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**Consideration of reports: reports submitted
by States parties in accordance with
articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant**

List of issues in relation to the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Egypt

Addendum

Replies of Egypt to the list of issues*,**

[22 October 2013]

* The present document has not been formally edited.

** Annexes may be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.



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Introduction

1. Egypt welcomes the list of issues drawn up by the working group as a preparatory measure for the consideration of the combined second, third and fourth periodic reports of Egypt by the Committee in November 2013 and would like to express its complete willingness to continue with the constructive dialogue with the Committee in keeping with the country's international obligations and those arising from its accession to the Covenant.
2. The information requested by the Committee will be presented in the same order and under the same headings as in the list of issues. The requested statistics will be included in a separate annex with an indication of the sources and the specific issue to which the items refer. The number of the annex will be referenced in the body of the text.

I. General information

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues (E/C.12/WG/EGY/Q/2-4)

3. According to Egyptian law, all the rights and freedoms embodied in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are safeguarded under the Constitution having been included in successive constitutional instruments, most recently the Constitutional Declaration of 8 July 2013 issued following the June 2013 revolution. Thus, national legislation must conform with constitutional provisions which are of higher rank under Egyptian law, and legislators are also bound by them, subject to scrutiny by the Supreme Constitutional Court. This, in the context of the Committee's general comment No. 3, ensures the direct applicability of the Covenant which, as provided for in successive constitutional provisions, is considered to be part of Egyptian law following its ratification and publication in the Official Gazette. This is a guarantee of the applicability of the Covenant and of citizens' full and effective enjoyment of the rights contained therein. At the same time it provides for an independent redress mechanism, and full judicial protection for individuals from any violations of the Covenant, whether stemming from laws issued by the legislature regulating the exercise of those rights, administrative offices charged with implementing those laws, or in the context of issues which may arise in relations between citizens themselves and which have a bearing on the exercise of the rights protected by the Covenant. As previously mentioned, the Covenant is considered to be part of Egyptian law and can consequently be invoked in court and in dealings with the State.
4. In terms of the practical application of the above in decisions by judicial authorities, a number of judgements issued by the Constitutional Court since its creation in 1969, and by the Supreme Constitutional Court when it began to exercise its functions in 1971, have addressed issues of the constitutionality of laws and regulations affecting rights and freedoms covered by the Covenant. In previous reports Egypt also pointed out that the Criminal Court of Cairo had invoked the Covenant when handing down an acquittal in the case of a railway workers' strike. The basis for the verdict was that strikes had become legal since the date of Egypt's accession to the Covenant, and the fact that they had been illegal at the time this strike took place was irrelevant. By virtue of that judgement, Egypt was obliged to establish the right to strike and incorporate it into its new Labour Code, as previously detailed in the State party report.
5. The Supreme Constitutional Court has issued other judgements concerning laws which violate the constitutional provisions relating to the rights embodied in the

Covenant. A number of these were mentioned in the State party report, but since then the Court has issued other judgements:

6. The Court ruled that a number of Acts granting periodic increases in pensions were unconstitutional on the grounds that they were too restrictive in their applicability to persons entitled to pensions, providing as they did that one of the qualifying requirements was that the beneficiary must be of the specified legal age for entitlement to a pension, and no other age. This, it was ruled, constituted a violation of the right to equality and the right of private ownership (judgement handed down in case No. 174, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 9 January 2005).

7. The Court ruled that article 2, paragraph 1, of Acts No. 150 of 1988, No. 85 of 2000, No. 19 of 2001, No. 150 of 2002, No. 91 of 2003 and No. 88 of 2004 were unconstitutional on the grounds that they awarded increases in pension only to persons who had completed their service, and did not award a comparable increase to persons whose service had been terminated by resignation, thereby infringing the right of private ownership enshrined in article 34 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 33, year 28, rulings of the SCC, session of 1 July 2007).

8. The Court ruled that article 23, paragraph 2 of Act No. 79 of 1975 (the Social Insurance Act) was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided that pension due should be deducted from the adjusted pay of every employee whose service had been terminated by resignation, but not from that of other employees whose service had been terminated for other reasons; this, the Court found, was discrimination and as such contravened the principle of equality enshrined in article 40 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 310, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 4 March 2008).

9. The Court ruled that article 1, paragraph 2, subparagraph 2 of Act No. 88 of 2004 was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided for a cap on pension increases for pension holders who were not employees of the State, whereas no such cap was imposed on those employees, despite the fact that the purpose of the provision was the same in both cases, namely to address the burden of constantly increasing pension entitlements; in passing this Act, the legislature had exceeded its authority in the matter of regulating entitlements, thereby contravening articles 17 and 122 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in Case No. 20, year 27, rulings of the SCC, session of 8 June 2008).

10. The Court ruled that Act No. 100 of 1993 concerning democratic guarantees for trade unions and professional associations, as amended by Act No. 5 of 1995, was unconstitutional because it is the State's duty to guarantee the right to form and join professional associations and establish trade unions, and because the contested Act had not been referred to the Consultative Council even though it was a law which supplemented the Constitution. Although this judgement invalidated the Act on formal grounds, laying it before the second chamber of the legislature as it then existed would have put the onus on the legislature to strive to formulate better provisions to guarantee the enjoyment of the aforementioned rights (judgement handed down in case No. 198, year 23, rulings of the SCC, published in the Official Gazette No. 1 (bis) on 8 January 2011).

11. The Court ruled that the opening clause of article 105 (2) of the Social Insurance Act No. 79 of 1975, before its amendment by Act No. 12 of 2000, was unconstitutional insofar as it stipulated that, for widows, the contract or legalization of their marriage had to have been finalized before the insured party or beneficiary of the pension reached the age of 60, which is the legal age of retirement. The Court likewise ruled that the rest of article 105 (2) was null insofar as it constituted an attack on personal freedom and the right to form a family, both of which are protected by the

Constitution, as well as a deprivation of insurance rights as guaranteed by law (judgement handed down in case No. 36, year 31, rulings of the SCC, published in the Official Gazette No. 1 (bis) on 8 January 2011).

12. The Court ruled that article 84 (1) and (2) of Act No. 17 of 1983 regulating the exercise of the legal profession, as amended by Act No. 107 of 2001, was unconstitutional, and that article 84 (3) as well as article 85 were null, insofar as they infringed the right to take legal action, the right to be tried before a natural judge and the independence of the judiciary. This ensures that the independence of the judiciary is maintained and applied in practice in Egyptian law, and that the right to defence is effectively guaranteed (judgement handed down in Case No. 5/31, rulings of the SCC, published in the Official Gazette No. 1 (bis) on 8 January 2011).

13. The Court ruled that the last part of article 36 (d) of Act No. 35 of 1976 on trade unions was unconstitutional insofar as it made candidacy for a higher-level trade union body conditional on having served a prior term as a member of the administrative board of a lower-level trade union body. The Court likewise ruled that similar provisions contained in the special guidelines for candidacy and elections of members of administrative councils of trade union bodies for the cycle 2001-2006 were also null. This was done on the basis of the fact that they represented a restriction on and a violation of the freedom of expression and association, and the right to form trade union organizations, which are among the rights protected by the Constitution (judgement handed down during session of 4 March 2012, published in the Official Gazette No. 10 (bis) 14 March 2012).

14. The Court ruled that a number of Acts regarding pension increases (Nos. 19 of 2001, 150 of 2002 and 91 of 2003) which established a cap on the increase of 60 Egyptian pounds (LE) per month, but not for State employees, were unconstitutional on the grounds that they contravened the right to equality, despite the fact that the purpose of the provisions was the same, namely to address the burden of constantly increasing pension entitlements. In passing this Act, the legislature had exceeded its authority in the matter of regulating entitlements, thereby contravening articles 17 and 122 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case Nos. 82 of year 26 and 56 of year 31, rulings of the SCC, session of 5 August 2012).

15. The Court ruled that article 3 (1) of Act No. 2 of 1997 which amended a number of provisions of General Sales Tax Act No. 11 of 1991 with retroactive effect from 5 March 1992 was unconstitutional because it violated the constitutional provision whereby laws are not to be retroactive except under particular stipulated circumstances agreed by a special majority of Parliament (case No. 29 of year 22, rulings of the SCC, session of 14 October 2012, published in the Official Gazette No. 42 (bis) of 24 October 2012).

16. It should be pointed out that, as a result of the revolution of the Egyptian people on 25 January 2011, the 1971 Constitution was abrogated. Subsequently, the military council which was then running the country issued a number of Constitutional Declarations and these remained in force until the issue the 2012 Constitution which, however, failed to meet with popular consent. As a result of the revolution of the Egyptian people on 30 June 2013, work on the 2012 Constitution was discontinued and a Constitutional Declaration was issued on 8 July 2013 which remains in force today. As part of the implementation of that Declaration, mechanisms have been set up at various levels to make the necessary amendments to the provisions in the earlier Constitution which failed to find popular favour. This process — which aims to achieve the goals for which the two revolutions and the endorsement of which will be conditional on a referendum — is taking place in stages during which all the provisions are being subjected to careful examination in order to ensure that the rights and freedoms laid down in international human rights treaties to which Egypt has

acceded are safeguarded, including of course the rights and freedoms covered by this Covenant. This confirms Egypt's fulfilment of the international and regional obligations which arise from its accession to those treaties.

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

17. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant is still under consideration. This process is expected to end once the necessary steps have been taken to bring constitutional amendments into force, as per the road map, and following parliamentary and presidential elections.

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

18. Civil society activities have been ongoing in Egypt since the nineteenth century with the help and support of all areas of society, developing over the course of the last 200 years, moving to different fields and utilizing different means and mechanisms as they accompanied social and economic developments, scientific advances and global changes.

19. During that period civil society has played an important complementary role to Government, achieving many tangible positive results. The growing civil society movement has helped to fill many social gaps and responded to many of the citizens' basic needs. It has propagated literary and scientific works, different forms of art and culture, as well as raising society's awareness to various fields of knowledge and new scientific specialisations.

20. More than 26,000 civil society organizations currently operate in Egypt, working in various different fields. These include around 200 non-governmental organizations which are classified as human rights organizations. The Constitutions of Egypt, as well as successive constitutional provisions of which the most recent was the Constitutional Declaration of 8 July 2013 issued after the revolution of 30 June 2013, have all been careful to mention social activities as a human right and a fundamental part of human development. Article 10 of the 8 July Declaration states that "unarmed citizens have the right to organize public assemblies, processions and peaceful demonstrations" after giving notification pursuant to law. The right to private assembly is guaranteed without the need for prior notification. Security personnel may not attend or intercept such private meetings. Citizens have the right to form associations, establish unions, federations and parties as per the law. The establishment of associations whose activities are harmful to public order, of secret associations, or of military-type associations is prohibited. No political party may be established on the basis of discrimination among citizens on the grounds of sex, origin or religion. Political parties may only be dissolved by a court ruling.

21. With these historical precedents, the institutions of civil society continue to play an effective and increasingly important role in society thanks to their integrity and transparency, and the uniquely objective nature of their disinterested voluntary work which aims only at the common good. On account of their ability to relate to all sectors of society and to bring them together under the umbrella of unity of effort and goals, the work of these institutions as fundamental partners in development provides, within their limits, an effective response to many of society's needs and aspirations. Their work is also important for human rights organizations, as they spread awareness of human rights and basic freedoms, and of how to preserve and defend them.

22. For all these reasons the State is careful to create a propitious atmosphere for the activities of civil society organizations and to ensure they abide by the legal conditions regulating social activities, the aim of which is to preserve the security and stability of society. For this reason, the legally competent administrative departments

must ensure that constitutional and legal controls exist for the formation and activity of associations, and constantly ensure those associations abide by the goals for which they were created. In carrying out the role prescribed to them by law, these administrative departments cannot act arbitrarily or without supervision, but are subject to the administrative rulings issued by the State in this regard.

23. In view of the multi-dimensional nature of the issue, Egypt would like to add the information below to that contained in its report.

A. Conditions for establishing civil society associations

24. The conditions for establishing civil society associations are as follows:

- (a) The number of founders must not be less than 10, whether natural persons, legal persons or the two combined, and the aim of the association must be non-profit;
- (b) The name of the association must reflect its aims and must not give rise to confusion with other associations operating in the same geographical area;
- (c) It must undertake activities for the development of society, in such fields as education, health care, culture, social services, the economy, the environment, consumer protection, awareness raising on constitutional rights and freedoms, civil defence and others;
- (d) Civil society associations are prohibited from carrying out political or trade union activities which, by the terms of the Political Parties Act and trade union legislation are restricted, respectively, to political parties and to trade unions. Nor may such associations foment discrimination among citizens;
- (e) The association must have its headquarters within the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the deed of occupation of those headquarters must have a fixed date (ownership, rental, usufruct or apportionment);
- (f) The association must have a written statute, signed by the founders, clearly stating its areas of activity and the aim for which it was created.

