Government has expanded its construction of sewage treatment plants in seven governorates in Upper Egypt, at a cost of LE 9 billion. This is in addition to numerous other treatment plants that have been brought into service in other governorates, benefiting 8.3 million citizens. The sewage treatment plants are being run as efficiently as possible, in order to prevent any kind of negative impact on the surrounding environment. Various technologies are used to provide sanitation in rural areas, and all plants are currently being built to standard specifications and have centralized laboratories to ensure quality of service.

Articles 13 and 14

Right to education

104. The Constitution stipulates that education is a right for all citizens. The goal of education is to build the Egyptian character and preserve national identity, to promote rational thinking, develop gifts, encourage innovation, foment civilized and spiritual values and implant concepts of citizenship, tolerance and non-discrimination. Also under the Constitution, the State is required to provide education free of charge until the end of compulsory schooling, for all citizens without discrimination, and it is to seek to promote university education and to provide such education free of charge in State-run universities and colleges. Furthermore, the State is under an obligation to allocate a portion of government spending, amounting to not less than 7 per cent of the country's gross national product, to pre-university education, university education and scientific research (arts. 19–23), with pre-university education receiving 4 per cent, university education 2 per cent and scientific research receiving 1 per cent.

105. With a view to reforming the educational system, a strategic plan for the development of pre-university education 2014–2030 has been rolled out, and a national education project was launched in 2018. The strategic plan envisages a body of public policies aimed, notably, at providing the entire school-age population with equal enrolment opportunities, with a particular focus on poor areas, and at improving the quality of education by using modern curricula that are in line with global standards, taught by well-qualified teachers capable of following the latest educational methods. The strategic plan also seeks to strengthen institutional structures using decentralization as a way of ensuring good governance. The plan, moreover, includes a raft of programmes and subprogrammes including, most importantly, an information technology programme, a school meals programme and a comprehensive curriculum reform programme.

Educational inclusion of persons with disabilities

106. In the period 2019–2023, a total of 139,169 children with disabilities underwent habilitation, attending disability kindergartens and care facilities. Currently, in the year 2023/24, a total of 159,825 students with disabilities of both sexes are enrolled in education structures of all types and levels where they benefit from services under the educational inclusion system. These figures compare with 3,697 students in 2012/13 and 37,519 in 2017/18.

Efforts on the part of the State to promote the right to pre-university education

107. The development of pre-university education is based on moving students away from being merely taught and towards active learning and understanding. In this context, a total of 72,230 new classrooms have been opened, including an additional 20,400 classrooms in villages most in need and in villages that are part of the “decent life” programme. In addition to this, 629,700 primary school teachers have been given training in the new education system.

Technical education

108. More than half of the students in State-run secondary education in Egypt are enrolled in technical education courses. In fact, they account for 55 per cent of the total, as compared to 45 per cent enrolled in general secondary education. Egypt began implementing its comprehensive strategy to develop technical education by adapting study programmes to reflect the needs of the labour market, then developing competency-based curricula for 48 professions in 150 technical schools attended by 55,000 students and ensuring the quality of technical education programmes, duly accredited by an independent body.

109. The Government is applying a system of dual education, which is one of the most important teaching methods for technical education. It involves workplace learning through participation in private-sector activities. Under this set-up, private sector businesses are the real stakeholders with the Government (i.e., the Ministry of Education) providing students with four days of training in factories, companies or farms. The dual education/training system is set to expand annually by increasing the number of students and the number of

schools inside factories. The system is being applied in 58 vocational schools attended by 54,222 students. Of the dual education schools, 22 are independent, 59 are based in factories and 231 are associated with technical schools, making a total of 312 dual education schools.

Literacy and community schools

110. According to the Constitution, the State is under an obligation to develop a comprehensive plan for the eradication of illiteracy, including digital illiteracy, among citizens of all ages. Between 2014 and 2021, 3.3 million citizens were rendered literate, and 63,600 certificates of literacy were issued. Thanks to such efforts on the part of the State, illiteracy among persons aged 10 and over fell to 16.1 per cent in 2023, as compared to 25.9 per cent in 2013. This is a direct result of the efforts made by the authorities as well as of the commitment of universities to fight against illiteracy, in particular 22 universities which achieved the notable success of eradicating illiteracy among 302,607 citizens. The Government is also aiming to eradicate illiteracy among 160,000 people in villages where the “dignified life” project is being implemented.

111. In order to provide education in areas most in need, a project to establish community schools in such areas has been expanded with the creation of 200 new schools, bringing the total number of new schools to 4,943, attended by 139,772 pupils of both sexes. In addition to this, five schools have been opened specializing in applied technology in the following industries: food, pharmaceuticals, woodworking and furniture, building materials and mechanical and electrical engineering.

Public spending on education and numbers of schools

112. Spending on pre-university education increased from LE 208.2 billion in the year 2017/18 to LE 565 billion in the budget for the financial year 2024/25. The number of schools increased from 49,400 in 2013/14 to 61,300 in 2023/24; pre-university education classes went up from 466,600 in 2013/14 to 556,888 in 2023/2024; the number of students increased from 18.6 million in 2013/14 to 28 million in 2022/23; and the number of teachers went from 942,800 in 2013/14 to 958,900 in 2022/23, an increase of 1.7 per cent. The State is taking action to address the teacher shortage by allocating resources to hire an additional 30,000 teachers per year.

113. Over recent years, the State has been working to support teachers and to improve their material conditions and their standard of living. It has also been seeking to make them more effective by training them in the latest teaching methodologies and thus enabling them to perform their role optimally. In all, 315,000 teachers received training in 2022, and the annual cost of the allowances disbursed to teachers went up to LE 1.8 billion, benefiting 1.4 million individuals. At the same time, thanks to cooperation with a number of international bodies, 80,000 teachers in general and technical education received training in the latest teaching methods.

University education

114. The system of university education in Egypt is made up as follows: 28 State-run universities, 35 private universities, 20 charity-run universities, 10 technological universities, 7 branches of foreign universities, 176 public and private institutes of higher education, 11 research centres and 125 university hospitals. The system has almost 3.5 million students, 150,000 foreign students, 122,000 professors, 220,000 graduate students, 321,000 faculty members, teaching assistants and residents, and 13,505 research staff and their assistants.

