



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION**

Periodic reports of States parties due in 2000

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC*

[Original: Arabic]
[15 August 2000]

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, see CRC/C/28/Add.2 for its consideration by the Committee, see documents CRC/C/SR.360-362 and CRC/C/15/Add.70.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1 - 8	6
I. DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS	9 - 10	7
II. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION	11 - 27	8
A. Measures taken to coordinate national policies relating to children	17 - 20	9
B. Measures taken to make the Convention widely known to the public	21 - 27	10
III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD	28 - 34	13
IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	35 - 56	14
A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)	35 - 39	14
B. Best interests of the child (art. 3)	40 - 48	15
C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)	49 - 52	17
D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)	53 - 56	18
V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS	57 - 69	19
A. Name and nationality (art. 7)	57 - 60	19
B. Preservation of identity (art. 8)	61	21
C. Freedom of expression (art. 13)	62	21
D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)	63	21
E. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)	64	21
F. Protection of privacy (art. 16)	65	21
G. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)	66	21
H. The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))	67 - 69	21
VI. THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE	70 - 86	22
A. Parental guidance (art. 5)	70	22
B. Parental responsibilities (art. 18, paras. 1 and 2)	71 - 72	22
C. Separation from parents (art. 9)	73 - 78	23
D. Family reunification (art. 10)	79	25
E. Illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad (art. 11)	80	25
F. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, para. 4).....	81	25

CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
G. Children deprived of their family environment (art. 20)	82	25
H. Adoption (art. 21)	83	25
I. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)	84 - 85	25
J. Maltreatment and neglect (art. 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)	86	26
VII. BASIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE	87 - 128	26
A. Disabled children (art. 23)	87 - 91	26
B. Health and health-care services (art. 24)	92 - 125	28
C. Social security and childcare services and facilities (art. 26 and art. 18, para. 3)	126	40
D. Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)	127	40
E. Drinking-water and sanitation coverage	128	41
VIII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	129 - 187	41
A. Education, including vocational education guidance (art. 28)	129 - 168	41
B. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)	169 - 187	55
IX. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES	188 - 242	59
A. Children in states of emergency	188 - 197	59
B. Young offenders	198 - 213	61
C. Child victims of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)	214 - 236	65
D. Children belonging to minorities or indigenous population groups (art. 30)	237 - 242	70
Conclusion	243 - 244	71
Annexes		72
Sources		75

List of tables

<u>Table No. and title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Estimated population (thousands) by sex and place of residence, mid-1999	7
2. Sex structure of the working population	7
3. Children's awareness of rights contained in the Convention	12
4. Sources of information about children's rights	12
5. Children's awareness of the principles of the Convention	12
6. Causes of infant mortality	17
7. Ministry of Justice courses in various governorates	18
8. Vaccination coverage rate, 1999	31
9. Coverage rate of different vaccines for children under 1 year of age	31
10. Vaccination coverage rate by governorate, 1999	31
11. Cases of contagious diseases covered by immunization programmes	32
12. Percentage of children protected against neonatal tetanus, by governorate, 1998 and 1999	33
13. Services coverage rate before and after healthy villages programme	35
14. Environmental indicators before and after healthy villages programme	35
15. Type of course and number of trainees	35
16. Implementation of programmed activities in healthy villages	35
17. Main environmental indicators	36
18. Activities carried out at village information centre	36
19. Coverage rate of main primary health-care programmes in selected healthy villages, showing impact of programme activities on evolution of indicators	36
20. Ministry of Health activities connected with the Anti-AIDS Programme, 1995-1999	39

List of tables (continued)

<u>Table No. and title</u>	<u>Page</u>
21. Ministry of Health and departmental budgets, 1996-1998	40
22. Per capita share of GDP	40
23. Workforce dependency ratio (15-64 age group)	40
24. Steps on the educational ladder in the Syrian Arab Republic	44
25. Kindergartens, 2000	45
26. Primary school enrolment rate	46
27. Development of primary schools, 1995-1999	47
28. Development of preparatory schools, 1995-1999	47
29. Development of secondary schools, 1995-1999	48
30. Technical and vocational education, 1993-1999	49
31. Pre-university education budgets, 1995-1998	50
32. No. of juvenile magistrates in Syria	63
33. Juveniles sentenced to criminal penalties and subject to reform measures	63
34. Proportion of children engaged in work	68
35. Structure of child labour, by sex	68

Introduction

1. In implementation of the provisions of article 44, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Syrian Arab Republic has the honour to submit to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Syria's second periodic report on the status of children's rights and the measures undertaken to implement the provisions of this Convention in the Syrian Arab Republic. Particular mention should be made, however, of the fact that not all Syrian children have access to the welfare and services provided by the Syrian Government, because some live in areas that fall under the yoke of Israeli occupation.

2. The situation of foreign occupation constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights, particularly of the rights of the child, to which our Syrian people in the Golan, men, women and children, are daily subjected. The foreign occupation is also regarded as a stumbling block to social and economic development.

3. The Syrian Arab Republic has adopted peace as a strategic choice and a goal of Syria's domestic and foreign policies, as was confirmed by the President of the Republic, Dr. Bashar al-Assad, in his address to the People's Assembly after taking the constitutional oath, when he said: "We hereby confirm that we are eager for peace, but that we are not willing to forsake our territory, nor will we accept the infringement of our sovereignty ...".

4. In the preparation of this report, which is the second of its kind, due account has been taken of the general guidelines adopted by the Committee at its thirteenth session, held in October 1996, and of its concluding observations concerning the initial report which the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to it on 22 September 1995.¹ This reflects our eagerness to continue the constructive and purposeful dialogue between Syria and the Committee and is a token of the clear commitment of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the ensurance and observance of all the rights set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is without prejudice to Syria's right to maintain its reservations to the provisions of article 14 of the aforesaid Convention, which refer to religion, and of articles 20 and 21 which refer to adoption, these provisions being incompatible with the precepts of the Islamic Shariah, the provisions of the Syrian Personal Status Code, and prevailing Syrian law.

5. Over the recent period, and in spite of the scarcity of the requisite resources and financing, the Syrian Government has made intensive endeavours to develop child-oriented policies and create an environment conducive to the welfare, growth and development of the child.