25. If these conditions are met, the administrative authorities must register the association within 60 days of the founders presenting due application for registration. If registration is not completed within that period of time, it is anyway considered to have taken place *ipso jure*.

B. Procedures for registering foreign organizations

26. Foreign non-governmental organizations may be permitted to operate as civil society associations under Act No. 84 of 2002 and in accordance with the rules contained therein. Permits are issued by the Ministry of Social Solidarity on the basis of an agreement concluded between the organizations in question and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pursuant to article 1 of the regulations promulgating the above-mentioned Act. The procedures for registering foreign organizations are as follows:

- (a) The application is to be made to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and must state:
 - (i) The treaty or agreement on the basis of which the organization is applying to operate in Egypt. In the absence of a prior treaty or agreement, the application will be considered on the basis of any proposal for an agreement it may contain;
 - (ii) The nature of the activities, the geographical area in which they will take place and the period for which they will last;
 - (iii) The amount of funding and the means of financing the proposed activity.

(b) The relevant department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will seek the opinion of the Ministry concerned before admitting the application and signing the agreement.

(c) If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs admits the organization's application an agreement is concluded. The agreement can take the form of letters exchanged between the Ministry and the foreign organization concerned.

(d) A copy of the agreement is sent to the Ministry concerned and the permit is issued to the foreign organization for the activities it has requested to carry out.

C. Conditions for obtaining foreign grants

26. The conditions for obtaining foreign grants are as follows:

(a) The association must have undertaken a satisfactory search for funding;

(b) The aim of the grant must accord with the aim of the association as per its statute;

(c) Society must have an effective need for the grant, which must be used appropriately (in other words, there must be groups with an urgent need for the intended activities);

(d) Other parties concerned must be in agreement, if implementing the project would overlap with the area of authority of another Ministry;

(e) The association must include staff competent to implement its project. In the absence of such staff, the mechanism of implementation must be explained in detail including the bodies the association will work with in order to implement its project;

(f) The association must abide by article 17 of Act No. 84 of 2002, which stipulates that no association may obtain funds from abroad, whether from Egyptians or foreigners or their local representative, or send any of the above-mentioned items except technical and scientific books and magazines to persons or associations abroad, save with permission from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

28. In light of current developments, the Government is examining a number of recent proposals made by various Egyptian civil society organizations concerning the new draft law. Since 2011, the Ministry of Social Solidarity has been organizing meetings with different parties in order to discuss amendments to laws governing civil society organizations and to formulate proposals that reflect the current need for change. Attention has focused on amending provisions concerning the registration of civil society associations, with a move towards registration by notification; provisions concerning foreign funding, where various opinions have favoured a simplification and clarification of procedures also for dissolving associations; and provisions regarding penalties. The Ministry hopes to come up with a draft law which supports the participation of civil society organizations in development issues while maintaining due regard for the security of the State.

29. The draft law on civil society associations is currently being completed, and will ensure compliance with all agreed standards and rules. This process is expected to come to an end following the constitutional amendments, and the draft law will then be presented to the legislature following general elections.

II. Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1-5)

Article 2, paragraph 1 Maximum available resources

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues

30. There have been increasing efforts at international, regional and national levels to combat corruption, a dangerous phenomenon which undermines national development. Combating corruption is considered a priority for the Government, being one of the main ways to ensure that citizens fully enjoy their rights and freedoms in a transparent society regulated by the rule of law. These efforts have focused on the following areas:

- Laying the foundations for democracy and good governance;
- Laying down regulations to ensure supervision, accountability and transparency in the management of public services and public assets;
- Strengthening international cooperation to stamp out corruption and limit its effects.

31. The efforts being undertaken by Egypt rest on the same foundations and follow the same standards as other anti-corruption measures, operating at the practical and legal levels in the aforementioned areas. These efforts may be detailed as follows:

(i) *The country is committed to laying the foundations for democracy and good governance*

32. In order to implement the “road map” which emerged from the revolution of 30 June 2013, Egypt is currently drawing up a Constitution to guarantee democracy and set standards for good governance, which were the goals of the popular revolutions of 25 January 2011 and 30 June 2013. In accordance with the popular will expressed in those revolutions, the Constitution will be put to a popular referendum after having been revised by the mechanisms laid down in the road map.

(ii) *The country is issuing legislation to improve supervision, accountability and transparency*

33. In the light of international anti-corruption initiatives, Egypt too is adopting legislation to enhance accountability, transparency and supervision in the administration of public affairs and services, and other associated fields. This legislation includes the following:

- The Prosecution of Administrative Offences Act No. 117 of 1958 and its amendments. This law establishes a judicial body to investigate financial and administrative violations by public officials or others of similar status, and refers those shown to have committed such violations to the Council of State for disciplinary action;
- The Illicit Gains Act No. 62 of 1975 which obligates public officials and others of similar status to present periodic reports on their financial status. This makes it possible to determine the amount and sources of their income and the extent to which it correspond to their declared earnings, and to establish criminal liability for illicit gains;

- A law which establishes a supervisory administrative body to investigate financial and administrative violations by public officials, and which contains legal provisions for launching criminal prosecution;
- A law establishing a central accounts agency to undertake all the financial auditing of government departments and other offices and present reports to the legislature and the President of the Republic;
- The Anti-Money Laundering Act 80 of 2002 which establishes penalties for the offence of laundering money gained as a result of corruption and other offences, enables the proceeds of that offence to be traced and confiscated, and contains provision for international cooperation in launching criminal proceedings and extraditing offenders;
- Act No. 3 of 1975 on the protection of competition and the prohibition of monopolistic practices which aims to support competition and transparency and to combat corruption;
- Act No. 15 of 2005 which regulates the use of electronic signatures, establishes an information technology development agency in response to the needs of modern international trade, and lays down means for applying the provisions of the Act in domestic trade activities;
- The Income Tax Act No. 91 of 2005 which reforms the fiscal system, applying a unified income tax regime, raising personal exemption levels, enabling all individuals to benefit from exemptions based on their family responsibilities, and simplifying procedures for economically active persons;
- Act No. 67 of 2006 which concerns consumer protection and the rights of consumers to receive quality goods and services;
- Act No. 120 of 2008, which promulgates the Economic Tribunals Act;
- The Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010;
- Act No. 111 of 2011 which amends the Press Act, establishing the right to exchange information;
- A set of laws regulating commercial and economic activities, investments, companies, the stock exchange, currency markets, banks and consumer protection, as well as combating monopolies in order to ensure integrity, transparency and accountability;
- A set of laws criminalizing all acts which are qualified as offences at an international level (such as misappropriation, embezzlement, bribery, profiteering, forgery, making illicit gains and all forms of collaboration or assistance in other criminal activities).

34. This body of interrelated national laws reflects the Government's insistent and ongoing legislative efforts to create a legal climate propitious for combating corruption, blocking any loopholes which cause it to thrive and ensuring the success of efforts to prosecute and punish offenders.

(iii) The country abides by international anti-corruption treaties

35. International anti-corruption efforts took concrete form in the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to which Egypt acceded pursuant to Decree No. 307 of 2004 and which became part of national law upon publication in the Official Gazette No. 6 on 8 February 2007. This allows Egypt to benefit from international cooperation in prosecuting corruption under the terms of that agreement.

36. The country's efforts in this area are ongoing. A high-level government committee for integrity and transparency has been set up to devise anti-corruption policies and to follow up on national efforts to implement the aforementioned Convention. These programmes naturally include training law-enforcement officials, raising awareness, education and spreading a culture of transparency, as well as rewarding public service workers by increasing their salaries and broadening the range of social services they are offered. In addition to this, civil society has been given the opportunity to become involved in raising awareness on the dangers of corruption, while whistle-blowers and others who reject corruption have received commendation. This committee published a number of reports prior to the revolution of January 2011.

37. In implementing the body of national laws listed above, the judicial authorities have investigated and prosecuted various corruption cases, issuing a number of guilty verdicts. Currently, in the wake of the revolution of January 2011, the relevant Egyptian authorities are engaged in ongoing efforts to recover monies smuggled abroad. To do so they are availing themselves of the international cooperation, tracking, detection and recovery mechanisms described in the Covenant, as well as ensuring the necessary legal requirements are met to secure the successful recovery of the monies.

38. Discussions within the Committee of Fifty which has been tasked with examining amendments to the Constitution proposed by a panel of experts, have revealed an increasing national desire for anti-corruption efforts to be defined as a constitutionally prescribed national duty. At the same time the Government is preparing a draft law on conflict of interests which aims to combat all forms of corruption in the light of the country's obligations arising from its accession to the Convention against Corruption. This law is expected to be presented before parliament as soon as the measures laid down in the road map have been completed: i.e., completing the constitutional amendments, submitting them to a popular referendum, then holding parliamentary and presidential elections.

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

39. The political situation in the country resulting from the popular revolutions of 2011 and 2013 has had repercussions on a number of basic resources of the Egyptian economy. The effects of this have been felt in various sectors, which have seen a drop in funding and, consequently, in rates of growth and expected performance. Following the revolution of June 2013, Egypt is now moving towards economic recovery as, with the help of friendly nations, certain of its principal resources are being restored to their natural levels. This will soon enable the country to exceed its previous performance and to implement ambitious development programmes to realize the hopes of the Egyptian people in the wake of their revolution.

40. The priorities of the 2013/14 development plan are to restart manufacturing, lower the budget deficit, combat administrative corruption and unemployment and achieve social justice.

41. Given below are some indicators of gross domestic product and expenditures for the financial year 2010/11, as compared with the financial year 2011/12. The detailed statistics requested by the Committee will be provided in the annexes.

	2010/11	2011/12
GDP with the cost of all production factors taken into account (millions)	85 397.2	873 054.3
Growth rate	1.9%	2.2%

	2010/11	2011/12
Public spending (billions)	403.2	490.6
1. Pre-university education	42 (10.4%)	46.4 (9.5%)
2. University education	10.2 (2.5%)	11.1 (2.3%)
3. Health care	20.3 (5.04%)	23.8 (4.84%)
4. Social security	(3.3%)	(3.3%)

Annex 1 contains statistics regarding national production and resource development, also detailing the sources of those statistics and the aims of the 2013/14 development plan.

Article 2, paragraph 2

Non-discrimination

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

42. The principle of equality before the law has been established in successive Egyptian constitutional provisions. Following the June 2013 revolution, the 2012 Constitution was suspended, however article 4 of the Constitutional Declaration of 8 July 2014, issued after the revolution of 30 June 2013, reiterates the principle of equality, stating that all citizens are equal before the law, that they shall have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on the basis of gender, origin, sexual orientation, language, religion, or belief, and that the State shall provide for equal opportunities among citizens.

43. The Supreme Constitutional Court had previously laid down certain important principles concerning article 40 of the 1971 Constitution (which is equivalent to article 4 of the Constitutional Declaration). These are as follows:

(a) Article 40 of the Constitution forbids discrimination between citizens on certain specific grounds: gender, origin, race, religion, or belief. However, the fact that the Constitution mentions those particular grounds is merely because they are the most commonly encountered in daily life, and should not be seen as a limitation. Otherwise discrimination would be permissible on other grounds, and that would be incompatible with the equality guaranteed in the Constitution. There are many varieties of unconstitutional discrimination but it consists primarily in forms of differentiation, restriction, preference or exclusion that, either by their existence or ineffectiveness, arbitrarily detract from the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution and the law in such a way as to prevent those rights and freedoms from being exercised on an equal footing by all legally entitled persons (Constitutional Case No. 17, judicial year 14, session of 14 January 1995, ruling published in the Official Gazette No. 6 on 9 February 1995);

(b) The equality stipulated in article 40 of the Constitution is not absolute. Legislators have discretionary powers by which, according to public interest, they can place conditions on the equality of persons before the law. Thus, if those conditions exist in a particular group of persons they must be treated equally because their legal standing is the same. If this is not the case because the conditions exist in some of the persons but not in others, then only those in whom those conditions exist, and not the others, may exercise the rights guaranteed them by law (Constitutional Case No. 16, judicial year 8, session of 21 May 1989, ruling published in the Official Gazette No. 23 on 8 June 1989).