115. In March 2023, the State launched its national strategy for higher education and scientific research, the aim being to fortify the system of teaching and research, to create an environment suitable for investment, to support the diversification of university education and to link academic research to the needs and priorities of the State plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The strategy for higher education focuses on ensuring that graduates are qualified and equipped with the skills required by the labour market, which goes hand in hand with national efforts to achieve sustainable development and curb unemployment. It is clear that technological changes have led to the emergence of new jobs that require non-traditional skills and, in this context, the Ministry has taken action to set up

a system of training and qualifications that includes the creation of career development centres, digital platforms to manage career services and training programmes to improve the skills of students and graduates. The Ministry will also provide career guidance services to millions of students via 46 offices to be established in 34 universities by 2026.

116. The Egyptian Knowledge Bank is one of the largest knowledge banks in the world, containing resources of culture, knowledge and information intended to support education and scientific research. It has benefited in excess of 5 million people and has drawn praise for the way it has improved the global ranking of Egyptian universities and research institutions. In fact, 15 Egyptian universities were included in the 2024 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking. The number of universities from Arab States in the 2024 QS Ranking increased to 36, as compared to 15 in the 2016 Ranking. The British Times Higher Education Rankings saw an increase in the number of universities, with the inclusion of a further 46 seats of learning in 2024. There were 19 universities in the US News Ranking of 2023 and 8 in the Shanghai Ranking in 2023, as compared to just 5 in the 2016 Ranking. As for the Leiden Ranking, the number of ranked universities went up to 13 in 2023. Moreover, a number of Egyptian universities entered the top 50 universities globally in fields such as agriculture, veterinary medicine and energy. The Minister has explained that the experience of the Knowledge Bank was presented at the “Digital Learning Week 2024” conference in Paris, where it gained plaudits from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) as a beacon for educational innovation.

Article 15

Cultural rights

Constitutional framework for cultural rights

117. The Constitution affirms that the State is under an obligation to preserve the cultural identity of Egypt and its diversity of civilizations. Every citizen, moreover, has a right to culture and it is up to the State to uphold that right and to make cultural commodities of all kinds available to different groups of people, without discrimination. The Constitution further enshrines the State’s obligation to protect, preserve, maintain and restore the country’s antiquities and the areas in which they are situated. It goes on to stipulate that the Egyptian heritage of civilization and culture, both material and moral, in all its diversity and across all its major stages from Ancient Egypt to Coptic Egypt to Islamic Egypt, is a national and human treasure that the State is required to preserve and maintain (arts. 47–50 of the Constitution). In addition, the State is required to develop the cultural capacities of the young and to ensure that local cultural, environmental and community specificities are duly reflected in the formulation of comprehensive economic and urban development plans for border areas and deprived areas (arts. 82 and 236). The Ministry of Culture has an annual budget of around LE 3,541 billion.

118. The national human rights strategy includes cultural rights as one of its areas of focus, with the intention of achieving a number of results including, inter alia: the balanced distribution of cultural services throughout the country, particularly in deprived areas, border areas and areas most in need; the advancement of the culture industry and the strengthening of funding mechanisms; the provision of greater support to palaces of culture to enable them to play their mandated role; and increased support for grass-roots cultural activity in order to promote the preservation of cultural identity.

119. The Government’s programme of work for 2018–2022 includes a scheme “to activate the role of cultural institutions”. This includes a number of different subprogrammes and activities aimed at promoting positive social values, developing cultural institutions, pursuing cultural justice and protecting and promoting cultural heritage. The total cost of these activities is LE 5.56 billion.

120. A total of 85,000 cultural activities have been set in train with a view to promoting positive social values. Among these activities – which have brought direct benefit to some 2.526 million citizens – were 743 plays, 8,284 cultural seminars and 952 concerts at the Cairo Opera House including 168 virtual concerts disseminated via the Internet in the first half of

2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. These performances were watched by more than 382,000 citizens. As of June 2020, a number of cultural institutions were replaced or developed at a total cost of LE 1.28 billion, and 549 projects were rolled out. Cultural institutions include 18 cultural sites in 11 governorates, including palaces of culture, houses of culture, public libraries, and theatres.

121. An online platform has been set up to make cultural resources, materials and content digitally available. This includes some 5,000 books in Arabic translated into several languages, 100 historical manuscripts, documentary and cinematic films, plays, artistic and cultural programmes, rare maps, microfilms, and catalogues of major libraries.

122. In order to promote cultural identity and to increase the awareness and enjoyment of cultural heritage, 740 workshops providing training in traditional crafts have been run, attended by 5,622 citizens. Also, 7,127 shows featuring traditional arts have been laid on, benefiting some 62,600 citizens. In addition to this, 262 cultural seminars and 382 art exhibitions and performances have been organized under a programme to utilize the country's heritage, benefiting some 354,000 citizens. Furthermore, the State has acted to have the traditional "Aragouz" hand puppets placed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and it is working with other States to have "the palm tree and its associated knowledge, skills, traditions and practices" included on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

123. In a related context, an "Egyptian Trades" initiative was launched with the aim of training young persons in traditional crafts in areas with high unemployment. A total of 730 persons in 13 governorates received training between 2018 and 2020, and 9 craft centres were opened in palaces of culture where the training courses were held.

124. Cultural programming on the television and radio channels of the State-owned National Media Authority covers a variety of cultural activities, encouraging the public to take advantage of such activities and to participate in cultural life more generally.

125. Egypt, which acts to preserve and display the cultural heritage of humankind, is proud of its global human heritage, and it seeks to protect the world heritage sites on its territory and to open them to the public. Egypt has seven sites officially registered on the World Heritage List: the Pyramids complex, Islamic Cairo, the ancient city of Thebes and the tombs in Luxor, the Monuments of Nubia from Abu Simbel to Philae, the Christian city of Abu Mina, Saint Catherine's Monastery and, most recently, Wadi al-Hitan in the Western Desert. The monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun are in the process of being added to the List.

126. Egypt has also managed to register seven entries on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. They are: the ceremonies related to the journey of the Holy Family in Egypt, Arabic calligraphy, the *Sirat Bani Hilal*, the "Tahtib" martial art, traditional "Aragouz" hand puppets, the palm tree and associated practices and hand weaving.