6. The Government has set up a multiple indicator database to meet the pressing need for such a system when formulating comprehensive development plans for Ministries and the different sectors of the State. This data system can be regularly updated in accordance with development requirements. Recently, the State has also been making endeavours to modernize and modify numerous laws. Indeed, it has submitted several Bills, some concerned with children and their circumstances, to the People's Assembly with a view to bringing the law into line with new international laws and conventions. One such Bill seeks to raise the age at which children are allowed to remain in maternal custody and another aims at raising the minimum legal age for

employment. It should also be recalled that the Syrian Arab Republic expressed its support for the introduction of the amendment to article 43, paragraph 18, of the Convention, bringing the number of expert members of the Committee up from 10 to 18.²

7. The Government has also opened the way for the participation of the private sector, the mixed economy sector and non-governmental organizations in projects that are concerned with children, with the creation of educational, social, counselling and recreational institutions, and with the provision of paediatric care, as a corollary to what the Government itself provides in these domains. This subject shall be considered later in this report.

8. Finally, we should like to mention that, in order to avoid repetition and for the sake of brevity, in certain parts of this report we have confined ourselves to reproducing the numbers of certain articles of the law without discussing their contents, since we have already provided answers concerning the subject matter covered therein and have nothing new to add.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

9. According to estimates for mid-1999, Syria has a total population of 17,460,000 persons, of whom 15,645,000 persons live in Syrian territory. Table 1 shows the composition of the population according to place of residence and sex. Table 2 provides an overview of the sex structure of the workforce.

Table 1

Estimated population (thousands) by sex and place of residence, mid-1999

Sex	Number	%	Place of residence	Number	%
Male	8 077	51.6	Urban area	7 749	49.5
Female	7 577	48.4	Rural area	7 905	50.5
Total	15 654	100	Total	15 654	100

Table 2

Sex structure of the working population

Sex	Structure of working population
Male	81.5%
Female	18.5%
Total	100%

10. The data and statistical information found here below are provided in fulfilment of the purposes of the present report:

- (a) Average family size: 6.0 members;
- (b) Proportion of the population under 15 years of age: 40.50 per cent;

- (c) Proportion of the population between 15 and 64 years of age: 56.4 per cent;
- (d) Proportion of the population over 64 years of age: 3.1 per cent.

II. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

11. The reservation made to article 14 of the Convention, concerning the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, refers solely to the child's right to choose his or her religion. We do not believe that this right serves the child, but rather does him harm, inasmuch as it creates a source of conflict between the child and his family over a religious difference and can cause animosity or hatred between them, since religion is bound up with his innermost feelings and deepest instincts. Moreover, it makes no sense to deny a child who has not attained his majority the right to dispose of his property, while allowing him free rein in the matter of religion. To our way of thinking, reason holds more sway than property.

12. With regard to the reservation made concerning the right to adoption (articles 20 and 21 of the Convention), this is not intended to impede the system of *kafalah* for foundlings, since this is guaranteed under our legislation, but merely aims at preventing the family caring for a foundling under this system from giving him or her its name, since Syrian law only recognizes facts and does not accept that which is invented and presented as if it were a fact. In addition, the system of adoption has the effect of depriving the child of rights, by reducing the circle of persons whom he or she would be eligible to marry. It can also affect the child's rights in such matters as inheritance and so on.

13. The Syrian legislature has created an alternative to the system of adoption under the terms of the Act promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 107 of 4 May 1970. The Act defines a live-born foundling as a newborn who is found and is of unknown parentage. It regulates the protection and welfare of, and the management of any property owned by, foundlings as well as their placement with a family under the system of *kafalah*. The Act vests the Minister for Social Affairs and Labour with the authority to place a foundling with a family or a woman wishing to care for the child, on condition that they are able to provide for his or her care, upbringing, protection, education and maintenance and that the arrangement is in the foundling's interests. In addition, Decision No. 819 of 19 July 1971, promulgated by the Minister for Social Affairs and Labour, specifies the conditions regulating the custody of foundlings. This is all intended to provide and create an appropriate atmosphere for the alternative family by integrating the legislative texts in such a way as to ensure their consistency, from a theoretical and practical point of view, with the preservation of the child's dignity and his or her protection against exploitation, without there being any contradiction between the aims and purposes of childcare and the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in this domain, and while ensuring that these texts are consistent with Syrian legislation guaranteeing the protection of the rights of the family.

14. A Bill has been introduced to amend the Personal Status Code in order to take account of the interests of the child by raising the age at which the child can remain in the mother's custody and by regulating visiting rights so as to include both parents and relatives up to the second degree. The Bill introduces penalties for the failure by the father or mother to keep appointments for visits (amendment to arts. 142, 146, 147 and 148 of the Personal Status Code). Another Bill

has been introduced to amend the provisions of articles 124, 125 and 126 of the Labour Code No. 91 of 1959 and the amendments thereto, with a view to prohibiting the employment of young persons under the age of 15 years. The Minister of Social Affairs and Labour has the power to prevent young persons under the age of 16 years from being employed in certain industries specified under the terms of a decision issued by him and also to prohibit the employment of minors who have not yet reached the age of 18 full years in other industries. The hours and times in which children may engage in work have also been defined.

15. A Bill has also been submitted to amend the provisions of articles 38, 47, 48, 49, 50 and 56 of the Agricultural Relations Act No. 134 of 1958, and the amendments thereto, by providing that a seasonal agricultural worker must be at least 18 years old, unless he or she is employed as a shepherd or performs light work, in which case the child must be at least between 13 and 15 years of age. The amendment makes it illegal to employ a child under the age of 13 years in agricultural work other than on a family holding which does not employ labourers from outside the family. Minors who are not over 16 years of age cannot be employed in night work, nor can they be employed in heavy work. The Bill attributes criminal responsibility to the parents, employer, tutor and representatives of a child employed under conditions that contravene the provisions of the Bill.

16. In addition to the information provided in paragraph 21 of Syria's initial report (CRC/C/28/Add.2), we should like to add that the National Plan of Action to Implement the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s was implemented and that the follow-up thereto has been completed. The Higher Committee for Children is working to further develop the Plan.