44. According to these well-established constitutional principles discrimination is forbidden, whatever form it takes and for whatever reason it is practised. That

principle of equality and non-discrimination is reflected in the aforementioned constitutional rulings which, in their reasoning, adopt the definition of discrimination contained in international treaties. As regards non-nationals, the law regulates the extent to which they enjoy these rights in Egypt (the right to work, the right to own property, and the right to social insurance and social security), as previously mentioned in the combined periodic reports. In all cases involving these issues Egypt is committed to the principle of equal treatment as applied in international relations, though allowing certain exceptions to be granted to citizens of friendly nations on the basis of factors determined by the State pursuant to a decision of the President of the Republic.

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

45. Egyptian society looks after people with special needs and is making ongoing efforts to care for them, protect their rights and freedoms, and facilitate their interpersonal dealings and relationships within the limits imposed by their particular condition. These endeavours took concrete form in Act No. 39 of 1975 which renders explicit the State's responsibility to care for such persons and defines the scope of that care. Article 4 of the Act contains provision for the formation of a high-level committee for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, under the presidency of the Minister of Social Affairs and with members drawn from relevant ministries and departments. The regulations implementing the Act were issued in a decree of the Minister of Social Affairs in 1976.

46. The Act deals specifically with rehabilitation services and the right to work for persons with disabilities, granting them exemption from customs duties on any vital compensatory aids they may require as well as other forms of support. Egyptian legislators' efforts in this field have continued: the Child Act No. 12 of 1996 contains a number of special provisions for children with disabilities, and establishes a fund to provide them with health care and other services. A number of other laws have also dealt with this issue, each in a specific context, such as the Mental Health Act, labour, education and health insurance legislation, and the Civil Code.

47. Egypt participated in international efforts which led to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which the country acceded pursuant to Decree No. 400 of 2007, published in the Official Gazette No. 27 on 3 July 2008.

48. In light of the Committee's earlier recommendations and of subsequent developments in the country, and in order to supplement the relevant information contained in the State party report, we will now consider some of the legislative initiatives taken in this field, as well as practical and operational measures.

A. National legislation

(i) Legislation on the care of the mentally ill

49. With a view to ensuring better care for the mentally ill and in the light of the Committee's recommendations, Act No. 71 of 2009 on the care of mentally ill persons has been adopted. This Act amends the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure and states that mentally ill persons shall not face criminal proceedings. The Act also states that such persons shall receive care and protection, and that any contravention of its provisions shall be liable to punishment, which shall be more severe in certain specified cases. The main features of the Act are as follows:

- Establishment of a national council on mental health, made up of governmental legal experts and representatives of relevant civil society organizations, as well as experts in mental health from various agencies. The Council's main tasks

include the drafting of policies on the rights and well-being of mentally ill persons, the publication of periodic reports on its work, and supervision of regional mental health councils;

- Establishment of regional mental health councils with a membership similar to that of the national council, but at the regional level. The main tasks of these councils are to follow up on reports issued by mental health establishments and monitor all aspects of their work and issue to periodic reports on their own work for submission to the national council;
- Verification of the process whereby mentally ill persons are admitted to institutions, including such aspects as whether the patient's admission is voluntary or forced and the conditions of admission in either case, how such a patient will be allowed to leave, how long his or her course of treatment is and under what conditions it will be completed, and under what conditions a non-Egyptian may be admitted. All these procedures are subject to judicial, social and psychological supervision by experts;
- Consolidation of the right of patients to receive the care they need in a safe and clean environment, not to have their freedom restricted, not to be economically or sexually exploited or subjected to humiliating treatment, not to have personal information divulged, to be allowed to meet with their families or legal counsel, to have complaints from child patients about abuse or suspected abuse forwarded to the appropriate authorities, and to be allowed to submit complaints about any procedure in accordance with the rules set forth in the implementing regulations of the Act;
- Establishment of committees at every mental health institution to ensure that patients' rights are respected. The committees are established upon the orders of the director of the institution and are made up of psychologists and sociologists in the employ of the institution and either a patient or a representative of a civil society association concerned with the rights of patients. The function of the committees is to ensure that the rights of patients are respected and to organize campaigns aimed at heightening their awareness of those rights. They also receive complaints and endeavour to resolve them;
- Establishment of a mental health fund to support patients' rights committees, training activities, awareness campaigns about mental health in the community, and to award prizes to workers in the field of mental health;
- The Act includes a chapter on criminal liability for offences against the rights of patients that are protected under the Act;
- The Act amends article 62 of the Penal Code by stating that a person incurs no criminal liability if, at the time of committing an offence, he or she was suffering from a mental or psychological disorder that rendered them bereft of understanding or of the faculty to choose. Where such a disorder had merely diminished the offender's understanding or faculty of choice, he or she does incur criminal liability but the court must take that circumstance into account when determining the sentence;
- The Act also amends the Code of Criminal Procedure by replacing the term "insanity" with "mental disorder" and the term "mental diseases" with "psychological diseases".

(ii) The Child Act

50. As Egypt explained in its State party report, the Child Act No. 12 of 1996 as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008 includes a special section (arts. 75-86) on children with disabilities. This contains the following provisions:

- The guarantee that the State will seek to prevent disability in children, and to protect them from anything injurious to their health or to their bodily, mental, spiritual or social development. The State will also seek to ensure that disability is detected early and that opportunities for rehabilitation and employment are available to persons with disabilities when they reach employable age;
- The participation of the media in awareness-raising programmes in the field of disability prevention and the rights of children with disabilities, as well as in raising awareness among children and caregivers on ways to facilitate their integration in society;
- The right of children with disabilities to enjoy social, health and psychological care in order to increase their self-reliance and facilitate their integration and participation in society;
- The right of children with disabilities to education and professional training in the same schools, institutes and training centres as those frequented by children without disabilities, with the exception of cases where, due to the nature or degree of disability, the State is required to guarantee education and training in special classes, schools, institutions or training centres that offer the State curriculum but are suited to the needs of children with disabilities and are located near where they live;
- The obligation on the part of the State to provide rehabilitation services and compensatory aids free of charge, within the limits of the sums set aside for that purpose in the general budget, and supply them to children with disabilities and their families in order to enable them to cope with the effects of their malady;
- The obligation on the part of the relevant ministries to supply the necessary facilities for providing rehabilitation services to children with disabilities;
- The obligation on the part of employment bureaus to help persons with disabilities to find jobs suitable to their age and abilities, in the areas in which they live;
- The obligation on the part of the State to identify specific jobs in state administration, public sector institutions and public works, and to earmark them for children with disabilities who hold a rehabilitation certificate;
- The obligation on the part of employers to employ children with disabilities sent to them by an employment bureau as at least 2 per cent of the 5 per cent laid down in Act No. 39 of 1975;
- The establishment of a fund for the care and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. The fund has legal personality and its sources include any fines levied for the offences stipulated in this chapter;
- The removal of all taxation and levies on compensatory aids and their spare parts, the means and machinery used to produce them and the means of transport necessary for the employment and rehabilitation of children with disabilities.

51. As part of the Government's legislative efforts, the Ministry of Social Solidarity is working on a proposal to update Act No. 39 of 1975 as amended by Act No. 49 of 1982. The proposal aims to improve equal rights for persons with disabilities on an

equal and non-discriminatory footing with others, to ensure respect for their capacities and freedoms, to affirm their right to education, health, rehabilitation and integration into society, and to freedom of opinion and expression. It also contains provisions to ensure that people with disabilities do not suffer torture, oppression or inhuman or degrading treatment, affirms their right to work in government institutions and the public and private sectors, increasing the penalties for transgressors, and their right to certain privileges in the field of transport and rehabilitation as part of a comprehensive medical insurance. The proposal also offers guidance and education to families regarding provisions for comprehensive and integrated care contained in the relevant international Convention, in order to safeguard and enhance the rights of persons with disabilities.

B. Practical and operational measures

52. In order to improve care for persons with disabilities and to meet the country's obligations having acceded to the Convention, the Government of Egypt has developed a national disability elimination programme, as detailed in the state party report. The programme functions under the auspices of a number of ministries and is structured around three primary axes, which are summarized below.

(i) Health sector

- Disability prevention through early detection among persons intending marriage, safe maternity programmes, care during pregnancy and at birth, postnatal follow-up, and child growth and development;
- Early detection of disability through health units and hospitals;
- An integrated health care and rehabilitation system featuring diagnostic, treatment and monitoring services free of charge at health insurance centres and clinics.

(ii) The media

- There are 44 radio and television programmes for persons with disabilities, amounting to approximately 838 hours of programming in the course of a year. These programmes emphasize the rights of persons with disabilities and present some of their positive experiences.

(iii) Social solidarity

- Disability allowances are paid to disabled heads of households. In 2007/2008, a total of 381,585 families were receiving these allowances;
- Blind students attending Egyptian universities receive pocket money;
- Persons with disabilities are trained in appropriate trades, and at the conclusion of their training they are given certificates of qualification and issued with ration cards for their support;
- The Ministry of Transportation grants exemptions and reductions for disabled persons, and provides special facilities for them on public transport.

(iv) Sport

- Persons with disabilities participate in sporting life through some 40 clubs for disabled persons and 44 sports centres distributed throughout the country, under the supervision and care of the National Council on Sport for the Disabled and the Egyptian Paralympic Committee. Egyptian athletes and teams, both men and

women, have won many championships and medals in international competitions, including 12 medals in Beijing in 2008.

(v) *Education*

- One of the most important recent initiatives in Egypt has been a project for integrating persons with special needs in the education system. The following steps have been taken:

(a) Students with special needs have been allowed to enrol in state schools and have been integrated with their non-disabled peers in ordinary classrooms;

(b) The number of integrated schools for pupils with disabilities had been increased to 700 by the end of the year 2011/2012;

(c) A ministerial committee for integration has been formed with responsibility for policies concerning a project to integrate pupils with disabilities in state schools;

(d) Ministerial Decree No. 264 of 2011 has been issued, concerning the integration of pupils with special needs in state schools;

(e) Special exams have been arranged for pupils with disabilities in state schools, consistent with the nature of their disability.

53. In its discussions the Committee of Fifty, which has been tasked with examining amendments to the Constitution, is showing itself to be in favour of incorporating the rights and freedoms of people with special needs into the Constitution.

54. Annex 2 contains statistical information on Egypt's efforts in the field of disability care.

Article 3

Equal rights of men and women

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

55. Act No. 149 of 2009 was passed before the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013, as part of ongoing national efforts to increase the participation of women in parliament. The Act reserved 64 additional seats for women in 32 electoral districts, and the elections of 2010 were carried out under that legislation. With the January 2011 revolution the 1971 Constitution was abrogated, the People's Assembly was dissolved and general elections were held pursuant to the Constitutional Declaration of March 2011 and the amendments to electoral laws. After the June 2013 revolution the 2012 Constitution was suspended and constitutional amendments are currently being examined. The National Council for Women is continuing its efforts and its president is participating in the work of the Committee of Fifty to consolidate the right to fair and equitable representation for women in general elections, and to establish a minimum number of reserved seats for them in parliament on the basis of the widely practised principle of positive discrimination.

56. In its report to the Committee Egypt mentioned some of the ministerial, parliamentary and leadership positions occupied by women. For example some women have entered the judiciary and reached the grade of judge in the courts of appeal, others hold leading positions as deans of universities, mayors in local government or heads of government departments and offices. Encouraging political participation and candidacy are currently among the most important practical tasks women face, and the National Council for Women is continuing its awareness-raising efforts in this regard.

Statistical indicators concerning female workers in various fields

Ministerial posts	3	Environment, Media and Health in the latest round of ministerial appointments (2013)
Judiciary	41	Some women have reached the grade of judge in the higher courts of appeal
Office of Administrative Prosecution	436	Women have headed the Office on two occasions
State Lawsuits Authority	72	
Parliament	12 seats	Elections to the People's Assembly 2012
	11 seats	Elections to the Consultative Council 2012

Source: The National Council for Women.

A woman also occupied the role of judge on the Supreme Constitutional Court until the introduction of the 2012 Constitution which reduced the number of members of the Court and led to her departure.