127. As concerns legislation to protect freedom of creativity and artistic expression, the Intellectual Property Protection Act has been amended to establish a registry in which the utilizations of works such as performances, sound recordings and radio programmes can be recorded, the aim being to strengthen the protection associated with such utilization, while waiving registration fees for persons under the age of 21 and persons with disabilities.

128. As regards vocational education in the field of culture and the arts, the Academy of Arts is the body responsible for nurturing persons who are gifted in any of the artistic disciplines. People graduate with academic titles in specific arts from the Academy, which has turned out cohorts of artists who are now leading exponents of artistic groups and artistic activities. Since 2019, the Academy has been expanding its activities by opening branches in four governorates: Alexandria, Asyut, Daqahliyah and Cairo. The Academy has seven higher institutes for performing arts, conservatoire, ballet, cinema, Arabic music, art criticism and popular arts. It also has schools for primary and secondary pre-university education and where it takes in gifted pupils at an early age to develop their artistic abilities.

129. Something in excess of 110,000 activities have been organized as part of efforts to develop the talents of gifted individuals. Those activities – which include theatrical performances, training courses, exhibitions and workshops – have benefited some

255,000 citizens. One hundred and forty-four prizes have been distributed – the Nile Prize, the Excellence Prize, the Appreciation Prize and the Encouragement Prize – which serve to recognize the discovery of creative individuals or to support them in their work. In addition, a further 105 prizes have been awarded in the field of arts, literature, social sciences, economics and law, while 716 artists and writers have been granted sabbaticals. In all, 492 books have been translated into Arabic while 2,685 books have been printed and published as part of a programme to promote the publishing industry.

130. As concerns cultural justice, 1,554 “culture convoys” were sent out between 2019 and 2024, benefiting 649,943 people. The purpose of the convoys is to provide sociocultural support to Egyptian families in remote areas, border governorates, villages in the governorates of the western and central Delta and villages in the governorate of Minya. The Ministry of Culture has revived the ceremonial activities associated with Siwa and introduced new ones in Nubia. These are standing events that aim to record and document the customs, traditions and heritage of Aswan, Nubia and Siwa through figurative works of art. Also, between 2019 and 2024, 32,631 clubs for talented children were set up, which were attended by 397,096 children.

Freedom of academic research and creativity

131. The State guarantees freedom of academic research and supports the relevant institutions, and it sponsors researchers, inventors and innovators, protecting and seeking to find applications for their discoveries (art. 66). No form of legal action may be brought to block or confiscate artistic, literary or intellectual works or against the creators of such works except via the State Prosecution Office. Moreover, no custodial penalty may be imposed for crimes committed because of the public nature of an artistic, literary or intellectual work. The State is also required to protect intellectual property rights of all kinds and in all fields (art. 67). The Government has enacted several pieces of legislation intended to support academic research, including the Act establishing the Innovators Support Fund;¹⁰ the Act establishing the Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Authority;¹¹ and the Act to incentivize Science, Technology and Innovation.¹² Egypt has also developed and rolled out its national intellectual property strategy 2021–2025 which aims to provide greater protection for intellectual property rights and to support innovation.

132. In 2019, the Government launched its strategy for higher education and scientific research 2030, which is consistent with the Egypt Vision 2030. Also in 2019, it launched its national strategy for science, technology and innovation 2030, the aim of which is to build “a science-based society undergirded by generations of lifelong learners who produce and use knowledge to provide practical scientific solutions to the problems facing society.”

133. In 2015, the Government launched its “*Intilaq*” national technology incubator programme, which is the largest umbrella structure in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation for the creation and administration of technology incubators. The first phase of the program entailed the establishment of 19 technology incubators across the country and the incubation of 93 startups. The Egyptian Innovation Bank, which was established in 2018 as the largest Government-run platform for innovation in Egypt and the region, addresses technological challenges as they arise and seeks to transform them into investment opportunities using innovative ideas and solutions.

134. The ranking of Egypt on various global knowledge and innovation indicators has increased. In 2019/20, the country ranked ninety-sixth on the Global Innovation Index, and it ranked fifty-third on the subindex of innovation for research and development in 2020. Moreover, in 2018/19 Egypt rose by two places to rank as thirty-second for scientific publications on global indexes. Lastly, the country’s ranking on the Global Knowledge Index in 2019 rose 17 places from ninety-ninth to eighty-second, out of 136 countries.

135. Between 2018 and 2020, LE 42.79 billion was spent on conducting research and developing scientific research infrastructure, while LE 79.3 billion was spent on the higher

¹⁰ Act No. 1 of 2019.

¹¹ Act No. 150 of 2019.

¹² Act No. 23 of 2018.

education system. A total of 25,500 international research papers were published while the number of patents reached 750, including 175 patents for Egyptian nationals. In addition to this, a programme for young researchers and innovators was launched at a cost of LE 100 million; thanks to the programme, the number of patent applications increased from 490 in 2009 to 997 in 2018.

Effective protection for the moral and material interests of creators

136. The protection of intellectual property rights of all kinds and in all fields is enshrined in the Constitution, and the State is required to establish a specialized body to oversee and provide legal protection for those rights (art. 69 of the Constitution). At the level of legislation, an amendment to the Intellectual Property Protection Act has been issued which envisions protection for persons who undertake creative intellectual endeavours and for the works they produce, whether literary, artistic or industrial, thus enabling them to exploit and derive benefit from those works. The purpose of this is to incentivize innovation. The amendment in question has made it possible to protect certain varieties of agricultural products, thereby encouraging practical research into new genetic structures. The Act also envisages the possibility of legal recourse and provides a number of practical channels in the event of a violation to intellectual property rights of any kind.

137. The Government launched its national intellectual property strategy in September 2022, which aims to encourage and facilitate the creation, development, management and protection of intellectual property across the nation. As part of State efforts to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of intellectual property rights, the Ministry of Justice has arranged with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to have 16 rulings issued by Egyptian courts in intellectual property disputes posted on the WIPO website. Egypt has thus become the first Arab State to publish its court rulings on the WIPO website, just one in a list of 25 countries that publish rulings on that platform. The Egyptian entry includes rulings handed down by economic courts and the Court of Cassation in intellectual property disputes related to copyright, patents, and trademarks.