A. Measures taken to coordinate national policies relating to children

17. Decree No. 1023 of 31 January 1999 was promulgated to merge the committees responsible for the welfare of children into a single committee known as the Higher Committee for Childhood. Its Chairman is the Deputy Prime Minister for Social Affairs and its Vice-Chairman is the Minister for Social Affairs and Labour. The Committee's members include the Assistant Ministers for Social Affairs and Labour, Education, Justice, Health, and Information, representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Culture, Social Affairs and Labour, the State Planning Organization, the Ministries of Finance and Industry, the Central Bureau of Statistics, and popular organizations (the Women's General Federation, the Teachers' Association, the General Confederation of Trade Unions, the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation, the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization and the Tradesmen's Federation), the Damascus Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Charitable Associations. The Committee assumes the following functions:

(a) It concerns itself with all child-related issues in Syria (social, health, educational, legal, cultural and media issues);

(b) It monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Syria ratified under the terms of Act No. 8 of 13 June 1993;

(c) It prepares the National Plan for the Welfare of Children in Syria, oversees its implementation and monitors its evaluation;

(d) It provides regular activity reports to the Office of the Prime Minister. The broad composition of the Committee, which operates under the auspices of the executive authority, ensures that there is effective coordination of activities between the various Ministries with competence for the areas covered in the Convention on the one hand and popular organizations, voluntary institutions and employers on the other, and also that the provisions of the Convention are implemented, that there is coordination of appropriate policies for children, and that progress is monitored on a regular basis through the activity reports which the Committee submits to the Office of the Prime Minister.

18. Decision No. 134 of 3 January 1998 promulgated by the Minister of Justice stipulates: "Full-time presidents of juvenile courts shall be appointed in the governorates to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, interpret its provisions, coordinate with the public authorities and the office of UNICEF in Damascus in this domain, and represent the Ministry of Justice in committees established for this same purpose."

19. Decision No. 2108 of 10 October 1999 was promulgated by the Minister of Justice for the purpose of establishing in every governorate (of which there are a total of 14) a judicial committee to support the family and the child. These committees meet with family members who are experiencing family difficulties or have filed for divorce or separation from a spouse, and with families whose children are having family problems, are at risk of delinquency, have been prosecuted for a criminal offence, claim to have been deprived of their rights, or lodge a complaint alleging a violation of their rights. It also falls to these committees to investigate the causes of a dispute and to endeavour to reconcile differences, rectify delinquent behaviour, and provide advice on ways of overcoming difficulties or on legal procedures. They submit their suggestions and recommendations to the Ministry of Justice for the necessary action and for the purposes of follow-up.

20. The Government pays close attention to the services sector as a means of improving the quality of both urban and rural life, of reducing the disparities between urban and rural services and of stemming migration towards the larger cities by supplying basic services and utilities, such as education in all its different stages, culture, preventive and curative health care, social welfare services, sewage and drinking-water systems, telephones and local roads.

B. Measures taken to make the Convention widely known to the public

21. The competent Ministries in the Syrian Arab Republic (namely the Ministries of Health, Education, Information, Culture, Social Affairs and Labour, Justice, Religious Endowments, and the Interior) and popular organizations (the Women's General Federation, the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation, the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization, the General Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Teachers' Association) have run numerous training courses, national symposia, seminars, workshops, and meetings in rural and urban areas throughout the governorates to publicize and disseminate the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and make its principles and provisions widely known among members of the legal profession, the police, clerics, health professionals, teachers

working in the formal and informal educational sectors, social workers, probation officers, and women and youth leaders. In addition, the annual cultural seasons that are run by the Centres for Arab Culture include lectures and discussions about subjects relating to the Convention. Wall posters about the contents of the Convention have been distributed to all cultural centres and adult literacy bureaux in the main towns, districts and cantons of the governorates.

22. The Ministry of Education has incorporated the articles of the Convention into the school curricula for all academic subjects, beginning at the third grade of primary school, and has devised for this purpose separate matrices corresponding to the articles of the Convention. In cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), workshops were held in 1997, 1998 and 1999 for the writers of school textbooks. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its various articles have been widely disseminated to all schools and reproduced on approximately 12,000 large wall posters that have been distributed to these schools in collaboration with UNICEF.

23. A rotatable booklet has also been designed as an educational tool for use by teachers and health assistants in schools. It contains information on various health topics (personal hygiene, first aid, vaccinations, accident prevention, and so on) as well as a special section on different children's rights. Approximately 6,500 schools are scheduled to receive copies in 2000.

24. All the print and audio-visual media have been enlisted to publicize the provisions of the Convention and use has been made of the cultural centres throughout the various governorates, districts and cantons of the country. Fifty thousand copies of the Convention have been printed in booklet form, and 100,000 pamphlets, posters and large wooden billboards have been produced and distributed to all official and popular organizations, in addition to yearly wall calendars focusing on the contents of the Convention.

25. The activities of the Women's General Federation devote considerable attention to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The provisions of the Convention constitute a fixed point of reference in all the Federation's meetings, programmes of work and training courses, of which there are more than 45,000 courses each year. A total of 7,800 seminars have been held at the level of women's leagues and unions, comparing the rights accorded to Syrian children with those set forth in the provisions of the Convention. The stress is placed on the articles of the Convention, taken as a whole and individually, in the large number of wall newspapers published each year by the women's leagues and unions under the auspices of the Women's General Federation, amounting to between 2,500 and 5,000 newspapers and 110 periodicals. Attention is also paid to the Convention by children themselves, through the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization and via its various activities, such as annual festivals, plays, children's drawing competitions, summer camps, and wall newspapers.

26. In order to gauge the extent of children's knowledge of their rights in general and the fundamental principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular, and of the sources of information available to them about the Convention, and also the types of government agency and popular and international organizations which they perceive to be concerned with the defence of their rights, a field study on these subjects was carried out in 1999 in collaboration with UNICEF. The study involved 1,740 children from 800 families in all different parts of the country, including both rural and urban areas. The results showed that 57 per cent of the

children had a general awareness of their rights. (Table 3 shows the most important of these rights and the percentage of children who had some degree of awareness of them.) The study also showed that 29 per cent of the children had heard of the Convention. (Table 4 shows the sources from which the children had learned about the Convention.) Fifty-two per cent of the children were aware of the basic principles of the Convention. (Table 5 indicates what these principles were and the percentage of children who had some awareness of them.)