Replies to issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

57. Women have been deeply involved in the concerns and aspirations of the Egyptian people. They participated in both recent revolutions, sharing sufferings and shaping goals, and they played a pivotal role twice successfully changing the governing regime. In the light of these events, the National Council for Women has been studying the dangers women have had to face by participating in the marches and demonstrations that accompanied the 2011 revolution. As a result of its efforts Decree-Law No. 11 of 2011 was issued, which amended certain provisions of the Criminal Code (Act No. 58 of 1937) substituting articles Nos. 267, 268, 269, 269 bis, 288, 289 and 306 bis (a) of the Code and imposing more severe penalties for offences of rape and indecent assault by use of force or threats. These can be as high as the death penalty for the former and imprisonment for the latter if the victim is under the age of 18 or if the perpetrator of the offence is an ascendant of the victim, responsible for her upbringing or tutelage, in a position of authority over her, employed by her or by the persons previously mentioned, or if the offence is committed by numerous perpetrators. Penalties have also been increased for the offence of indecent assault without use of force or threats by perpetrators under the age of 18 or under the age of 12, and for the offence of inciting vice in public.

58. The National Council for Women has been tasked by the Council of Ministers with the preparation of a new draft law to combat violence against women. The proposed legislation will cover violence against women in general, the most serious forms of which include arbitrary deprivation of the exercise of their public and private rights, deprivation of inheritance rights, forced marriage, deprivation of the right to work and violation of the principle of equality and equal opportunity in the workplace.

59. One of the new provisions provides that the statute of limitations does not apply to civil and criminal proceedings within the scope of the Act, as that would undermine the rights enshrined in the Constitution. The bill covers sexual assault and corruption of morals; contrary to the provision in the current Criminal Code, the consent of a victim under the age of 18 years is not taken into consideration. Moreover, the new bill provides for aggravating circumstances in line with the current situation. A new provision has been introduced on violent sexual abuse of women without sexual

intercourse or with attempted intercourse, by which is intended acts that affront or humiliate women, regardless of the intent of the perpetrator.

60. The bill defines indecent assault more precisely in terms of the perpetrator's intent to commit an offence. In addition, it introduces a clear definition covering all kinds of sexual harassment, taking into account statistics and studies on this reprehensible behaviour, and provides for more severe penalties in some cases, taking into consideration the place in which the offence was perpetrated, the status of the perpetrator and whether the incident is a repeat offence. The bill also makes it an offence to acquire images of a woman and threaten to publish them, or to alter or distort them using modern technology and publish them, without the consent of the victim and, also, to tamper with evidence.

61. Moreover, the bill provides that the State undertakes to protect women victims of violence and requires State agencies to take the necessary measures and steps to assist such women free of charge. It provides for the establishment of a fund with legal personality and specific resources to protect victims of violence. It grants women victims of violence the rights established for persons with disabilities in the event that the offences against them result in serious illness or disability. In addition, it requires the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health to establish the necessary institutions and institutes for the rehabilitation of victims of violence, and establishes a specialized department within the Ministry of the Interior to combat violence against women, with branches at the governorate level in which psychologists and social workers are involved, in order to address the psychological welfare of victims. The bill also authorizes the Office of the Public Prosecutor to issue protection and assistance orders for women victims, as well as for witnesses, experts and others, with a view to removing obstacles that may prevent them from testifying. Furthermore, it establishes a specialized department within the Ministry of Justice concerned with the protection of witnesses, experts and technical experts. The bill introduces legal protection for witnesses, considering them as public officials when they are giving testimony during the investigation and trial stages. It also introduces the principle that victim statements and witness testimony given by modern means of communication and by means of letters rogatory are admissible before the Court.

62. The bill allows courts to sentence offenders to social measures rather than custodial sentences for lesser offences stipulated by law; they may require the defendant to carry out community service with authorities specified by the Ministry of Social Affairs in partnership with the National Council for Women and civil society institutions, if appropriate for the defendant or the victim. Such measures make it possible for perpetrators to make amends without resort to custodial sentences, taking into account the nature of some of the offences newly instituted by the bill. The bill also requires the State to support and encourage civil society in the creation of associations that seek to combat violence against women, rehabilitate victims and provide them with legal assistance.

63. It is anticipated that the legal and legislative procedures for the enactment of the bill will be taken after the Constitution has been proclaimed and parliamentary and presidential elections have been held.

64. In practical and operational terms, the Government has continued its efforts by taking the measures set out below.

Establishment of shelter and counselling centres for women

65. Through the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Government has established a number of shelter and counselling centres, in order to:

- Provide women and girls who are victims of violence and have no place to stay with counselling and temporary accommodation; help them overcome their difficulties and resolve their problems; make every effort to find amicable solutions so that they can be reintegrated in their families;
- Provide the women and girls concerned with social, medical, psychological and legal assistance;
- Raise their awareness in various fields;
- Raise awareness in the community with a view to combating all forms of violence and discrimination against women;
- Rebuild women's self-confidence so that they can live without fear of being victimized; provide self-assertiveness training through the centre's listening and counselling unit;
- Empower women economically by providing centre residents with training in handicrafts and small industries; provide work opportunities or access to projects implemented through the Ministry, such as productive families projects and women's projects; or help them to obtain a pension in view of their actual needs based on a case study or refer them to the appropriate authority so that they can access the required services;
- Promote small income-generating enterprises for poor women heads of household to help them avoid poverty and reduce the risk of violence.

66. Nine such shelter and counselling centres have been established in eight governorates. The target groups of this project are poor women, women heads of household and women victims of violence.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

67. As a result of the sustained efforts of the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, female genital mutilation was criminalized by Act No. 126 of 2008 amending the Criminal Code by the addition of article 242 bis. That article provides that anyone who inflicts wounds punishable under articles 242 and 243 of the Criminal Code by circumcizing a female shall be liable to a penalty of not less than 3 months' and not more than 2 years' imprisonment or a fine of not less than 1,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) and not more than LE5,000.

68. We will provide the Committee with statistics on cases of female genital mutilation as soon as they are available. Efforts to raise awareness of the dangers of female genital mutilation and of the fact that it is established as a criminal offence continue, with a view to eradicating practices harmful to women carried out in some rural areas; these efforts have succeeded in significantly reducing the incidence of this offence.

Practical and applied efforts to combat female genital mutilation

69. Since the turn of the century, the Egyptian Government has given particular attention to the issue of female genital mutilation, which has been given priority status on the national agenda for the Egyptian child. In this context, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood introduced a national programme to combat female genital mutilation in Egypt in 2003, on the real grounds that this social and cultural practice violates the fundamental rights of Egyptian girls and harms their health.

70. The programme is based on the following main elements:

1. Establishment of initiatives to combat female genital mutilation at the community level within Egyptian villages, based on partnerships with local

leaders and 21 civil society associations; and the introduction of health, social, educational and cultural initiatives and services to shape public opinion against female genital mutilation in every village. The programme is being implemented in 120 Egyptian villages as a model that could be replicated nationwide. Some 40 per cent of the total funding for the national programme is allocated to support civil society associations, through institutional capacity-building and the implementation of community initiatives in areas where the programme is being implemented;

2. Shaping public opinion against female genital mutilation, through an integrated information strategy that encompasses medical, legal, social and religious perspectives in response to community questions, through intensive information campaigns conducted via all media including press, radio, television, Internet and billboards on roadsides and in public places;

3. Resisting the medicalization of female genital mutilation by providing doctors in rural health units with support in the form of documented scientific and medical information on the practice, as well as training on the provision of health advice to Egyptian families to prevent them from performing female genital mutilation, as well as by implementing the law criminalizing the practice;

4. Seeking to promulgate new legislation to criminalize female genital mutilation by raising the awareness of the judiciary (judges and public prosecutors) and members of Parliament of the various health, social, religious and legal aspects of the issue, to encourage them to contribute to a draft legislative text criminalizing the practice;

5. Encouraging young men and women to volunteer to form youth groups in educational and cultural institutions, with a view to changing prevalent beliefs about female genital mutilation among future fathers and mothers through a peer-to-peer approach;

6. Coordinating national efforts with the relevant ministries, civil society and the media to ensure that integrated messages against female genital mutilation are incorporated in the strategies of the institutions concerned;

7. Providing advice to the public and answering questions relating to female genital mutilation as well as receiving information about potential victims of such mutilation through the nationwide, toll-free, 24-hour child helpline number (16000).

Key results and indicators of change

1. Net decrease in national indicators pertaining to female genital mutilation

71. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Health and Population in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) at the national level in 2007, the female genital mutilation rate among schoolgirls aged 10-18 years had decreased to 50.3 per cent in urban schools, 62.7 per cent in rural schools and 9.2 per cent in private schools.

2. Rejection by young people of female genital mutilation

72. Research on social and political trends among young people conducted in 2005 under the supervision of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, as well as the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that 55 per cent of young men and women aged 15-24 years rejected female genital mutilation as a violation of children's rights.

3. *Criminalization of female genital mutilation*

73. Female genital mutilation was criminalized by Act No. 126 of 2008 amending certain provisions of the Child Act, the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, including article 242 bis of the Criminal Code and the penalty applicable to those who carry out this practice, which violates the rights and dignity of Egyptian girls.

4. *Raising awareness of the law*

74. The Public Prosecutor issued a circular setting out the philosophy underlying the amendments made to the Child Act, one separate section of which explains implementation measures and investigation procedures in cases of female genital mutilation.

5. *Information campaigns*

75. The intensive information campaign conducted by the Programme has contributed to breaking the silence around female genital mutilation, long taboo in the Egyptian media. In particular, the campaign conducted through State television has served to disseminate accurate, documented knowledge and information against the practice among large segments of Egyptian society. It was launched by broadcasting the clear message “Say no to female genital mutilation” on national television, in the context of a series of messages on Egyptian child rights such as “Say no to denial of an education” and “Say no to early marriage”. The campaign was expanded to include coverage on national and private satellite television channels, the radio and in the official and independent press. Its positive impact is apparent in the increase in the number of calls to the child helpline — 16000 — from all sectors of society in various governorates.

6. *Written statements issued by some villages against female genital mutilation*

76. The grass-roots action of the national programme to combat female genital mutilation in 120 Egyptian villages has resulted in the formation of groups consisting of young men and women, clerics, physicians, officials and community leaders, opposed to female genital mutilation. These groups openly express their position in villages by issuing a written declaration against female genital mutilation, calling on the village population to sign up and make a commitment to abandoning the practice. With encouragement from officials and community leaders, 70 villages have issued such declarations to date and many others intend to do so in the coming period.

7. *Islamic and Christian religious discourse against female genital mutilation*

77. The Egyptian Office of the Mufti has definitively stated its position that female genital mutilation is an offence through the recommendations formulated by the International Conference of Islamic Scholars prohibiting the violation of the female body in November 2006. The conference brought together top-level senior scholars, who reaffirmed that female genital mutilation was an ancient custom in some societies and was practised by some Muslims in a number of countries, as a matter of custom and without being supported by any Koranic text or tradition of the Prophet. They called on Muslims to desist from this custom, consistent with the teachings of Islam that prohibit causing harm to any other human being. The Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt confirmed its official position against female genital mutilation at the Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation, stating that the practice was not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. It also

published a number of pamphlets and brochures setting out clearly its position against female genital mutilation and distributed them to its members throughout Egypt.

8. *Youth participation*

78. Increasingly, young people of both sexes in many educational and cultural institutions are volunteering to advocate a culture that rejects female genital mutilation. They do so by raising awareness among their peers of the associated health risks, by denying that the practice is linked to religious beliefs in view of the stand taken by Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church against it, and by distributing leaflets and booklets on the topic.

79. There are preliminary indications that continuing Government efforts to combat female genital mutilation, supported by the considerable efforts of civil society organizations, are meeting with success — in the manner described above — as the practice has decreased significantly, due to greater awareness within the family and in the public sphere that it is to be rejected and spurned.

III. Issues relating to specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6-15)

Article 6

The right to work

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

80. The report before the Committee refers to indicators relating to issues raised at the time the report was drafted. The current indicators are as follows:

Statistical indicators

2011		Male (%)	Female (%)
Labour force	26.5 million	77.4	22.6
Employed	23.3 million	80.2	19.8
Unemployed	3.2 million	57.2	42.8
Unemployment rate	12 %	8.9	22.7
2012		Male (%)	Female (%)
Labour force	27 million	77.3	22.8
Employed	23.6 million	80.23	19.76
Unemployed	3.4 million	56.7	43.3
Unemployment rate	12.7 %	9.3	24.1

81. The fall in the growth rate due to the situation in Egypt and the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013 have, of course, had an impact on investment growth rates, which has reduced employment opportunities. The Government is currently addressing this situation and pursuing an ambitious development plan to get through this stage. The national economy has started to strengthen as a result of an increase in the cash reserve and the injection of the necessary funding into investments in national development projects, such as the Suez Canal, in addition to labour-intensive projects that will contribute to reducing unemployment. The development plan aims to bring down unemployment to 12.4 per cent in 2013/14 by the creation of 800,000 jobs.