Protecting the right to science

138. In order to protect individuals' right to science and to the benefits of science, and to balance that right with the protection of intellectual property rights, the Intellectual Property Protection Act authorizes the granting of compulsory licenses in certain circumstances. Under the Act, inventions can be utilized for non-commercial purposes in the public interest; or in emergency situations or cases of extreme necessity; or if patented medicines are not available in quantities sufficient to meet national needs, if they are of low quality or exorbitantly expensive; or if the invention concerns drugs for the treatment of chronic or incurable diseases. This can be done once certain safeguards have been fulfilled, most notably that of defining the economic rights of the patent holder and gaining the approval of a ministerial committee formed by decree of the Prime Minister.

Section II: Replies to the previous concluding observations

Safeguards to ensure the National Council for Human Rights maintains compliance with the Paris Principles

139. The independence of the National Council for Human Rights is enshrined in the 2014 Constitution of Egypt which also upholds the independence and impartiality of Council members and the Council's right to report to the public authorities concerning any violation that falls within its jurisdiction. The technical, financial and administrative independence of the Council is likewise guaranteed. The Constitution stipulates that the views of the Council are to be sought regarding any proposed legislation affecting operations under its mandate (art. 214 of the Constitution). The National Council for Human Rights, moreover, has the right to inform the State Prosecution Office regarding any violation or infringement of the public rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and the law. It may also intervene in civil proceedings on behalf of the injured party. The Act under with the Council

was established, as amended in 2017, defines the body's mandate and jurisdiction and stipulates that it is to be independent from government. Moreover, the Council is to have an independent budget, while the House of Representatives is responsible for selecting Council members from among persons nominated by universities, the Supreme Council for Culture, professional associations and other entities. The Council receives complaints, publishes reports, seeks to disseminate a human rights culture, makes recommendations to the Government and the legislature, coordinates and consults with the State, expresses its views on proposed legislation and undertakes visits to prisons and places of detention.

140. It is a condition that the Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Council – all of whom are chosen by the House of Representatives – must not be members of any bodies associated with the executive, the legislature or the judiciary. In the current composition of the Council, 44.5 per cent of members are women while, for the first time in its history, the Chair is also a woman. Fifty Council members come from civil society organizations and the Council as a whole holds regular consultations with both houses of parliament (House of Representatives and Senate). The Council has been granted category A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

141. Over the past five years, financial allocations from the State to the Council have amounted to around LE 260 million. The State has also provided the Council with a suitable headquarters as well as 11 branch offices in the governorates, thus facilitating communication with members of the public and the reception of complaints. The Council includes a number of committees, namely: a civil and political rights committee; a cultural rights committee; an international relations committee; a social rights committee; an economic rights committee; a legislative rights committee; a complaints, monitoring and follow-up committee; a training and capacity-building committee; a human rights promotion committee; and a climate justice and sustainable development committee. There are some 140 members on the Council's technical secretariat, many of whom have completed advanced degrees in international law and have undergone specialized training in oversight and protection, delivered in cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

With regard to the Committee's recommendation that the State party should increase the proportion of its budget allocated to sectors directly related to Covenant rights

142. It should be noted that, in the seven years prior to the issuance of the present report, the Egyptian Government disbursed LE 10 trillion on the development of infrastructure. Moreover, resources have been allocated in increasing amounts year on year, as part of the State budget, to fulfil people's constitutional entitlement to health and education and freedom of academic research. This is in addition to public spending allocations on housing and social protection programmes of various kinds. Mention should also be made of the amounts spent on implementing the national "decent life" initiative, which aims to develop Egyptian rural villages and which had cost an estimated LE 400 billion by mid-2024.

143. Public spending on health increased in the State budget for the financial year 2024/25 as allocations went up to LE 496 billion, an increase of LE 465 billion compared to the budget for the financial year 2013/14.

144. Spending on pre-university education increased from LE 208.2 billion in the year 2017/18 to LE 565 billion in the budget for the financial year 2024/25. Spending on higher education and university education reached LE 293 billion and on academic research 140.1 billion.

145. The budget allocation for salary payments has gone up to LE 575 billion, as compared to LE 494, which is the sum that the results of the financial year 2023/24 are expected to show. The increase is intended to accommodate the most recent wage package for State workers. Public spending on social protection went up from LE 327.7 billion in the financial year 2019/20 to LE 635.9 billion in the budget for the financial year 2024/25, an increase of 94 per cent. Social protection programmes include food subsidies, social and health insurance, social housing, and cash transfer programmes ("Takaful" and "Karama"). In addition, LE 1.5 billion has been disbursed in cash incentives for medium-size, small and micro-businesses.

Stakeholder input and participation in the budget formulation process

146. As concerns efforts to ensure that the budget formulation process allows for meaningful inputs from stakeholders, including civil society, it should be noted that the drafting and application of the general budget in Egypt is regulated by the Constitution and budgetary laws. The role of parliament in reviewing and approving the budget is also defined in the Constitution, which sets forth minimum allocations for healthcare, education, university and academic research, and dictates the need for a progressive increase in those allocations, in order to meet international standards. The process for formulating the State budget has four stages: drafting (formulation), discussion (approval), implementation (spending) and review (scrutiny).

147. The Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation is responsible for publishing the “citizens’ plan”. This annual document – one for each governorate – which includes detailed information on State investments in the country’s 27 governorates, explains how those investments are distributed across different sectors and illustrates the most significant projects being implemented in each sector. The document also contains the most important socioeconomic indicators for each governorate. This helps citizens keep abreast of the projects being run in their governorate/city/village and, in turn, helps to ensure that they are involved in planning and oversight mechanisms. In the light of the importance the “citizens’ plan” has in raising awareness among the public about the priorities and trends of annual sustainable development plans, the Ministry has posted the plans for the last five years – 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 – on its official website. In addition, the “citizens’ plan” was recently listed on the Sustainable Development Goal Acceleration Actions platform of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

148. The Ministry of Finance publishes reports and documents with a view to making the State budget more accessible to the public at large. These include the “citizen’s budget” which has been published in September of every year since 2014/15 and which helps citizens and stakeholders to understand the budget. The Ministry of Finance has launched an online platform (www.budget.gov.eg) which citizens can use to participate in the budget preparation and implementation process by sending in questions, comments, and suggestions.