Table 3**Children's awareness of rights contained in the Convention**

Most important rights mentioned	Percentage
Education	99
Health care	87
Recreation and play	60
Protection against all forms of exploitation	25
Decisions affecting them	23

Table 4**Sources of information about children's rights**

Source	Percentage
Television	93
School	51
Family	24
Friends	11
Newspapers	7
Radio	5

Table 5**Children's awareness of the principles of the Convention**

Most important principles mentioned by the children	Per cent
Non-discrimination in treatment of children	82
Protection of the best interests of the child	76
Non-separation from parents	69
Participation of the child in decisions affecting him/her	53

27. The Higher Committee for Children, which is responsible for drafting Syria's second report on the follow-up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, intends to present the report to the General National Conference and to disseminate the concluding observations relating thereto following the same procedure as was used for the previous report.

III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

28. The definition of the child contained in article 1 of the Convention is consistent with the provisions of the Syrian Constitution (art. 54) and prevailing law, including the Civil Code (art. 46) and the Personal Status Code (art. 162). A child is entitled to take legal advice in respect of the administration of property made over to him before he attains his majority and is also entitled to receive medical advice, there being no legal provisions denying the child either of these rights. A child is also entitled to receive emergency medical and first-aid treatment without the consent of his or her parents.

29. With regard to the end of compulsory education, article 2 of the Compulsory Education Act promulgated by Act No. 35 of 16 August 1981 stipulates that male and female children aged between 6 and 12 years must be enrolled by their guardians in primary schools, in which children will spend six years of their lives. This period may be extended to up to eight years, if the child fails his or her examinations. A child may fail only two years during the primary stage.

30. Approval has been granted to extend the period of compulsory education up to the end of the preparatory stage. This will be known as basic education and will entail raising the age for the completion of compulsory education to 16 full Gregorian years. The arrangement will be put into effect as soon as the requisite financial resources become available.

31. With regard to admission to employment or work, reference is made to paragraphs 39-44 of Syria's initial report. In spite of the efforts made to enforce the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act, a number of children of compulsory school age, particularly girl children, are still not being enrolled in, or drop out of, school, for social, economic or cultural reasons. This is why the Ministry of Education has called for a Bill providing for the infliction of higher penalties on any person who infringes the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act.

32. With regard to the link between the minimum age for employment and the age for the completion of compulsory education, and the effects thereof on the child's right to education, having due regard for the relevant international instruments in this connection, legislation had been enacted to prohibit the employment of young persons who are under 12 years of age (the Labour Code No. 91 of 1959, the Agricultural Relations Act No. 134 of 1985, Legislative Decree No. 13 of 3 April 1982, concerning the employment of children in the home, and the State Employment Statute No. 1 of 1985).

33. A field survey was carried out on drop-out rates among girls aged between 9 and 13 years from the north-eastern part of the country for the purpose of designing a special educational programme that would encourage this cohort to return to school. The results of the survey have yet to be published.

34. In the past, the practice of early marriage adversely affected primary school attendance among girls and was a contributory factor in their failure to continue their education up to the secondary stage. However, this phenomenon is on the wane, and, according to the estimates produced by the 2000 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the average marrying age for Syrian women has risen to 25.1 years. This is the result of the concerted efforts of the official and popular organizations, particularly the Women's General Federation.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)

35. The principle of non-discrimination between citizens is specified in article 25 of the Syrian Constitution in the following terms: “All citizens are equal before the law in regard to their rights and obligations.” This is in conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is confirmed by the prevailing national legislation. An exception is made in respect of the right of inheritance and marriageable age, which matters are regulated by the Personal Status Code on the basis of the authoritative texts of the Islamic Shariah and Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) in their capacity as the principal sources of law (article 3 of the Constitution). The Syrian legislature also protects children residing in the territory of the State, without distinction as to race, origin, religion or nationality and without any form of discrimination between them and Syrian children.

36. The Syrian Government has made efforts to disseminate education among all sectors of urban society and in the most and least densely populated areas, even including communities that move around in caravans. The Government also endeavours to deliver health services to Bedouin populations and has formed roving teams to conduct regular, scheduled visits to desert areas, providing preventive and curative services to citizens and their children.

37. There is no discrimination against girl children in the Syrian Arab Republic. Indeed, girls have access to all services, including educational, health, social, cultural and family services, on the basis of equality of sexes. Families have been made aware of the need for non-discrimination, through interactive seminars run by the Women’s General Federation. In rural areas in particular the stress is placed on the importance of non-discrimination between males and females and the rights of both sexes throughout all stages of life. The seminars place special emphasis on the right to education, particularly for girls, on the rights of girl children to preventive and therapeutic health and on the need to develop their skills and supply them with important health information. The principles of equality of sexes and equality of opportunity are underscored, together with the girl’s right to choose her marriage partner freely and responsibly, without any form of social or economic coercion.

38. The Central Bureau of Statistics attached to the Office of the Prime Minister is the authority responsible for the generation of data and statistical information. Syria excels in having a broad database which this Bureau manages through its highly experienced staff, regularly updating statistical information, conducting population censuses and carrying out specialized field surveys and studies with the relevant Ministries and popular organizations, and in cooperation and conjunction with international organizations.

39. In this connection, we should like to mention that Syria conducted a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 1995, covering a range of indicators showing to what extent the aims of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been put into effect. The Survey was repeated in 2000 in order to update the statistical data and monitor progress.

B. Best interests of the child (art. 3)

40. In addition to the information provided in paragraphs 52-55 of Syria's initial report, we should like to add that the Syrian State guarantees all children without distinction the right to life, survival and development. It protects the child from the stage at which it is formed as an embryo, by safeguarding its survival and punishing any person who attempts to abort it prior to its final separation from the mother, including if the mother deliberately endangers its life by seeking a termination of her pregnancy (article 58 of the Penal Code). Any person who performs or induces an abortion by administering medicines or similar substances is liable to punishment. The penalties are increased, if the culprit is a physician, surgeon, pharmacist or a person effectively employed by them, or if he or she aids, abets or participates in the commission of the crime. The penalty for this offence under article 528 of the Penal Code is a term of one to three years' imprisonment. If the abortion is deliberately induced by a person other than the mother and without her consent, a criminal penalty is inflicted. Under the terms of article 529 of the Penal Code: "Anyone who deliberately induces a woman to abort against her will is liable to not less than five years in prison at hard labour." The application of these provisions is subject to the deposition of a complaint or grievance or the filing of a report with the authorities.