82. The aims of the development plan and the statistics in connection with the questions raised concerning conditions of work, employment and unemployment are set out in annexes I and III, respectively.

Article 7

The right to just and favourable conditions of work

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

83. All basic and social services, such as social welfare and special pensions programmes, are available to all; in addition, the State runs support programmes in many areas to provide these services to all segments of society. Efforts to alleviate suffering through poverty reduction programmes and support for small enterprises continue. Moreover, a number of banks make small loans on easy terms with the Social Fund for Development, giving priority to female heads of households to provide them with sources of income and encourage their participation in development programmes.

84. In the context of its announced development plans, the Government is currently giving its direct attention to national projects, including the Suez Canal development project and labour-intensive infrastructure projects. It is investing heavily in such projects, with a view to reducing unemployment and raising living standards; this, in turn, will reduce informal employment. Projects to address domestic work in the context of the National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking (further details of which will be provided in the relevant reply on this issue) will also significantly reduce informal employment.

85. The statistics set out in annex IV indicate the areas in which services are available and the people who benefit from those services, referred to in previous replies and to which reference will be made in subsequent replies. The statistics pertaining to question 20 also provide clarification on efforts to combat human trafficking.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

86. Work on the 2012 Constitution was suspended following the revolution of June 2013. As explained above, amendments with regard to the minimum wage are currently being introduced with a view to achieving social justice, which is one of the objectives of the revolution. The Government decided recently, on the basis of much study and research and guided by a prior court ruling, to set the minimum wage at LE1,200 per month, with effect from 1 January 2014, for workers in the public sector, after making the necessary funding arrangements. Negotiations are under way to extend this measure to the private sector, and a wage ceiling is being studied. The Government is also working to curb inflation through an integrated package of measures which include the establishment of government outlets selling essential goods at low prices and the issuance of guide price lists for foodstuffs in order to curb the excesses of traders. At the same time, it is encouraging small enterprises in the area of food and agricultural commodities to increase production, while maintaining subsidies and rationalizing production to ensure that such support reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

87. Article 35 of the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003) prohibits pay discrimination on grounds of gender, origin, language, religion or creed. Article 88 stipulates that the provisions governing the employment of workers apply without distinction to women. Violations of these provisions are criminalized in articles 247 and 249 of the Code,

which prescribes a penalty for violations, with multiple penalties for multiple violations and increased penalties for repeat violations.

88. In view of the above, pay disparities between men and women in the private sector constitute an offence punishable by law.

89. A new draft Labour Code is currently being developed in partnership with trade unions, civil society organizations, the National Council for Women and the National Council for Human Rights, with a view to updating the legislative framework in the sphere of labour in line with the goals of the revolution, removing any practical obstacles arising from the application of the Code and extending the protection that it affords to new categories of workers, such as domestic workers, in view of the results of studies conducted in this area.

Article 8

Trade union rights

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

90. Egypt referred previously in its report to the decisions handed down by the Egyptian courts concerning trade union rights pursuant to the provisions set forth in the Convention, which allow the right to strike. Article 192 of the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003) enshrines the right of workers to peaceful strikes in accordance with the rules and procedures established by law, through their trade unions, in order to defend their professional, economic and social interests. Article 194 prohibits strikes or calls for strikes at facilities specified by decision of the Prime Minister where a work stoppage would be likely to undermine national security or disrupt essential services to citizens.

91. The provisions prohibiting the use of strikes incorporated in the Criminal Code apply in cases where the rules governing the exercise of the right to strike, established by law and under paragraphs 1 (d) and 2 of article 8 of the Convention, are violated.

92. The courts competent to deal with such cases are those in the area in which the offences concerned were perpetrated. Opinion in the Committee of Fifty tasked with drafting constitutional amendments is moving towards providing for the right to strike in accordance with rules laid down by law.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

93. It should be noted that the 2012 Constitution was suspended and is being reviewed, as indicated above. Article 10 of the Constitutional Declaration, which came into effect from 8 July 2013, does not impose the restriction referred to in paragraph 16 of the list of issues.

94. With regard to collective bargaining, the current Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003) establishes detailed procedures and regulations. The Labour Code and the Freedom of Association Act are currently the subject of a review intended to bring them into line with the international obligations of Egypt arising from its accession to labour conventions, in response to workers' demands in view of the goals sought and called for by the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013.

Article 9**The right to social security****Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues**

95. In the report before the Committee, Egypt provides detailed replies on the legal basis of the national social security system. In the light of the developments and changes resulting from the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013, policies and plans relating to coverage goals have been reshaped in order to achieve the goals of the revolution. The steps taken are set out below.

A. Government policy on social security

96. Government policy on social security is as follows:

1. Provide financial stability to families that do not have an adequate income by ensuring a minimum income, particularly for groups that are slow to engage in work and production and are not covered under any social security system;
2. Encourage families to engage in the production process through facilitating their access to small enterprises, by means of non-refundable grants;
3. Create opportunities to produce and increase income and, in some cases, provide monthly assistance to persons relatively able to work, such as widows and divorced women, through the Productive Families project, as well as informing them of the one-time benefit programme available in the context of social security projects in the event that the eligibility conditions are met;
4. Implement social security programmes that provide social assistance to poor families and individuals who are unable to work, such as orphans, the sick, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, divorced women, widows and persons with special needs;
5. Provide assistance in the form of study grants for the education of children in families on social security in order to prevent them from dropping out of education;
6. Provide financial assistance to poor individuals and families to help them launch productive projects that contribute to increasing their income and developing their resources;
7. Promote the advancement of women in general and women heads of household, divorced women and women abandoned by their families in particular, by bringing them as participants into the universal health insurance system;
8. Disburse study grants for children of families receiving monthly social assistance and a pension of LE40 per child enrolled in basic and secondary education up to a maximum of LE200 per family per year during the period from 1 October to 31 May.

B. Plan to the end of the current financial year 2013/14

97. The plan to the end of the current financial year 2013/14 includes the following elements:

- Bring new groups under the social security umbrella, as needed;
- Increase the number of families receiving social security benefits to 2 million;

- Amend the ministerial decision pertaining to the implementation of the Social Security Act with a view to raising the value of pensions and social security assistance to keep pace with economic developments and changes and increases in the cost of living from time to time, by increasing general budget allocations to social security to deal with new cases annually;
- Roll out the Smart Card project to all regional directorates for the disbursement of pensions, guided by the experience of Suez Governorate in this regard.

C. Provision of protection and social welfare services to all groups of citizens

98. The Government continues to endeavour to ensure that the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society can exercise their fundamental rights and so enjoy a decent life. In order to do so, it seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Protect the welfare of marginalized and vulnerable groups in society, while taking steps to empower them;
- Ensure that all citizens benefit equitably from the package of fundamental rights and the fruits of growth;
- Unleash the capacities of Egyptian citizens and enable them to participate effectively in planning and implementing development, and expand development opportunities through making available and improving the quality and efficiency of public services;
- Draw up the plans and programmes needed to implement government social policy on comprehensive human and social development, in order to achieve the objective of social justice;
- Submit a proposal to the Cabinet Office on increasing social security assistance to LE400 per family per month, with effect from the financial year 2013/14.

D. Existing government programmes

99. The following government programmes are currently in place:

1. Social security programmes are in place to prevent and treat the causes of poverty, by means of legislation that ensures a minimum level of subsistence. The Government guarantees this protection to citizens, taking into account the material conditions and economic circumstances of groups not covered by any system, and provides relief in cases of emergency. Some 1.5 million families or approximately 6 million citizens benefited from social security in 2010/2011. The Ministry aims to increase the number of beneficiaries to 2 million families in the coming years. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Administrative Development and the Ministry of International Cooperation, it also aims to extend health coverage to poor people in order to include them in the current health insurance system;
2. Social rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities aim to achieve social justice at the community level and equal opportunities, as well as community-based rehabilitation;
3. Productive Families projects are core development projects in the Ministry that aim to optimize and maximize the use of community resources and capacities, so contributing to steadily increasing the national product, by transforming some categories — such as families of persons with disabilities, young graduates, prisoners' families, housewives, persons on social security, young university students — into productive families;

4. The issue of school dropouts is addressed by providing school dropouts with vocational training appropriate to their capacities so enabling them to engage in productive work and, at the same time, improving their conduct and instilling in them, through Ministry vocational training centres, sufficient knowledge to ensure that they do not drop out again. In the coming period, there are plans to conclude a cooperation protocol between the Ministry and the Ministry of Education on the provision of recognized qualifications to graduates from vocational training centres;

5. The Ministry has established a pilot centre for the welfare and development of working children in order to address the issue of child labour. Acting through a social entity operating in the sphere of the welfare and development of children between the ages of 6 and 18 years is one mechanism whereby the Ministry can achieve welfare and social development and reduce the negative effects of child labour;

6. Juveniles at risk and at risk of delinquency are provided with protection and care through social welfare institutions for children at risk, observation centres and shelters, social monitoring offices and social defence groups. In addition, a social diagnostic centre and a shelter for juveniles at risk or at risk of delinquency have been established;

7. The Ministry has launched an integrated strategy for the coming five years to tackle the issue of homeless children, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In this context, a study is currently being conducted on the possibility of creating an integrated city for the provision of social welfare to homeless children that would incorporate residential institutions, artisanal workshops and sports grounds. The Ministry would play a pivotal role in such an enterprise by providing comprehensive services for families and children as well as a parcel of 40 feddans of land south of the 6 October/Al-Wahat road, owned by the Ministry and allocated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Communities;

8. The objective of the advancement of women is sought by improving their situation through supporting and developing productive development projects (small income-generating projects), basic skills training and raising women's awareness of national issues in order to encourage them to participate in the development of society.

The aim of these programmes combined is to achieve comprehensive access to social security, with a view to achieving the goals of the revolution, as explained above.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

100. Egypt referred previously in its report to the Committee on aspects of health-care coverage and the legal foundations thereof. Plans to develop health-care coverage aim to reduce child and maternal mortality rates and increase immunization rates to achieve full immunization against childhood diseases. In furtherance of the objectives of the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013, the Egyptian Government is taking steps to prepare for the enactment of a comprehensive health insurance act, which, it is anticipated, will be presented to the House of Representatives once the constitutional reform process is complete and parliamentary and presidential elections have been held.

101. The development plan targets set out in annex I indicate that action is being taken to increase the number of health insurance beneficiaries from 52 per cent of the population in 2007 to 60 per cent in 2013/14, and to raise medical service delivery rates.

102. The statistics set out in annex V clarify points raised with regard to the question relating to health care.

Article 10

Protection of the family, mothers and children

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

103. The 2012 Constitution was suspended in the wake of the revolution of June 2012 and its provisions are currently under review, as indicated above; consequently, the article to which reference is made is suspended.

104. The Child Act No. 12 of 1996, as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008, makes the following provisions with regard to child labour:

1. The employment of children under the age of 15 full years and the training of children under the age of 13 years is prohibited. Under article 64, authorization to employ children of 13 to 14 years in seasonal work that is not harmful to their health or development and that does not have a negative impact on their schooling may be obtained on the basis of a decision by the competent Governor, with the approval of the Minister of Education;
2. Under article 65, the employment of children in any kind of work the nature or conditions of which could put their health, safety or morals at risk is prohibited and, in particular, the employment of any child in the worst forms of child labour as defined in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 of 1999;
3. The implementing regulations of the Act establish regulations governing the employment of children, the conditions under which they may be employed and the work, crafts and industries in which they may be trained in at different ages;
4. Children are required to undergo a medical examination before starting work in order to ensure that they are fit for the work concerned and must undergo periodic examinations at least once per year, as set out in the implementing regulations;
5. Work must not cause physical or psychological pain or harm to children or deprive them of regular access to school, recreation and the opportunity to develop their abilities and talents, and employers are required to insure children against occupational injuries during their term of employment;
6. Working children are entitled to seven days of annual leave more than adult workers and their leave may not be postponed or denied for any reason;
7. Children may not be employed for more than six hours per day. They must be allowed to take at least one break period, or more than one, of not less than one hour in order to eat and rest; such periods shall be spaced to ensure that children do not work for more than four consecutive hours;
8. It is prohibited to employ children outside normal working hours, on weekly rest days, official holidays or between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.

105. It should be noted that, as previously indicated, it is an offence under the provisions of the Labour Code to violate child labour provisions. We will provide the Committee with the findings of investigations and studies that will be carried out in this regard. Child labour is particularly prevalent in rural areas and in artisanal businesses; the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood is stepping up its efforts to eliminate child labour and prosecute offenders.