149. The “Sharek 2030” mobile app is the first interactive online platform launched by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in 2019 to act as a link with citizens and to draw attention to programmes, development projects and performance indicators. The app also gives citizens an opportunity to propose their own projects and initiatives, thereby enhancing communication mechanisms and community participation. The app has since been improved in response to suggestions made by users, in order to maximize opportunities for interaction with citizens and, in recognition of the role it plays in fostering community engagement, it has also been listed on the DESA Sustainable Development Goal Acceleration Actions platform. These developments in terms of financial disclosure and participation have contributed to improving the ranking of Egypt on the Open Budget Index with a score that increased from 16 points in 2015 to 41 in 2017 and 43 in 2019. This serves to underscore the advances the country has made in transparency and the dissemination of data and information related to the general budget.

150. The President of the Republic made an appeal for a national dialogue which, beginning in May 2023, has involved many different community groups, political parties, civil society representatives and trade unions. In the first stage of the process, which lasted three months, 44 meetings were held. The national dialogue then resumed in August 2024 when the outcomes and recommendations to emerge from the discussions were announced: a total of more than 96,000 proposals in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Following the conclusion of the first round of national dialogue in August 2023, the President referred the outcomes to the competent State authorities for them to examine and to decide what action to take. For his part, the Prime Minister has announced plan of action involving the development of procedures and programmes by ministries for the implementation of the recommendations that emerged from the national dialogue and on which agreement had been reached. One hundred and thirty-three measures were developed in the first phase covering three subject areas: 61 measures in the social sphere, 37 measures in the political sphere and 35 measures in the economic sphere. The plan of action includes the measures to be taken,

the body responsible for taking them, the proposed time frame for implementation and follow-up performance indicators. Matters such as education, health, employment, unemployment, inflation, public spending priorities and family rights are all prioritized in the measures being taken in the social and economic spheres.

Ensuring that obligations under the Covenant are taken into account in all aspects of negotiations with international financial institutions

151. In order to ensure that no violations occur against economic, social and cultural rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable groups, Egypt has worked with international partners to formulate a programme of economic reform aimed at addressing development challenges. The programme has three main areas of focus: the strengthening of the social protection network; the provision of comprehensive protection to the poorest strata in society thanks to a more effective and better-targeted social safety net, in order to reduce poverty and improve living conditions; and the pursuit of sustainable economic growth capable of creating decent jobs, lowering unemployment rates and improving the lives of citizens. The comments regarding the articles of the Covenant, above, particularly the comment on article 9, illustrate the efforts made at the national level to provide social protection for vulnerable social groups. The economic reforms put in place by the State since 2016 following its agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), accompanied by its notable success in maximizing State assets and developing infrastructure, have helped significantly to deal with, contain and mitigate the economic repercussions of global crises. In addition to this, the social protection measures that have been put in place have helped to provide coverage for the most affected groups.

152. The process of drafting the country partnership framework 2023–2027 between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the World Bank Group was marked by transparency and the effective participation of the parties involved. This resulted in the development of a strategic framework that is directly aligned with national priorities and objectives, including the Egypt Vision 2030 sustainable development strategy, the Government’s programme of work and the national programme for structural reform, as well as national sectoral strategies. The country framework partnership aims to help Egypt find ways to eradicate poverty, create prosperity for different segments of society, improve the standard of living for vulnerable groups and create conditions conducive to achieving green, inclusive and resilient development.

Strengthening State efforts to combat corruption

153. The State has stepped up “its efforts to strengthen its national legislation to combat corruption”, ensuring that such legislation is “effectively implemented, including through allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources” and imposing “commensurate sanctions, including criminal sanctions, for perpetrators of corruption”. The State has launched its national anti-corruption strategy, which is currently in its third iteration (2023–2030) and which is consistent with article 218 of the Constitution and with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The strategy has nine principal goals: creating an effective administrative body; providing high-quality public services; rolling out transparency and integrity units in government agencies; developing legislative structures to support the fight against corruption and updating judicial processes to ensure prompt justice; supporting law enforcement agencies to prevent and combat corruption; raising the awareness of local communities about the importance of preventing and combating corruption; involving civil society groups and the private sector in the fight against corruption; improving the performance of government institutions; and improving public services.

154. In the field of legislation, the Code of Criminal Procedure has been amended so that the statute of limitations for the misuse of public funds or bribery begins to run from the date of termination of service or removal from office, unless the investigation is initiated earlier.¹³ A law has been enacted to prevent conflicts of interests for State officials. It defines and prohibits any conflict between the interests of a public official and the interests of the State, requiring the officials concerned either to renounce their interests or to resign their post.

¹³ Amendments promulgated under Act No. 16 of 2015.

Legislators have entrusted the enforcement of this law to an anti-corruption commission, the formation of which is envisaged in the law itself.¹⁴ Amendments have also been introduced to the Money Laundering Act concerning the rules and methods used to combat money laundering and the actions that constitute more or less serious crimes under the Act, whether committed inside the country or abroad.¹⁵ A further law has been issued which regulates the contracts entered into by public bodies and is applicable to all State entities that come under the general budget of the State.¹⁶ The law aims to apply principles of governance, transparency, equality and equality of opportunity, and to create a climate in which medium-size, small and micro-businesses and companies are able to compete. A website known as the “Public Contracts Portal” has been opened to guarantee governance and transparency in all State procurement processes.

155. A section regarding professional conduct and disciplinary accountability for violations of the public interest has been added to the Civil Service Act¹⁷ and its implementing regulations. Other laws have been enacted that seek to provide effective protection for public assets by regulating the judicial bodies responsible for punishing persons who commit corruption-related offences. In addition to this, amendments have been introduced to the law regulating the Administrative Control Authority so as to uphold its independence and enable it to monitor the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy.¹⁸ Ultimately, the Criminal Code has been amended to criminalize the bribery of foreign public officials or members of international organizations.¹⁹

156. In parallel with the legislative amendments, a code of conduct for public officials has been produced and published on the websites of ministries and governorates. Also, a national commission has been established for the recovery of overseas funds, property and assets²⁰ as well as a commission for the recovery of State-owned land that has been illegally seized.²¹ At the institutional level, a national committee and a national coordinating subcommittee to prevent and combat corruption were created under Prime Ministerial Decrees No. 2890 of 2010 and 1022 of 2014. The committees bring together representatives from ministries and other bodies involved in implementing and monitoring the national anti-corruption strategy and related national and international treaties.