41. The legislature has not restricted itself to protecting the embryo per se, but has gone further by extending the protection to include the embryo's right to inherit from a relative who dies before it is born. A live-born child is guaranteed the right to inherit under the terms of the Personal Status Code of 1953. Article 299 of the Code stipulates: "The larger share of a deceased person's estate shall be assigned for the foetus in order to take account of the fact that its gender is unknown." Article 301 of the Code further states: "If the share assigned to the foetus is smaller than that to which it is entitled after its birth, the remaining portion shall be assigned to it from the excess attributed to another heir."

42. In order to safeguard the right of the foetus to take its father's name in cases where the mother deliberately denies or is unaware of her pregnancy at the time of her divorce or upon the father's death, the Syrian legislature protects the interests of the child and its right to have its paternity established in accordance with the terms of the law. Article 130 of the Personal Status Code stipulates: "Where a divorced woman or widow fails to declare that her period of *'idda*³ has come to an end, the child's family name shall be established, if he or she is born within one year from the date of the divorce or death. It cannot be established thereafter, unless a claim is made by the former husband or heirs." According to article 131 of the Code: "The family name of a child of a divorced woman or widow who makes a declaration that her period of *'idda* has come to an end shall be established, if the child is born less than 180 days from the date of the declaration or less than one year from the date of the divorce or death."

43. The interests of a child born of a marriage that is not valid under religious law or that is the fruit of an unlawful relationship are safeguarded by recognizing the child's right to take its name from its parents, even though the marriage is not valid. These matters are regulated under the following provisions of the Personal Status Code:

"If, after the consummation of an invalid marriage, a child is born 180 or more days after the date of consummation, its family name shall be established as that of the husband" (art. 132, para. 1).

“If it is born after a desertion or separation” (art. 132, para. 2).

“If, between the minimum and maximum periods for the duration of a pregnancy, a child is born to a woman who has had carnal relations, the child’s family name shall be established as that of the man with whom the woman had relations” (art. 133, para. 1).

44. The Personal Status Code regulates the procedure for administering and supervising a minor’s property. It stipulates that the legal guardian or tutor has a responsibility to protect such property, that he may not make a donation or gift thereof, and that he has an obligation to preserve it. If the guardian or tutor mismanages the minor’s property, his guardianship or trusteeship shall be revoked and he shall be required to recompense his ward (articles 173, 180, 181 and 182, of the Personal Status Code).

45. A person cannot be appointed to act as a minor’s tutor, if he has been found guilty of the crimes of theft, a breach of confidence or forgery, or has been declared bankrupt (article 178 of the Personal Status Code). Where there is a conflict between the minor’s interests and the interests of his guardian or his guardian’s spouse, ascendants or offspring, a special tutor shall be appointed as a temporary measure (article 179 of the Personal Status Code). A child is granted the right to administer such property as he acquires with his own earnings upon attaining the age of 13 years. He is also allowed to manage some of his property upon reaching the age of 15 years. In order to protect the minor against exploitation during this period, a court may annul a contract, the terms of which are injurious to the minor or fail to preserve his or her rights. The situation pertaining prior to the conclusion of the contract will be restored. No contract will be recognized unless it benefits the child (article 169 of the Personal Status Code).

46. The law fully protects the child against separation from his or her parents, except where, under the terms of a judicial order, there is evidence that the child is being subjected to ill-treatment or neglect or is at risk of delinquency (article 481 of the Penal Code and article 460, paragraph (e), of the Code of Criminal Procedures). The penalty specified in article 484 of the Penal Code is inflicted on any person who neglects a child or is derelict in his duty towards him or her.

47. In addition, a mother who ill-treats her children by subjecting them to beating or torture, or whose personal conduct and behaviour is such that she neglects her children and is absent from the home, will lose the custody of her children. Other measures may be taken to withdraw guardianship from the father or a tutor who ill-treats a child or causes him or her harm that exceeds the limits that are legitimate for the purposes of administering discipline.

48. The principle of the best interests of the child is the priority consideration in the juvenile courts, insofar as the courts take the child’s best interests into account when ordering the taking of juvenile welfare or reform measures. These measures must be such as to guarantee the minor’s reform and reintegration into society. If the minor’s delinquency is attributable to negligence on the part of his or her parents or legal guardian, these persons shall have their guardianship revoked and shall be liable to penalties.

C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

49. In addition to the information contained in paragraphs 56-61 of our initial report, we should like to reaffirm that the State guarantees all children without distinction the right to life, survival and development in accordance with the provisions of the Syrian Constitution (art. 44) that are concerned with the welfare of children and the necessity of creating conditions conducive to the development of children's talents.

1. Infant mortality

50. Pursuant to articles 22 and 45 of the Personal Status Code, the death of a child must be registered according to the same procedures and within the same time frames as are prescribed for the registration of births (see paragraph 57 of the present report). The second Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey that was conducted at the beginning of 2000 showed that the infant mortality rate (for children under 1 year of age) stood at 24 deaths per 1,000 live births, as compared with a figure of 33 in 1990. In 2000 the under-5 mortality rate amounted to 29 per 1,000 live births, compared with a figure of 43 in 1990. This reflects the fact that there has been a tangible reduction in the percentage of deaths caused by diarrhoeal illnesses and vaccinateable diseases, while the number of accidents has risen (according to two studies carried out jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Central Bureau of Statistics in 1990 and 1995). Table 6 shows the principal variations that have occurred in the causes of death among children under 5 years of age.

Table 6

Causes of infant mortality

Causes of death	1990	1995
Foetal deformities and miscarriage	42.7%	46.4%
Diarrhoea	20.8%	9.1%
Respiratory infection	10.1%	8.5%
Accidents	5.8%	8.5%
Infections treatable by vaccination	4.2%	0.6%

51. The Syrian Arab Republic is devoted to the protection of children and to guaranteeing their survival at all ages. The legislature has introduced stiffer penalties for the deliberate murder of a child, prescribing the additional penalty of hard labour, if the victim was under 15 years of age (article 534 of the Penal Code). In cases where the perpetrator was a parent or grandparent of the child, the penalty is capital punishment. Very few cases of child suicide have been recorded.