106. As indicated in the reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17, the Government plans to tackle the phenomenon of street children through the provision of protection and welfare services for children at risk and at risk of delinquency through social welfare institutions for children at risk, observation centres and shelters, social surveillance offices and social defence groups. In addition, a social diagnostic centre and a shelter for juveniles at risk or at risk of delinquency have been established.

107. An integrated five-year strategy to tackle the issue of street children has also been launched, in cooperation with UNICEF. A study is currently being conducted on the possibility of creating an integrated facility for the provision of social welfare to homeless children that would incorporate residential institutions, artisanal workshops and sports grounds. The Ministry would play a pivotal role in such an enterprise by providing comprehensive services for families and children, as well as a parcel of 40 feddans of land south of the 6 October/Al-Wahat road, owned by the Ministry and allocated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Communities.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

108. Since the turn of the century, Egypt has been concerned to combat the scourge of trafficking in persons — in particular, the trafficking of women and children, including the sale of children and their exploitation in begging, prostitution and Internet pornography — in the context of efforts to combat all forms of slavery, servitude and forced labour, practices prohibited by the revealed religions and positive law. That concern is reflected in the establishment by the Council of Ministers of the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking in July 2007, the members of which are drawn from 12 national authorities, and the subsequent establishment by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood of a unit to combat human trafficking dealing specifically with women and children, as a key area in which to lay the foundations of human rights and children's rights.

109. The unit operates on three parallel tracks, namely, operational, legislative and advocacy activities, as follows:

A. Operational activities

1. Development and implementation of the National Plan

110. The anti-child trafficking unit was developed and incorporated in the National Plan of Action Against Human Trafficking announced by the National Coordinating Committee in December 2010; implementation of the National Plan was followed up in partnership with other actors, namely, the National Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Security Sector within the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, civil society and the International Organization for Migration.

2. Creation of a national referral mechanism

111. A national referral mechanism to support trafficking victims was created pursuant to a decision of the Committee dated 15 February 2012. The unit serves as coordinator, as approved by the National Coordinating Committee, in accordance with Act No. 64 of 2010; it is responsible for examining victims, informing them of their rights and assisting the competent authorities with the case management process during the evidence-gathering stage, in particular with regard to legal and security matters.

3. *Capacity-building and specialized mechanisms*

112. The anti-human trafficking unit continues to raise awareness among criminal justice administrators, civil society actors and persons who deal with victims, as it has done since 2008. It provides training courses in implementation of the national legislation, which prescribes harsh penalties for offenders consistent with the gravity of the offence; of international agreements on action against human trafficking that uphold the rights of victims; and of the National Plan of Action, which is based upon four principles, namely, prevention, participation, protection and prosecution.

4. *Protection, recovery and reintegration of victims*

113. The unit has encouraged civil society organizations to network through providing training on victim recovery and rehabilitation to more than 100 specialists from 62 civil society associations in 5 governorates. One outcome of this activity has been the formation of a national alliance of civil society associations against human trafficking, led by the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA). In order to support rehabilitation and reintegration services, a number of shelters have been established to provide victims with psychological, social and health protection and rehabilitation services. One such shelter for boys was created in Madinat al-Salam, in cooperation with Belgian organization FACE. A regional rehabilitation shelter for girls and women victims was established in Madinat al-Salam, in cooperation with IOM, and a regional shelter for girls offering rehabilitation and legal assistance was established in Alexandria, in cooperation with Catholic Relief Services, IOM and Al-Hurriyah association.

5. *Creation of a database*

114. The unit has enjoyed some measure of success in developing a database — containing data disaggregated by age, sex, geographical location and socioeconomic background — on trafficking victims who have frequented the shelter and the victim health recovery unit at the National Bank Hospital. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has provided data on victims of human trafficking cases in which sentences have been handed down against perpetrators and pending cases in respect of offences categorized as such under international agreements and national legislation.

6. *Field studies*

115. Field studies that include a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the root causes of the spread of all the offences referred to above have been conducted in the governorates of Assiut, Giza, Aswan, Luxor and Qena; another such study is currently being conducted in Fayoum Governorate.

7. *Efforts to prevent forced labour*

116. Through the anti-human trafficking unit, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood adopted the Decent Work for Domestic Workers initiative, in particular for children and women. In this context, it established a national working group, with members from the National Coordinating Committee on Combating Human Trafficking, the Ministry of Manpower, IOM, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNW), Al-Shehab Foundation, CEWLA, and the National Coalition Against Trafficking in Human Beings. The objective of the initiative is to research problems relating to domestic workers in Egypt and to monitor national efforts and studies, in particular the exemption of the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003), which is the source of legislation and ordinary law governing Egyptian labour relations for this category.

117. The national working group has worked on the following themes:

(a) Lax enforcement of rights and legislation. In order to address this issue, the national working group has developed a regulatory framework in the form of an equitable employment contract that protects the rights of domestic workers, who are a marginalized category, and their current legal and contractual status. The regulatory framework is based on national and international law and is a core element of a draft national legislative amendment to guarantee domestic workers' rights. The employment contract sets out the obligations of parties thereto and protects the interests of both employers and workers, in particular minors over 11 years of age. In addition, this initiative provides for the formation of stakeholder and civil society pressure groups to draw the attention of the authorities to the need to expedite the ratification of ILO Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers;

(b) Raising awareness and upgrading reporting mechanisms. In this connection the national working group conducts awareness-raising campaigns and implements plans, as distinct from legislative changes, to improve employers' conduct. The objective of such action is to change the misconceptions and prejudices about domestic workers and acceptable conduct by employers that abound, such as that an employer can oblige a domestic worker to work from morning to night for years in violation of their human rights or child rights to rest, social life and association; and to raise the awareness of domestic workers about reporting mechanisms and how to address their grievances to the relevant authorities;

(c) Prosecution. The working group also addresses the inevitable imposition of sentences and fines on offending employers and the publicization of the imposition of such penalties, in order to deliver the message that such conduct is unacceptable.

In addition, it monitors the magnitude of the problem and derives official statistics from studies on domestic workers in order to develop a clear road map for governorates that export domestic workers.

B. Legislative and advocacy activities

1. Dissemination of legislation and documentation

118. National anti-human trafficking legislation has been published and manuals on trafficking and the identification of victims have been issued to law enforcement officers, in cooperation with IOM. Copies have been circulated to the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Centre for Social and Criminological Studies, the Ministry of Education and the governorates. One manual explains what constitutes offences of trafficking in women and children under national and international legislation and clarifies the different forms it can take and the means whereby it can be committed. It includes definitions of victim and perpetrator, and distinguishes between human trafficking and possible associated offences, such as migrant smuggling. It clarifies effective means of implementing the law for law enforcement officials and sets out the responsibilities of the State and State institutions, in accordance with their contractual obligations and their obligations under national legislation. The manual, which focuses on human rights, emphasizes that action against human trafficking should not have a negative impact on human rights and dignity, in particular the rights of victims. It also underscores the need to take great care in formulating relevant policies so that they do not entail any violation of human rights. An entire chapter of the manual is devoted to victim and witness protection and identification, management and risk assessment. Another manual explains how to train teachers to sensitize students to certain types of

offence, while a further manual was written for social workers responsible for victim shelters.

2. Prosecution and law enforcement

119. There has been close and fruitful cooperation with the Office of the Public Prosecutor to prosecute and punish offenders; this has contributed to changes in policies relating to the work of authorized officials and to the arrest and prosecution of offenders in accordance with the law. The Office of the Public Prosecutor refers victims to shelters by an official decision and returns child victims to school. It is to publish a manual on the legal and administrative rights of which victims must be informed, being exempt from legal accountability, and the importance of coming forward voluntarily to help the authorities combat human trafficking in accordance with the provisions of part V and, in particular, articles 22, 23 and 24. Permanent focal points are being identified to help Egyptian and non-Egyptian victims access their rights more easily in a legal framework, in coordination with the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

3. Regional cooperation with the League of Arab States

120. The anti-human trafficking coordination unit of the Legal Department, in particular, has worked with the Arab League to implement the Arab regional plan against human trafficking. It provided training to the League's working group, and presented a working paper at the Doha Foundation Forum during which the Arab Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking was launched.

4. Definition of human trafficking

121. Trafficking in women and children is defined under Act No. 64 of 2010, the Palermo Protocol and the Child Act, as amended, the Criminal Code, the Civil Status Code and the regulation governing organ transplants as: "dealing in human beings for the purpose of exploitation, through abduction, fraud or deception, or the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or need, by obtaining control over them and limiting their movement for the purpose of forced labour or obliging them to perform illegal acts for profit and obtaining financial reward or compensation, by an individual or organized group, at home or abroad".

122. The legal definition of human trafficking has been expanded to include numerous forms of exploitation in order to accommodate rapid changes in the nature of the offence, as perpetrators are extremely resourceful and the returns are attractive. Human trafficking earns billions of dollars annually and is a multifaceted offence, involving numerous parties; it flourishes in the context of natural disasters, wars and changes in the political, security and economic situation, which bring poverty, unemployment and a fluid security situation. These factors, in addition to enormous advances in information and communications technology, have increased the incidence of trafficking not only in Egypt but the entire Arab region.

5. Definition of the sale of children

123. It should be noted that every instance of the definition and prohibition of the sale of children is in accordance with article 291 of the Criminal Code, article 116 bis of the Child Act and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography; the definition of the sale of children is similar, although not identical, to the definition of human trafficking. The definition of trafficking includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children by traffickers for the purpose of their exploitation. The point of difference is that at any stage in the process, the child may, or may not, be sold. In

other words, the element of sale is not essential to child trafficking, which links the sale of children to any act or transaction whereby a child is offered, delivered or accepted by any means by any person or group of persons to a third party in exchange for compensation or any other consideration for any of the following purposes:

- Sexual exploitation of a child or the transfer of a child's organs for profit;
- Use of a child in forced labour;
- Child prostitution by using a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration;
- Child pornography by the representation of any child, by whatever means, engaging in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes or the production, distribution, dissemination, import, export, offering, sale or possession of child pornography;
- Offering, obtaining, procuring or providing a child for the purpose of prostitution;
- Improperly inducing consent, as an intermediary, for the adoption of a child in violation of the applicable national legislation on adoption;
- Any attempt to commit any of the above acts or complicity or participation in any such act at home or abroad, even if the offence is not committed.

124. The efforts made by the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to combat human trafficking are set out in annex VI.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

125. Article 7 bis (a) of the Child Act, which was added under the terms of Act No. 126 of 2008, prohibits the deliberate exposure of children to any bodily harm or harmful or illegal practice, taking into account the rights and duties of persons responsible for the care of children and their right to impose legally permissible discipline. Childhood protection subcommittees are competent to take legal measures in the event that this provision is contravened.

126. This prohibition applies in schools, welfare institutions and homes, and to parents or guardians. Parents or guardians may not exceed the legally established limits of discipline and commit acts punishable by law.

127. Egypt will provide the Committee with the outcomes of prosecutions as soon as they are available.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

128. The Child Act (Act No. 12 of 1996), as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008, addresses the issues and rights of working mothers and dedicates a chapter to their welfare, containing the following provisions.

- Women who work in the State, public, business or private sector on a permanent or a temporary contract are entitled to three months' maternity leave with full pay on a maximum of three occasions during their career;
- The daily working hours of pregnant women are reduced by one hour from the sixth month of pregnancy; they may not work additional hours throughout their pregnancy and for a full six months after giving birth;

- Women who are breastfeeding during the two years after giving birth shall be entitled to two rest periods of at least 30 minutes for this purpose, in addition to the established rest period;
- Women who work in the State, public or business sector are entitled to leave without pay for a period of two years to care for their child, on three occasions during their career;
- In the private sector, women who work in an establishment employing 50 or more workers are entitled to leave without pay for a period of up to two years to care for their child, on a maximum of three occasions during their career;
- Employers who employ more than 100 women in one location are required to provide crèche facilities on or off site, under the terms and conditions set out in the implementing regulations.

129. Violations of the provisions of this chapter of the Child Act constitute an offence punishable by a minimum fine of LE100 Egyptian pounds and a maximum fine of LE500. The fine increases as the number of workers in respect of whom the violation is committed increases; in the event of a subsequent conviction, the penalty is increased by a similar amount, and may not be suspended.