157. Between January 2020 and August 2022, the State Prosecution Office investigated 236 bribery offences, referring a number of them to the courts for criminal proceedings. Convictions were handed down in 23 cases, with 41 still pending. Administrative sanctions and disciplinary proceedings were applied in 17 cases. The State Prosecution Office is still pursuing investigations in 54 cases. During the same period, it investigated 4,487 crimes of misappropriation of public funds, with convictions handed down in 277 cases and 408 cases still pending. The State Prosecution Office applied administrative sanctions and disciplinary proceedings in 180 cases. Investigations are ongoing in 1,200 cases.

Eliminating discrimination in all aspects of economic, social and cultural rights

158. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 21–25.

With regard to the Committee’s recommendation to enhance the participation of women in the labour force and to promote the substantive equality of women and men in political and public life

159. Apart from the comment on article 6 concerning the employment of women and girls, earlier in the present report, mentions should also be made of the State’s efforts towards the economic empowerment and labour-market integration of women, which includes a national plan to promote gender equality in the workplace, launched in 2022, and of the fact that the

¹⁴ Act No. 106 of 2013 regarding conflicts of interests among state officials.

¹⁵ Money Laundering Act promulgated by Act No. 80 of 2002 as amended by Act No. 17 of 2020.

¹⁶ Act No. 182 of 2018 regulating contracts awarded by public bodies.

¹⁷ Act No. 81 of 2016.

¹⁸ Amendments promulgated under Act No. 207 of 2017.

¹⁹ Amendments promulgated under Act No. 5 of 2018.

²⁰ Established pursuant to Act No. 28 of 2015.

²¹ Established by Presidential Decree No. 75 of 2016.

unemployment rate among women decreased from 24.2 per cent in 2015 to 17.8 per cent in 2021. Moreover, the ranking of Egypt in international indicators on women's political empowerment has improved. Egypt jumped 47 places in the "women's political empowerment indicator" of the Global Gender Gap Report to reach its best placing in 10 years, occupying seventy-eighth place in 2022 as compared to 125th in 2012. It jumped 65 places in the "women's representation in parliament indicator", to sixty-third in 2022 as compared to 128th in 2012. It advanced 29 places in the "women holding ministerial portfolios indicator", to sixty-sixth in 2022, compared to ninety-fifth in 2012. In 2020, women won 165 seats in the House of Representatives; i.e., 27.7 per cent. They hold 15 seats on House committees, one of the highest percentages in the history of Egypt. Although the Senate Act allocates 10 per cent of Senate seats to women, the President of the Republic has appointed 20 women Senators, bringing women's representation to 14 per cent.

160. A female judge has been appointed as Vice-President of the Supreme Constitutional Court, and a total of 3,541 women were working on judicial bodies as of 2023. The number of female court judges stands at 166 with 100 female judges on the Council of State, as compared to 66 in 2017. At the beginning of 2024, a woman was appointed for the first time to a leadership role within the Ministry of the Interior, currently holding the position of Deputy Minister of the Interior for Human Rights. Furthermore, around 30 per cent of the diplomatic corps are women and women have continued to maintain a strong presence in government, notably in the most recent Government in July 2024 where they hold 18 posts, including ministerial and deputy-ministerial portfolios. There are also female governors and deputy governors. In addition to this, women are at the helm of several national human rights bodies, such as the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities.

161. As concerns economic empowerment, there have been improvements in the indicators on the economic inclusion of women, also vis-à-vis small businesses and micro-loans, and in the indicators on women in managerial positions. In 2021, the Ministry of International Cooperation, in collaboration with the National Council for Women, the World Economic Forum and the private sector, launched a plan of action to accelerate the closure of the gender gap. Egypt is the first country in Africa and the Middle East to launch such a plan. A total of 264 equal opportunity units have been created in ministries, governorates and districts to educate working women about their rights and the importance of participating in the development process.

Progress in policies to combat unemployment, in particular among women and youth

162. The reply is contained in the comment regarding article 6 of the Covenant, in paragraphs 35–40 of the present report.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning a minimum wage

163. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 48–50 of the present report and the comment concerning article 7.

Bringing the Labour Code into line with the Covenant and extending it to cover workers in the informal sector

164. The Government has submitted a new draft labour code, and the Council for Social Dialogue is in the process of holding consultations and discussion on the text with representatives from the three parties concerned with labour matters (i.e., government, employers and workers) and labour-related institutions. ILO experts are also being involved in order to ensure that due account is given to international labour standards. As concerns work in the informal economic sector, reference is made to paragraphs 42–45 above and the comment regarding article 6.

The right to form independent trade unions.

165. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 58–61 of the present report and the comment concerning article 8.

Adopting national legislation and establishing a strategy to ensure universal access to social security and social assistance programmes

166. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 64–69 of the present report and the comment concerning article 9.

Legislation and measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women and to criminalize female genital mutilation

167. As concerns efforts to combat violence against women, in addition to amendments to the Criminal Code increasing the penalties for such crimes, in 2021 the Prime Minister issued a decree creating the first joint unit to prevent violence against women in order to accelerate the relevant procedures and provide all services within an integrated unit. The decree clearly defines violence against women as any act, behaviour or omission in violation of the Constitution and the law that results in harm or suffering to women, be it physical, material, moral, psychological, social or economic, or in the violation of legally guaranteed rights and freedoms, whether in public or private life.

168. The National Committee for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation launched its national plan for the elimination of female genital mutilation (2022–2026). As part of its “Protect Her from Circumcision” campaigns, the Committee has been able to make 108 million repeat contacts to raise awareness among men and women. Genital mutilation had already seen a decrease among the 0–19 age group, to 14 per cent in 2021 as compared to 21 per cent in 2014.

169. Act No. 10 of 2021 introduced amendments to the Criminal Code intended to punish practitioners of female circumcision with a term of rigorous imprisonment of between 5 and 10 years. In cases where the party responsible for the offence is a doctor or nursing professional, the Act envisages penalties of up to 20 years’ imprisonment followed by disqualification from professional practice for a minimum of 3 years upon completion of sentence and closure of the facility where the circumcision took place. The Act also envisages imprisonment for any person who requests female mutilation or who openly advocates, promotes or encourages the commission of the crime of female genital mutilation.