52. The State endeavours to alert children, particularly adolescents, to the dangers of improper sexual contact, by disseminating full information through the different information media and symposia that it organizes in cooperation with popular organizations (the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation, the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard)

Organization and the Women's General Federation) and the Family Planning Association to mark World AIDS Day, World No Tobacco Day and the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

53. The principles of the law specify that every citizen has the right to express his or her views freely and openly by word of mouth, in writing or through any other medium, subject only to such restrictions as have been laid down in respect of this right. Since children are citizens, they therefore have the right to express their views in all forums in which their opinion is sought.

54. All children have the opportunity to express their views freely and at all levels in the classroom, at parent-teacher meetings and at all school meetings, including those arranged by popular organizations (the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization and the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation). Their views are also taken into account when programmes and regulations are being modified. Managers and experts who work with children, including teachers and educational counsellors, are trained in the methods of imparting essential information to children according to their educational level, and are also trained to listen to and respect their views and the views of others. A large number of training courses are run for this purpose by government agencies, popular organizations and voluntary organizations, depending on the personnel available in each organization. In addition, numerous steps are taken to sensitize the family and the public to the necessity of encouraging children to exercise their right to express their views. In the judicial domain, centrally and locally run training courses have been organized in every governorate for juvenile court judges, Shariah court judges, magistrates of the Department of Public Prosecutions and certain members of the staff of Ministries and popular voluntary organizations, in order to make children aware of the contents of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ways of dealing with children that will help them to express their views and speak freely in public.

Table 7

Ministry of Justice courses in various governorates

No. of courses	No. of magistrates per course	Total participants
14	25	350

55. The Women's General Federation organizes face-to-face discussions with families, mothers, and girls in their late puberty on the right of the child to express his or her views and engage in democratic dialogue as well as the necessity of letting the child talk about him/herself and his or her environment.

56. In legal cases involving minors, the judge must listen to the child's statements during legal and administrative proceedings and ask him to explain all the details and reasons which induced him to commit an offence and to engage in the wrongdoing for which he bears legal responsibility. If the child is a foreigner or suffers from a speech or auditory impediment, the

judge must have recourse to the services of an interpreter or expert in order to help the minor to deliver his statements. The fees of the interpreter or expert are paid for out of the public purse, if the guardian or tutor is unable or cannot afford to pay. In criminal proceedings involving a young person who commits a crime after attaining the age of 15 years, the court must hear the young person's statements in the presence of a lawyer duly appointed to defend the minor's interests. According to the provisions of article 274 of the Code of Criminal Procedures, and within the meaning of article 39 of the Juveniles Act, if the minor is poor or the guardian or tutor has failed to engage a lawyer, the court must adjourn its hearing until a defence lawyer has been appointed, in cooperation with the Bar Association, to act on the young person's behalf.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Name and nationality (art. 7)

57. The personality of the child begins at the moment when it is born alive. The procedure for the registration of births is regulated under the provisions of the Personal Status Code No. 376 of 1957, as amended. Article 22 of the Code stipulates that a birth must be registered in the capital of a governorate within 15 days from the date on which it takes place and within 30 days, if it takes place outside the capital. A guardian or tutor who is late in registering, or fails to register, a birth is liable to legal penalties. The penalties may be extended to include the management of the hospital or clinic in which the birth took place, if they fail to report the birth to the Office of the Civil Registrar in a timely manner. They may also be inflicted against a public official who does not register the birth at all or within 48 hours from the date on which the certificate is received.

58. The Personal Status Code also makes provision for cases in which a child is born outside the marital home or in the event of the absence of the father. Article 26 thereof stipulates that the father must present the birth certificate, authenticated by the local mayor, within the prescribed time limit. In the father's absence, this obligation devolves on the local mayor or the male relatives of the newborn child living in the house in which the birth took place. The physician or midwife is required to notify the Civil Registrar of the birth. If the birth took place in a home other than the marital home, the person in whose home the birth occurred has responsibility for presenting the birth certificate. The Civil Register must mention all the information pertaining to the identity of the newborn child, such as its gender, religion, surname, parents' name, date of birth and the date of registration. In addition, the Civil Registrar registers, gives a name to, and determines the identity of foundlings in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Status Code, to which reference was made in paragraph 70 of Syria's initial report.

59. The rules of parentage are regulated by the Syrian legislature under the Personal Status Code as follows:

(a) **Descent from a valid marriage where the child is born in wedlock**

A child shall be recognized as descending from the mother who gave birth to it and take the name of her husband in accordance with the terms of the following two articles:

“The minimum duration of the pregnancy was 180 days and the maximum was one (solar) year” (art. 128).

“The child of every wife in a valid marriage shall take its name from her husband subject to the following conditions:

“The minimum period for the duration of a pregnancy has elapsed since the marriage was contracted;

“There is no evidence to show that the spouses have had no physical contact for a period exceeding the duration of the pregnancy owing to the fact that one of them was in prison or living in a distant country;

“If the husband makes a declaration attesting that he is the father of the child, such declaration shall be valid, even if neither of the aforementioned conditions is met.”

(b) Descent from a valid marriage following separation or the death of the husband

In order to safeguard the right of the foetus to take its father’s name in cases where the mother deliberately denies or is unaware of her pregnancy at the time of her divorce or the death of the father, the Syrian legislature protects the interests of the child and its right to have its paternity established in accordance with the following two articles of the Personal Status Code:

“Where a divorced woman or widow fails to declare that her period of *‘idda* has come to an end, the child’s family name shall be established, if he or she is born within one year from the date of the divorce or death. It cannot be established thereafter, unless the former husband or heirs claim it” (art. 130).

“The family name of the child of a divorced woman or a widow who makes a declaration that her period of *‘idda* has come to an end shall be established, if the child is born less than 180 days from the date of the declaration or less than one year from the date of the divorce or death” (art. 131).