130. The provisions of the Act apply to women who work in the government or private sector. As mentioned above with regard to women who work in the informal economy, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood adopted the Decent Work for Domestic Workers initiative, in particular for children and women, through its anti-human trafficking unit. Under this initiative, the National Council examines issues relating to domestic workers in Egypt (as the category most employed in the informal economy) and monitors national efforts and studies, particularly the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003) which is the legislative source and the law governing Egyptian labour relations for this category. In addition, it is developing a regulatory framework, in the form of a model employment contract, with a view to ensuring the equitable enjoyment and protection of the rights of this marginalized category and of their current occupational and contractual status in accordance with national and international law. The model employment contract forms the core of a draft national legislative amendment to guarantee domestic workers' rights and establish the obligations and interests of employers and workers, in particular minors over 11 years of age. Moreover, work is under way to form pressure groups involving stakeholders and civil society to advocate the early ratification by the Government of ILO Convention No. 122 concerning Employment Policy.

Article 11

The right to an adequate standard of living

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 of the list of issues

131. Poverty is one of the greatest challenges facing most countries and its eradication is one of the most important Millennium Development Goals. Egypt has adopted a number of ambitious plans and programmes to address poverty, as indicated in detail in the report.

132. The following elements and mechanisms are used to measure and monitor the incidence and address the consequences of poverty:

- The unemployment rate is one element used to measure and monitor the incidence of poverty. Economic development programmes continue to create sufficient and adequately paid employment opportunities, thereby raising the standard of living and driving down poverty rates;

- The population growth rate is an important element used to measure and monitor the incidence of poverty, in view of the direct burden on public spending caused by increases in the birth rate. The Government is taking action to bring the population growth rate under control;
- The literacy rate is another important element used to measure and monitor the incidence of poverty, as a social issue that must be addressed by strengthening poor people as a force in an economic environment that offers them incentives to become more productive.

Project to provide targeted support and create a database for families most in need

133. This project is one of the main mechanisms used to monitor the incidence of poverty in order to create a database for families most in need. The project aims to:

- Identify the 6 million families most in need of welfare in order to curb the increase in poverty despite increased social spending;
- Ensure that the safety net reaches the poor more effectively so that it provides sufficient benefits and so has a palpable impact;
- Rationalize the current food support system and reduce costs;
- Provide access to food support and adequate funding.

134. A high committee, chaired by the Minister of Solidarity, oversees and tracks the project's progress on the basis of reports submitted by committee members in their specialist areas, and takes the appropriate decisions in respect of those reports. Regional committees have been established in every province.

135. According to the overall poverty measure, the poverty rate was 21.6 per cent in 2008/2009 and 25.2 per cent in 2010/11. The development plan target for 2013/14 is 24 per cent.

136. Rural poverty rates in Upper Egypt are the highest in the country; consequently, the various development plans mentioned in the report before the Committee focus on poverty reduction in villages in that area. The Government has announced that it plans to launch the national project for the development of the Suez Canal and pump new investment into labour-intensive infrastructure projects, which will create new job opportunities; this, combined with the introduction by the Government of a minimum wage of LE1,200 with effect from January 2014, is expected to significantly reduce poverty and unemployment in the short term.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

137. The Egyptian Government has developed a working mechanism to ensure food security, tackle rising food prices and achieve social justice through more equitable income distribution, with a focus on:

1. Addressing price rises by reducing inflation and controlling prices;
2. Developing a system of internal trade that will break the monopoly enjoyed by dealers and suppliers so as to close the gap between wholesale and retail prices; to that end, a consumer protection agency and competition protection board have been established, as well as an agency to prevent harmful monopolistic practices;
3. Taking active steps to increase workers' incomes, the increase being the greatest for those on the lowest incomes;
4. Directing support to the most disadvantaged; in this connection, direct subsidies on basic items have increased steadily in recent years.

138. In this context, the Government is keen to achieve self-sufficiency in terms of food commodities in general. It has achieved self-sufficiency in respect of some products and a surplus in respect of some others, which allows for the export of wheat, in particular, as a strategic commodity. The Government is working on plans to increase production by raising import prices, and is conducting research into ways of improving wheat quality and increasing cultivated areas, as well as providing sufficient and adequate conservation and storage. At the same time, this package of measures aims to ease the burden on the national economy by limiting foreign imports and ensuring that bread is available and affordable. The measures referred to in the reply to the previous question refer to the efforts pursued to achieve food security for families most in need.

139. The aims of the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013 included the achievement of social justice; accordingly, the minimum wage was increased to LE 1,200 per month with effect from January 2014, to counter rising inflation rates and reduce the poverty rate. At the same time, support was maintained at existing levels and steps taken to ensure that it reached beneficiaries, including by the provision of outlets selling foodstuffs at reduced prices. As prices continue to rise, the Government is moving towards establishing a list of indicative food prices in order to curb them.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 25 of the list of issues

140. Since 2007, the Government has implemented large-scale projects throughout Egypt to deliver safe, clean drinking water to its 222 cities and to rural areas, with the capacity to produce 25 million cubic metres per day, at a cost of LE32 billion. Urban coverage rates are 100 per cent and rural coverage rates reached 98.3 per cent in 2010. Water production capacity is now being increased to supply water to all villages, and the daily per capita amount of water supplied is being increased.

141. The Government has also implemented large-scale sanitation projects throughout the country, at a cost of LE48 billion. Coverage is close to 100 per cent in urban areas and 40 per cent in rural areas. Work is currently under way to extend sanitation coverage to the remaining towns and villages, with a view to achieving full coverage nationwide.

142. The Ministry of Health, through its specialized agencies, monitors compliance with global standards for safe drinking water production and wastewater disposal, by means of periodic and unannounced inspections. The Government is taking action to tackle a number of practical problems in this regard, all of which are due to funding and technical problems which the Government is taking practical measures to address.

143. Egypt previously received a visit from the Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation in June 2009. Her preliminary recommendations acknowledged the level of political commitment which Egypt has made to supplying drinking water and sanitation services to citizens and the achievements that it has made in that regard. At the same time, the Independent Expert drew attention to challenges at a number of levels and the need for sustained efforts to overcome them.

144. The Egyptian Government's continuing political commitment, to which the Independent Expert referred, and its sustained efforts in this regard will certainly lead to significant progress, particularly in the wake of the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013. The Government's current focus is on providing the necessary funding to continue implementing national plans developed in this regard in furtherance of the goals of the revolution. The necessary resources are being provided through budget allocations as well as assistance and loans from international organizations and friendly States. The development plan target for 2013/14 is to increase available

drinking water capacity to 367 litres per capita per day and available capacity for pumping to purification plants to 14 million cubic metres per day.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

145. In addition to the information provided by Egypt in its report in this regard, the national housing programme is one of the most important projects launched by the Government to overcome the problem of providing adequate housing for persons with limited income, through the provision of 1 million housing units over a period of six years. The main components of the programme were designed in such a way as to take account of the different needs, wishes and preferences of citizens, to build towns in which people wish to live or are close to their places of work, and to ensure that accommodation is in keeping with income levels. Land for construction has been set aside in governorates and new towns, State subsidies have been granted and 20-year loans offered on easy terms. The private sector is involved in the construction of housing units with 63 square metres of floor space. The State provides facilities and infrastructure — water, sanitation, electricity, roads and communications — at every stage of construction; most phases of the programme have already been implemented, and the remaining phases are being implemented.

146. Government efforts to address the housing problem through the “Build your own house” housing project and the “Million housing units” project have continued following the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013. Despite the circumstances and developments in economic conditions, the Government continues to work on completing these projects and to prioritize the provision of infrastructure to the land allocated to the “Build your own house” project and of the funding needed to provide soft loans to beneficiaries. As indicated in annex I, housing sector targets for the year 2013/14 under the development plan are to provide 175 housing units for persons with limited income under the national housing programme; provide LE250 million in soft loans for popular housing; and provide 50,000 small residential plots for middle-income families.

147. In extreme situations where forced evictions are needed, the governorates ensure that suitable accommodation is available under the programme and the plans established for this purpose.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

148. The Government is doing everything possible to address the widespread problem of informal settlements, where population numbers and density are high. It aims to curb and contain the problem in existing settlements, to restructure, plan and develop them and, at the same time, ensure that they are not deprived of basic services.

149. Plans are currently being drawn up to develop those informal settlements that are suitable for development, in partnership with civil society; friendly States are providing Egypt with the substantial funding required. Settlements will be developed in stages, by the introduction of basic services and facilities and the construction of roads and main roads serving residents. The residents of areas not suitable for development are being given priority for housing in new urban areas.

150. Informal settlements are being developed with the assistance of international organizations and through bilateral relations with friendly States. The Minister for Local Development in the new Government has announced that there are 422 such settlements in Egypt, covering an area of 5,092 feddans, containing 248,000 housing units; 57 unsafe informal settlements have been developed in 17 governorates, and steps are being taken to develop 170 areas nationwide.

Article 12

The right to physical and mental health

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues

151. Under the development plan set out in annex I, the Government is taking action to reduce infant, under-5 and maternal mortality rates, with varying success in rural and urban areas in view of differing educational levels and literacy rates. The statistics indicate the following:

<i>Infant mortality rates</i>	
2010	31 698 (14 per mil)
2011	35 997 (14.7 per mil)
<i>Under-five mortality rates</i>	
2010	18.7 (per mil)
2011	19 (per mil)

The quantitative data requested by the Committee are set out in detail in annex VII.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

152. The Government adopted a national project to establish, restore and renovate 2,500 primary care units nationwide by June 2010; by June 2009, work had been completed on 1,318 units in 24 governorates. In addition, 48 out of a total of 390 government hospitals providing services free of charge to citizens have been developed, and medical convoys continue to be deployed to remote areas to provide diagnostic and therapeutic services as well as the necessary medicines free of charge. During the period from June 2006 to June 2009, 3,467 medical convoys provided services to some 10 million citizens.

153. Health spending doubled to LE 13.5 billion in 2008/2009, excluding spending on armed forces, police, private sector and corporate hospitals.

154. Some 42.3 million Egyptian citizens or 56 per cent of the population were covered by health insurance free of charge in Egypt in 2010. The development plan target for 2013/14 is to raise coverage to 60 per cent, and a bill that would guarantee universal health insurance coverage is under consideration.

155. The Government has taken robust action to tackle diseases, in particular avian influenza (H5N1) and influenza A (H1N1). Free treatment is provided to all at government hospitals, and vaccinations are available.

156. With regard to access to medicines, Egypt has refused to yield to pressure from certain advanced countries which have sought to impose higher standards of intellectual property protection than Egypt is required to observe under the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Consequently, pursuant to Act No. 82 of 2002, mandatory licences are granted for the use of inventions — subject to the identification of patent owner's rights — whenever the quantity of patent-protected drugs is insufficient for the country's needs, or the quality of the drug declines, or there is an unusual price hike, or the invention is a drug used to treat urgent, chronic, complex or endemic diseases or a product for the prevention of these diseases.

157. The Government, committed to the goals of the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013, continues its efforts to achieve full coverage for citizens in accordance with the plans that were laid down. The decline in the proportion of GNP allocated to health expenditure has without doubt had a negative impact on health services. The issue is now being raised in the work and discussions of the Committee of Fifty tasked with drafting constitutional amendments; the trend is towards determining the proportion of GNP allocated under the Constitution to spending on basic services, in order to ensure that those responsible for drafting budgets and financial plans will adhere to that proportion and maintain the provision of adequate levels of services to citizens. In addition, the enactment of a law aimed at universal health coverage is under consideration.

158. The development plan target for 2013/14 is to increase medical service rates per 10,000 inhabitants as follows:

	<i>2011</i>	<i>Plan 2013/14</i>
Doctors	7.7	8.3
Dentists	1.4	1.68
Pharmacists	2.2	2.44
Nurses	13.8	14.85

Statistics from the authorities responsible for health care provision are set out in annex VIII.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 30 of the list of issues

159. Necessary and age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health is provided to different age groups through the school curriculum, in the same scientific manner as other subjects.

160. Reproductive and sexual health services are basic services and are provided free of charge by specialized Ministry of Health health units to all citizens. The efforts expended in this area have enjoyed some success, particularly in tackling the problem of female genital mutilation, as indicated above.

Articles 13 and 14

The right to education

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 31 of the list of issues

161. In addition to the material contained in the report before the Committee, Egypt wishes to draw attention to the following points.

General education

162. Under successive Egyptian constitutions and the Education Act, all Egyptian children are entitled to education in State schools free of charge from the age of 6 years. The State is under an obligation to provide them with education, and parents or guardians are under an obligation to comply for a period of nine years. At the governorate level, Governors make the decisions needed to regulate and ensure compliance on the part of parents or guardians, as well as on admissions to primary schools. If places are available, children may be admitted at five and a half years of age, provided that their admission does not have an adverse impact on class size.