170. Security agencies have stepped up their measures to address violence against women and, between 2019 and 2023, 1,241 perpetrators of such violence (sexual harassment and assault) were arrested. The first national referral form for reporting cases of violence against women has also been drafted, based on international models. Between January 2020 and August 2022, the State Prosecution Office investigated 72 cases of female genital mutilation; 18 convictions were handed down and a number of cases are still pending.

171. More than 42 anti-harassment and anti-violence units have been set up at universities, and there are medical response units at university hospitals. There is a unit to combat violence against women at the Ministry of Justice and similar divisions in the directorates of the Ministry of the Interior. There are 10 “safe women” units at university hospitals for female victims of violence and 3 forensic medicine clinics for victims of violence and sexual assault, as well as online services for families at the State Prosecution Office. A total of nine women’s shelters take in victims of violence and human trafficking. There have been campaigns to raise awareness about all forms of violence against women, human trafficking, exploitation and cyberviolence with information about how to file reports and seek protection. These have included social media, door-to-door campaigns and awareness-raising in schools.

172. A code of conduct for the transport sector has been published that aims to promote safe transportation for women. A charter of ethics to promote a safe workplace environment for women has also been produced. Training programmes have been put in place for service providers and other relevant authorities. This is in addition to the publication of a number of manuals, including: a forensic manual for doctors; a manual on effective police response to crimes of violence against women; a manual for prosecutors; a manual on effective judicial response to crimes of violence against women; a medical manual for healthcare providers; a manual for case management and psychological support; a manual for judges; a manual for anti-violence units at universities; and a manual for “safe women” units at university hospitals. The Government is in the process of studying a bill on domestic violence, which aims to tackle all aspects of this phenomenon; the text will then be submitted to parliament.

It envisages increased penalties for and protection against assault within the family and introduces new punishable offences. It also covers matters such as alternative penalties for certain offences; rehabilitation for offenders and victims; family, psychological, social and health counselling; and the need to raise public awareness of the dangers of domestic violence, including through training and academic programmes in schools.

Prohibition of child labour in line with ILO conventions

173. Reference is made to the reply on child labour given in paragraphs 75–77 of the present report and the comment concerning article 10. In September 2024, the National Council for Childhood, in cooperation with ILO, published an operational and procedural guide for combating child labour. The guide is intended to act as a tool within the child labour monitoring system, which is part of the national plan to combat the worst forms of child labour. Case management forms for dealing with instances of child labour have been produced and a series of training courses on the procedural guide are now to be held (depending upon the priorities of the targeted governorates) for persons who work in the field of child labour, including the staff of child protection units, labour inspectors, and staff specialized in combating child labour from the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning food security and evaluating the impact of the reduction of food subsidies

174. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 80–83 of the present report and the comment concerning article 11.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation

175. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 102 and 103 of the present report and the comment concerning article 11 of the Covenant.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning sufficient investment in the construction of affordable housing and the registration of ownership of houses and land

176. On the subject of sufficient investment in affordable housing, reference is made to paragraphs 84–89 of the present report and the comment concerning article 11. Egypt has introduced legislative reforms in the form of Act No. 9 of 2022 which amended Real Estate Registry Act No. 114 of 1946. The purpose of the new Act is to simplify and abbreviate procedures, reduce the number of required documents to a minimum necessary for reasons of security, set clear time limits for adjudicating real estate-related matters and appealing against decisions, provide protection and stability for real estate property, reduce the number of legal disputes and end the crisis of citizen reluctance. The authorities have launched media campaigns to raise awareness about the new Act.

177. The expropriation of property for the common good is regulated by Act No. 10 of 1990, under which property required for the public weal can be expropriated and compensation provided. In this regard, works for the common good include the construction, expansion, modification or extension of roads, streets and squares; the establishment of new neighbourhoods; the building of water, sanitation, irrigation, drainage, energy or transportation projects; urban planning; and the improvement of public facilities. The Act contains an important safeguard in that the common good is to be established by a decree of the President of the Republic accompanied by a document detailing the project to be undertaken with designs and plans of the necessary building work. Any decree regarding the expropriation of property for the common good must be published in the Official Gazette and any such expropriation of property is to entail fair compensation for the owner and the occupant. The amount of compensation is determined by a committee to be set up in each governorate by decree of the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation with its membership drawn from ministries and government agencies. The committee calculates the amount of compensation on the basis of current prices at the time the decree of expropriation was issued then adds an additional 20 per cent to the estimated value. The entity demanding the

expropriation is to disburse the agreed compensation within no more than a month of the issuance of the decree of expropriation. With the agreement of the owner, the compensation may be paid fully or partly in kind. The parties concerned can contest the compensation assessment before the courts of first instance. The Court of Cassation has published a manual containing the text of the Expropriation of Property in the Public Interest Act as well as relevant Court rulings and other details relevant to the enforcement of the Act.

178. The Supreme Administrative Court of the Council of State has established that the administrative courts have jurisdiction over disputes regarding the expropriation of property for the public good. However, that jurisdiction does not extend to appeals against compensation assessments for expropriated property which are handled by the ordinary courts of first instance in the district where the expropriated property is located. It is up to the Administrative Prosecution Office to determine the disciplinary responsibilities of staff of the administrative committees that conduct the procedures if it emerges that they abused their authority or violated the law. The Egyptian courts have handed down numerous rulings on disputes regarding the expropriation of property for the public good.

Public spending on health and the provision of health insurance for all

179. As stated earlier, public spending on health increased in the State budget for the financial year 2024/25 as allocations went up to LE 496 billion, an increase of LE 465 billion compared to the budget for the financial year 2013/14. As concerns efforts on the part of the State to provide health insurance for all, as well as healthcare facilities and services, reference is made to the reply on healthcare in paragraphs 90–101 of the present report and the comment concerning article 12 of the Covenant.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning public spending on education and reforms to the education system

180. Reference is made to the reply given in paragraphs 104–113 of the present report and the comment concerning articles 13 and 14 of the Covenant.