(c) Descent from an invalid marriage

Where a child is born of a marriage that is not valid under religious law or is the fruit of an unlawful relationship, its interests are safeguarded by recognizing its descent from its parents, even though the marriage is not valid. These matters are regulated under the following articles:

“If, after the consummation of an invalid marriage, a child is born 180 or more days after the date of consummation, its family name shall be established as that of the husband” (art. 132, para. 1).

“If it is born after a desertion or separation” (art. 132, para. 2).

“If, between the minimum and maximum periods for the duration of a pregnancy, a child is born to a woman who has had carnal relations, the child’s family name shall be established as that of the man with whom the woman had relations” (art. 133, para. 1).

“When the family name is established even from an invalid or improper marriage, all the consequences of kinship shall apply. The child will be prohibited from marrying relatives in the prohibited degrees of kinship and shall be entitled to receive support from its parents and an inheritance” (art. 133, para. 2).

60. The Syrian legislature has shown high regard for the interests of the child by providing that any person who declares himself to be the parent of a foundling is bound by that declaration, even if he or she is suffering from a terminal illness, and that such person is also required to pay child support (art. 134).

B. Preservation of identity (art. 8)

61. The Nationality Act No. 276 of 1969, as amended by Decree No. 17 of 1972, regulates the nationality of the newborn child. For further information on this subject, the reader is referred to paragraph 66 of Syria’s initial report.

C. Freedom of expression (art. 13)

62. Under the legal principles in force, everyone has the right to express, in various ways, his or her state of mind and intellectual or social thoughts (see paragraphs 72-75 of Syria’s initial report).

D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

63. See paragraph 11 of the present report.

E. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)

64. See paragraphs 86-90 of Syria’s initial report.

F. Protection of privacy (art. 16)

65. See paragraphs 91-95 of Syria’s initial report.

G. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)

66. See paragraphs 76-80 of Syria’s initial report.

H. The right not to be subjected to torture or to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))

67. We reaffirm the information contained in paragraphs 96-98 of Syria’s initial report, as well as that provided hereunder in paragraph 86 of the present report.

68. A child has the right to file a complaint on his own behalf with the magistrate in each governorate who has competence for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, under the terms of Decision No. 134 promulgated by the Minister of Justice on 3 January 1998, by which the presidents of judicial bodies throughout the governorates were entrusted with the task of monitoring the Convention, or directly with the Department of Public Prosecutions, if the child has been subjected to violence.

69. The Ministry of Education is very insistent that children should not be subjected to corporal punishment. Accordingly, it has issued numerous administrative decisions and orders reaffirming this principle. Any case involving a teacher who beats a child is referred to the courts for the infliction of the appropriate penalty.

VI. THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

A. Parental guidance (art. 5)

70. According to article 44, paragraph 1, of the Syrian Constitution: "The family is the nuclear unit of society and is protected by the State." Parents play the largest role in family welfare and the raising of children, while the State, through government departments and with the assistance of different popular organizations, strives to provide for the education and welfare of children and to advise parents about ways of dealing with their children, whether or not the children are suffering from a disability. The following two types of family can be found in Syria:

(a) The nuclear family, which is composed of the husband and wife (who are joined in marriage) and the children living in the same dwelling;

(b) The extended family, consisting of the father, mother and married children living in the same dwelling. This type of family is more common in the countryside than in the town.

B. Parental responsibilities (art. 18, paras. 1 and 2)

71. The heaviest share of responsibility for the proper education and upbringing of children is borne by their parents. Syrian law affirms the role and responsibilities which parents bear for looking after and educating their children and it prescribes the penalties to be inflicted upon parents who neglect or abandon their offspring (see paragraphs 105-110 of Syria's initial report).

72. Through the implementation of economic and social development policies, Syria has been able to take steps to deliver basic family services, support parents, and improve the quality of life of individual family members. It has, in particular, been able to provide:

(a) Free health services for citizens in health centres and hospitals run by the State and by popular organizations, associations and institutions operating in the social development field;

(b) Education for all that is free of charge at all different stages, including university, vocational and technical education;

- (c) Housing loans at nominal rates of interest for low-income and the poorest families, in order to help them gain access to the housing constructed by the public and private sectors;
- (d) Government subsidies on basic food items, the purpose of which is to protect the poorest families and guarantee them a reasonable standard of living;
- (e) Free agricultural advice and veterinary services for parents who are farmers, as supplied by the staff of agricultural training centres and agricultural advice bureaux throughout all parts of Syria;
- (f) The services which rural development centres and advice bureaux offer about part-time employment for mothers and others, and the ways of generating sources of income that can help to raise their families' standard of living;
- (g) The essential family services that are provided by popular organizations, particularly the Women's General Federation, in rural and urban areas (vocational training, health care, legal advice, education of children, etc. ...);
- (h) The different types of social services offered by the State and non-governmental organizations to poor families whose members include, inter alia, disabled persons, older persons, orphans, and children without a family provider, and the advice given to them in terms of directing them towards social welfare institutions offering services for the above-mentioned categories of persons, thereby ensuring that their members are able to benefit from the care that is on offer.

C. Separation from parents (art. 9)

73. In addition to the information supplied in paragraphs 111-116 of Syria's initial report, particularly paragraph 113 thereof which addresses the subject of visiting rights in cases where the child is separated from either of his or her parents, we should like to stress that the Syrian legislature has made provision for the protection and welfare of the family, the child and the mother, that it watches over children of all ages, and emphasizes their connection with both their parents in the event of a family break-up caused by a dispute between the marriage partners or of the end of married life, and it also preserves the family ties of orphaned children who have lost their parents. It does this by establishing the basic rules governing visiting rights (the principles of family access).

74. Article 148 of the Personal Status Code stipulates as follows: "Either parent has the right regularly to visit his or her children who have been placed in the custody of the other parent, at the latter's place of residence. In the event of opposition to this, the judge may order the enforcement of this right and specify the manner in which it can be exercised immediately without the need for an order from a court of merits. Any person who opposes the fact of or procedure used in the exercise of visiting rights must have recourse to the courts. The provisions of article 482 of the Penal Code shall be applied in respect of anyone who violates a court order."