163. One of the main cornerstones on which education is founded is that education is the right of all citizens. The State ensures that education is democratic by ensuring equal opportunities for pupils of both sexes in urban and rural populations [in three categories of schools], as is evident from the following.

1. Mainstream schools: 874,730 children are enrolled in kindergartens, 9,644,456 pupils in primary schools and 4,158,845 students in secondary schools;
2. Special schools: some 38,000 children with disabilities (visual, hearing and mental impairment) are enrolled in special schools;
3. Community schools: some 114,128 students attend community schools, which were set up for children in marginalized and remote areas to reduce illiteracy and the dropout rate; these one-class schools are girl-friendly and also accommodate children in difficult circumstances.

In total, approximately 15 million children are enrolled in schools.

164. The Government is taking steps to ensure the principle of quality and agreement in schools through good governance, which achieves balance between conflicting interests, emphasizes the principle of accountability and transparency and is based on universal democratic participation in decision-making, with effective community participation and equal opportunities for students, without discrimination.

165. The Government is taking steps to increase the kindergarten intake rate from 60 per cent to 100 per cent and, eventually, to make kindergarten attendance mandatory.

166. Work is under way to extend health coverage to all students enrolled at all levels of education, to look after and preserve their health.

167. Sports education has been made a pass/fail subject in schools, in recognition of the role of sport in achieving burgeoning health and sporting brilliance among school students.

168. The Ministry organizes a national project for talented athletes with disabilities at special schools (for pupils with visual, hearing and mental impairment), holding football, table tennis and athletics competitions in which some 1,750 students participate at the national level. This project runs in parallel with other national projects for mainstream talented athletes. The Ministry is currently studying the issuance of a ministerial decision on the establishment of a sports competition for children in community schools, alongside other national projects for talented athletes, to give them the opportunity to show their sporting abilities and to identify and nurture talented pupils, starting from the school year 2013/14.

169. The Ministry works with civil society organizations to promote sports among students with disabilities, establishing football and table tennis competitions for students at schools for children with learning difficulties, in cooperation with families. It also held goalball competitions for partially-sighted persons with Al-Gomhuria newspaper at its education festival in 2012/13.

Private education

170. Private education is an important element in the development plans of most States and has become inseparable from comprehensive development issues. It is a mechanism for the advancement of societies, raises individual standards of living and is a means for social and economic mobility.

171. The private education system in Egypt is under focus in the context of the Government's continuing efforts to develop and promote education at different levels

and to upgrade the services provided to citizens, with a view to making a fairer society for all at various levels. The education sector, being closely connected with the needs of society and the construction of a future based on science, knowledge and innovation in numerous areas, is the best and most effective sector in which to make such efforts as it has a strong impact, brings benefits to society and contributes rapidly to progress in the economic, cultural, scientific and other relevant sectors.

Private schools

172. Private schools contribute to providing places for large numbers of pupils looking for an education that offers diversity in terms of level, quality, inclinations and desires. Private education has expanded and proliferated and there are now many different kinds of institution. Parents increasingly accept to send their children to private schools because they wish them to embark upon a formal education at a younger age than their peers, to teach them foreign languages or wish them to be taught in smaller classes in which there is greater opportunity for quality education and ongoing monitoring.

173. Private schools teach foreign curriculums, adjusted to Egyptian Ministry of Education curriculums, once their textbooks, curriculums and teaching plans have been reviewed to ensure that they are suitable and appropriate in terms of learning standards and religious and moral aspects, as well as Egyptian customs, traditions, history and consideration for geographical boundaries. Experts and advisors on school subjects are aware that textbooks in their respective areas are revised every three years. These schools are required to teach Arabic, religious studies, geography, history and civic studies to all Egyptian students and expatriate students from Arabic-speaking countries so that they can sit examinations in these subjects, in accordance with the rules followed in Egyptian schools, under the supervision of the Directorate and Department of Education.

Private Arabic and foreign language schools and schools with special curriculums, 2012/13

<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>
Arabic private	3 377	1 010 699
Private foreign language	1 860	448 074
Special curriculum	452	59 088
Total	5 689	1 517 861

Illiteracy

174. Successive Egyptian constitutions have stipulated that the fight against illiteracy is a national duty. Egypt continues to pursue initiatives and projects to address this issue through the National Authority for the Eradication of Illiteracy and for Adult Education. In 2003, the National Illiteracy Eradication Project was rolled out, with 100,000 young graduates being employed as teachers of literacy skills. A number of programmes have been set up, most notably a single classroom project designed to help young girls who drop out of education to complete their studies and a “girl-friendly schools” project, which aims to close the gender gap in basic education.

175. According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), these initiatives have reduced the illiteracy rate to 28.6 per cent. In the years from 2006 to 2008, a total of 1,498,946 citizens received literacy training, 927,104 of them males. Most beneficiaries came from rural areas.

Development plan targets for 2013/14 include the reduction of illiteracy rates among persons over 10 years of age from 22.3 per cent in 2012/13 to 21 per cent in 2013/14. Egypt continues to implement its plans to eradicate illiteracy; the current constitutional review process is expected to maintain the provision that the eradication of illiteracy is a national duty, as a challenge that society must successfully overcome in order to achieve the revolutionary goal of human dignity.

Unemployment rate

176. The Government is currently focusing efforts on upgrading education, working with all parties involved. As indicated previously in the report before the Committee, Egypt has endeavoured to reduce class sizes and upgrade teaching staff. The Government is currently reviewing educational curricula to ensure that they are of good quality, remain abreast of advances in knowledge and reflect the needs of the labour market.

177. The discussions being held in the Committee of Fifty tasked with drafting constitutional amendments tend to favour the inclusion in the article on the right to education of the State's obligation to ensure that education is of good quality and remains abreast of advances in knowledge, in order to maximize the benefits to society of the State's obligation to realize this right.

178. Annex IX shows statistics on education and higher education, while annex I shows development plan targets for general education in 2013/14.

Articles 14 and 15

The right to culture and to benefit from scientific progress

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 32 of the list of issues

179. The Egyptian Government attaches importance to culture in a broad sense, in view of the depth and diversity of the strands — including Pharaonic, Coptic, Islamic, Arabic and Nubian — that have contributed to and constitute the component elements of Egyptian culture. For the past 7,000 years, Egypt has been, and continues to be, the scene of interaction with other peoples and civilizations. Historically, the Constitution and laws of the country have protected the right to take part in cultural life, enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and benefit from the protection of artistic production, the right to intellectual property and patent rights. These rights are enshrined in the national Constitution and legislation and have been reaffirmed by numerous court judgements, as indicated in the report before the Committee and the foregoing replies.

180. Creativity and innovation and the provision of an environment conducive to both of these elements are the cornerstone of cultural activity. Accordingly, the State seeks to encourage gifted, creative individuals in all fields of artistic and cultural endeavour by providing specialized centres for the arts, equipped with modern facilities, sponsoring the translation of Arabic literature into various languages and vice versa, publishing cultural journals, and participating in national and international exhibitions and competitions. In addition, the State encourages and motivates citizens to participate by granting annual State awards to winners, who are selected through mechanisms established by law and regulated by the relevant decisions, in the areas of literary and scientific production.

181. Egypt reaffirms its commitment to and support for the effective exercise of the right to knowledge and culture for all citizens. A number of national governmental bodies and agencies, as well as private bodies and agencies, run numerous cultural and media programmes and activities, endeavouring to provide an appropriate climate for the exercise of this right through the cultural and media systems, to which the report

before the Committee refers. In addition, the private sector has been given latitude to establish satellite television channels and publish newspapers; this is a significant addition that has broadened the cultural base and introduced greater diversity, as well as reaching out to a wider public.

182. Egypt possesses a great stock of cultural capital and an extraordinary archaeological heritage that spans civilizations from Pharaonic times, to say nothing of the religious archaeological heritage left by the monotheistic religions that have flourished in Egypt in the course of its history. Accordingly, it has enjoyed strong cultural relations with other States throughout the world and with the international community. This has contributed, over time, to the distinctive Egyptian national identity, which is characterized by tolerance, respect for others and openness to progress and other cultures without compromising the core values of Egyptian society.

183. Egypt has made sustained efforts in this regard by acceding to international cultural conventions. It has acceded to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions — adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 20 October 2005 — in addition to numerous other bilateral agreements on cultural cooperation.

184. Pursuant to these agreements, a large number of foreign cultural centres have been opened in Egypt and, conversely, Egyptian cultural centres have been opened around the world. In addition, Egypt organizes a wide variety of regional and international cultural and artistic festivals and participates in similar cultural activities organized in other countries.

185. In this regard, Egypt has endeavoured to increase communication with the global cultural movement by continuing to increase the number of asymmetric digital subscriber lines (ADSL) for the country's growing number of Internet users. The number of Internet users rose from 15 million in 2009 to 29 million in 2011-2012 and to 32.5 million in 2013, reflecting the extent to which cultural awareness is widespread in Egypt, the interest that its people take in it, and the availability of Internet facilities.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 33 of the list of issues

186. In its report, Egypt points to the main structures underpinning the cultural and media systems, as well as the government agencies and bodies that work in this field and develop policies and implementation plans. Freedom of the press and the right to obtain and display or disseminate information to citizens are among the main issues addressed by the Committee of Fifty with a view to safeguarding the new Constitution and ensuring complete freedom of the media, consistent with its commitment to preserving the core components and values of Egyptian society.

187. The media system has recently expanded by allowing private sector newspapers and television channels; these media operate under the basic rules defined by the Constitution and the law referred to previously in the report. Information is obtained in accordance with the law governing freedom of information.

188. The State, concerned to fulfil its obligation to disseminate culture and knowledge, provides a full range of radio and television services. It strives to keep abreast of advances in science and technology in the field of media, based on the view that the media system embodies the right to knowledge and the right to culture. Egypt's media system comprises a number of agencies and mechanisms, to which reference has been made previously in the report.

189. Civil society plays an active and serious participant in the national media system and has established private satellite channels for the first time in Egypt, operated by companies with headquarters in the Media Free Zone in 6 October City.

Statistical data

<i>Number</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Books written and translated	3 234	1 212
Cultural associations	140	158
Public libraries	345	361
Morning, evening and weekly newspapers	69	58

190. These figures reflect the commitment on the part of the State to achieving widespread cultural awareness among the population and show that citizens take the exercise of their right to cultural participation seriously.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 34 of the list of issues

191. As indicated in its previous reports, Egypt does not have minorities in the conventional sense of the word. The distinctive, tightly-knit fabric of Egyptian society has been woven over 7,000 years of history. During the course of its national struggle, every element of difference and ground for distinction was melted in the crucible; all elements of society have been amalgamated into a single culture, drawn from multiple sources with a variety of concerns, and shaped in the mould of a proper upbringing that preserves the authentic character of the Egyptian family and identity. All Egyptian citizens enjoy all the basic services provided by the State, without exception or distinction. While there may be differences in customs, traditions, behaviour or accents in different geographical areas, such as urban and rural areas or Nile valley and desert border regions, such differences are natural and are not a valid basis on which to describe the groups concerned as minorities.

192. Consistent with its international obligations and its obligations under the national Constitution and legislation, the State is taking action to significantly raise the standard of living in the poorest villages and border areas, and to address the difficulties faced in particular by the people of Nubia in Upper Egypt as a result of the displacement caused by the construction of the Aswan dam. It seeks to take such action through educational programmes that call for non-discrimination, tolerance and acceptance of others, and through ambitious development plans. It is also taking action, through ambitious policies and programmes, to resettle Bedouins in modern villages with economic and social services.

193. This goes hand in hand with the State's desire to support all efforts to preserve the cultural and artistic heritage of these communities, as a repository of culture and knowledge. It documents their artistic and literary works and disseminates them through the media, facilitates their participation in international and national competitions and showcases their heritage at international and regional festivals, in which they have won many prizes.

194. Moreover, the fact that representatives of all these communities are members of the Committee of Fifty tasked with drafting constitutional amendments underscores the desire of Egypt for all groups and communities in society to participate in drafting this emblematic document by national consensus, thereby achieving the goals of the revolutions of January 2011 and June 2013.

Conclusion

195. Egypt hereby submits the present report containing replies to the issues raised by the Committee in preparation for the discussion of the report. It reaffirms that it is fully prepared to cooperate and continue the constructive dialogue with the Committee, in appreciation of its efforts to achieve full implementation of the Convention at the national level and so promote the well-being and prosperity of all humanity.