Access to education in rural areas

181. The number of schools in rural areas in Egypt has gone up to 12,360. These schools incorporate 150,666 classes which were attended by 7,726,967 pupils in the academic year 2023/24. Those figures compare with 10,931 schools, 129,927 classes and 5,549,263 pupils in the academic year 2013/14. Middle schools in rural Egypt number 8,200, incorporating 67,973 classes attended by 3,308,424 pupils in the academic year 2022/23. This compares with 6,419 schools, 57,815 classes and 2,338,337 pupils in 2013/14. As concerns public secondary education, the number of schools in rural areas has nearly doubled with 1,638 schools, 17,371 classes and 728,207 pupils in the academic year 2023/24, as compared to 995 schools, 10,985 classes and 400,015 pupils in 2013/14.

182. The State is always striving to achieve a balance in access to education between rural and urban areas. This commitment is clearly evident in the numbers of schools, classes and students at different levels of education, which are distributed between rural and urban areas in a manner that reflects the geographical distribution of the population. As of 2022, 57 per cent of the population lived in rural areas and 43 per cent in urban areas. At the same time, during the academic year 2023/24, the total number of schools stood at 61,512, of which 35,024 in rural areas (56.9 per cent of the total), compared to 26,488 in urban areas (43% of the total). This is almost identical to the geographical distribution of the population and is very near the proportion for the academic year 2013/14, when 58.7 per cent of schools were in rural areas and 41.2 per cent in urban areas, for all levels of education.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation regarding freedom of religious practice and the construction of places of worship

183. Freedom to practise religious rites and to establish places for different forms of worship is guaranteed under the Constitution as this represents the outward manifestation of freedom of belief. The Constitution guarantees the right to practise religious rites for everyone, individually or with others, inside places of worship. Article 64 reads: "The

freedom to practise religious rites and to establish places of worship is a right regulated by law for followers of the Abrahamic religions.” The Constitution considers this to be an inherent personal right of citizens, and it is forbidden for any law that regulates the exercise of rights and freedoms to impose restrictions that adulterate the spirit and essence of that right. Act No. 80 of 2016 regulating the construction and restoration of churches reaffirms the right of the Christian citizens of Egypt to build and renovate churches wherein to practise their religious rituals freely. At the national level, the total number of churches and other buildings that have been legally endorsed and regularized has gone up from 1,800 in December 2020 to 3,453 in October 2024.

184. Freedom of religion and belief is also upheld in the national human rights strategy, which sets itself a number of goals to be achieved in the period 2021–2026. These include intensified awareness-raising campaigns targeting young people, in particular to promote coexistence, tolerance and acceptance of others; the rejection of hatred and violence; activities intended to shape societal awareness about religious freedom; the rejection of intolerance and extremist ideas; greater coordination among religious institutions on plans to renew religious discourse; disseminating tolerance and respect for religions; reviewing religious curricula in schools to remove elements that do not contribute to the promotion of tolerance; and monitoring material broadcast via the media that might amount to discrimination or incitement on religious grounds. At the same time, the committee for legalizing the status of churches is continuing its efforts to bring churches and service buildings that have not yet been regulated under the umbrella of the law. In addition to this, lands have been allocated for the construction of churches in new cities and urban settlements, and the State has pursued its efforts to carry out a number of restoration projects on mosques, churches and synagogues in various governorates, at a cost of around LE 1.5 billion. As part of efforts to revive the itinerary of the Holy Family and to identify the points through which they passed on their flight into Egypt, 7 out of a total of 14 sites have been opened.

With regard to the Committee’s recommendation regarding the direct applicability of the Covenant in the national legal system

185. The current Constitution, which was promulgated in 2014, envisages all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Covenant. Indeed, its definitions are broader and its applications more extensive than those contained in the Covenant. Under article 151 of the Constitution, the legislature, judiciary and executive are required to abide by ratified international treaties in the same way as they are required to abide by domestic law. This means that persons who have suffered harm as a consequence of a failure to apply such treaties may have recourse to the courts. In this regard, the 2014 Constitution has gone further than earlier Constitutions because article 93 of the current Constitution envisages a special status for ratified international human rights treaties, which are given force of law. This means that the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in those treaties enjoy constitutional protection and, thus, any interested party may have recourse to the Supreme Constitutional Court to challenge the constitutionality of a piece of legislation. The Supreme Constitutional Court has upheld this right in two cases, explaining in its reasoning that the enforcement of article 93 entails an obligation to amend domestic laws to bring them into line with obligations under international human rights treaties. Rulings handed down by the Court are final and enforceable for all State authorities. Moreover, the Supreme Constitutional Court has had occasion to invoke international human rights treaties in certain rulings regarding rights-related disputes that it has been called upon to examine.

186. The Covenant has been invoked or cited in a number of rulings by the Supreme Administrative Court of the Council of State. During the period covered by the present report, the Supreme Constitutional Court also invoked the Covenant in several cases concerning the constitutionality of certain legal provisions:

- Case No. 75 of judicial year 35, issued on 16 January 2022, which invoked article 2 of the Covenant.
- Case No. 71 of judicial year 41, issued on 4 June 2022, which invoked article 2 of the Covenant.

- Case No. 298 of judicial year 30, issued on 2 April 2022, which invoked article 1 of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and article 2 of the ILO Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154).

With regard to the Committee's recommendation to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Covenant and acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

187. Egypt periodically reviews its treaty accessions in the light of national priorities and reconsiders its position on international instruments to which it has not acceded or to which it has expressed reservations, in the light of the provisions of the Constitution and in order to ensure consistency and harmony between its international obligations. For example, measures were recently taken to accede to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa.

Conclusion

188. In submitting its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports, the Arab Republic of Egypt affirms its willingness to resume interactive dialogue with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the regular submission of its periodic reports. It also looks forward to benefiting from the Committee's expertise in follow-up on the implementation of observations and recommendations, and it reaffirms its determination to extend the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights through various measures and policies and to the maximum extent of available resources.

189. The period covered by the present report was marked by a number of security, political and economic challenges and overshadowed by the dangers of terrorism and transnational organized crime. This was accompanied by regional turbulence, increasing numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers (also as a result of the difficulties in the region), the COVID-19 pandemic and rising global food and energy prices. Despite all these challenges, over the past 10 years Egypt has made great progress towards the creation of a modern civil State and the achievement of sustained rates of sustainable economic and social development. Over those years the Egyptian State has not shirked its treaty obligations but has worked to modernize, develop and improve its national human right system. In conclusion, Egypt as a whole remains determined to continue to advance with increasing speed and determination to fulfil the aspirations of its people.