75. Under the terms of the aforementioned article, the father, grandfather or grandmother of the child has the right to submit an administrative petition to the Shariah court judge requesting access to a child being cared for by his or her mother while the child is of the age at which the mother is granted custody. The mother has an equal right to visit her child living with his or her father after the age of [maternal] custody has come to an end or if custody has devolved on the father. The Shariah court judge examines the petition in court without holding a trial and delivers his decision in accordance with his legal capacity. This decision is enforced directly by the agency responsible for the enforcement of Shariah court judgements. The judge normally leaves it to the discretion of the competent director of the agency to determine the place and times of visits. If the child does not require special care, the visit may be set for 24 hours, during which period the child is handed over to the petitioner, who may take him back to his home. If the child is young and needs its mother, as when it is being breastfed, for example, the enforcement agency decides where the visits will be held. A visit in this case cannot last more than two hours.

76. All of this is intended to ensure that the father or the mother presents the child for visits. Anyone who opposes the enforcement of visiting rights in respect of a child under 15 years of age is liable to a term of imprisonment, since, according to the provisions of article 460 of the Code of Criminal Procedures, a parent has an obligation to comply with visiting rights. After the child has attained the age of 15 years the Shariah court judge will issue an order to prevent the guardian from refusing to present the child for visits. However, the guilty party does not face prison in these circumstances. A person subject to an administrative order may object to the place and times of visit established by the Shariah court judge by bringing a case before the Shariah court. If, however, the determination was made by the director of the enforcement agency, the person may challenge the decision before a court of appeal or bring a case before the Shariah court in order to have the court decide on the place and times of visits.

77. The Ministry of Justice noticed that visits in the enforcement agency were not being conducted in an atmosphere that was conducive to openness or to achieving the desired purpose of visits between children and their parents. Moreover, children were being exposed to psychological trauma, because conflict over visitation orders and the places designated for visits, as well as the abusiveness and ignorance of certain families, only exacerbated the child's suffering and pain. Accordingly, the Ministry took action to improve the atmosphere in which visits were held and to address the problems associated therewith. Several committees have been formed and seminars run towards this end, in cooperation with the competent Ministries, the Women's General Federation, and UNICEF. These efforts have culminated in the creation of two family meeting centres, in the governorates of Damascus and Aleppo. Work is continuing to open similar centres in the other governorates with a view to guaranteeing children the right to see their parents in a friendly and free atmosphere where the child feels at home. The centres also encourage the parents to cooperate in order to guarantee the child his rights and a proper upbringing and to compensate him or her for the deprivation caused by the break-up of the family. Furthermore, these amicable meetings between parents and children have served to resolve differences and reunite families. Fifteen families have been reunited at the Damascus centre and 10 in Aleppo since the two centres were opened.

78. Out of concern for the child's stability and protection and in order to guarantee that he or she is cared for by one of his or her parents, a Bill has been drafted to amend article 146 of the Personal Status Code as follows:

“(a) The period of custody ends when the boy reaches 15 years of age and when the girl marries. In a legal dispute, the judge decides when custody comes to an end.

“(b) When the (male or female) child who is subject to custody has attained the age of 15 years, he or she shall be entitled to choose the parent with whom they would like to live.”

D. Family reunification (art. 10)

79. See paragraphs 117-119 of Syria's initial report.

E. Illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad (art. 11)

80. See paragraphs 126-129 of Syria's initial report.

F. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, para. 4)

81. In addition to the information supplied in paragraphs 120 and 121 of Syria's initial report and paragraph 41 of the present report, we should like to add that the judge, when considering a petition for the payment of maintenance, may order that an urgent payment be made immediately, pending the outcome of the case. If the person required to pay maintenance is unable to do so, his property will be seized and he may be remanded in prison in implementation of the provisions of article 460 of the Code of Criminal Procedures.

G. Children deprived of their family environment (art. 20)

82. See paragraphs 122 and 123 of Syria's initial report. It should be pointed out that the number of institutions has increased to 45.

H. Adoption (art. 21)

83. See paragraphs 124 and 125 of Syria's initial report and also paragraphs 12 and 13 of the present report.

I. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)

84. In addition to the information provided in paragraphs 137-139 of Syria's initial report, we should like to mention that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, through its central administrative departments (the Family and Child Welfare Department, the Department for Disabled Persons, and the Social Defence Department) that were created to replace those mentioned in the initial report, perform, in addition to the activities of the Directorates of Social Affairs and Labour in the governorates, the functions of supervising all governmental and

non-governmental social welfare institutions (catering for orphans deprived of family care, different categories of disabled persons, including the deaf, dumb, blind, physically or mentally disabled, those suffering from cerebral palsy, juvenile delinquents, beggars and the homeless). They also verify that all kinds of welfare, educational, health, social and training services are provided to these categories and submit regular reports on conditions in institutions and the action taken to overcome the difficulties which they face.

85. Juvenile court judges and members of the Department of Public Prosecutions regularly visit juvenile reform institutions and supervision facilities for the purpose of monitoring the conditions of juvenile delinquents, receiving complaints and requests, and addressing them in the context of the young persons' case files.

J. Maltreatment and neglect (art. 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

86. See paragraphs 130-136 of Syria's initial report, as well as paragraphs 46, 68 and 69 of the present report.

VII. BASIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

A. Disabled children (art. 23)

87. In addition to what was mentioned in paragraphs 141-147 of Syria's initial report, we should like to add that over the past five years great stress has been laid on doing more to provide for the welfare, education, rehabilitation and training of disabled persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. This is in conformity with the provisions of the Syrian Constitution, the terms of international and Arab conventions, and the goals of Arab strategies for action and successive international conferences which have emphasized the need to provide for the welfare and supply all the needs of disabled persons in order to guarantee them a life of human dignity and furnish them with rehabilitation services that will enable them to become integrated into society, to lead a normal life, and to participate in economic and social development activities. Accordingly, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, in its capacity as the authority responsible for the welfare, education, training and rehabilitation of disabled persons, has taken the actions described in the following paragraphs.

88. In the legislative domain:

(a) In view of the multiplicity of rules regulating social welfare institutions that cater for disabled persons and the absence of legislative enactments pertaining to existing institutions, a Bill on the establishment of social welfare institutions for disabled persons has been drafted and submitted to the competent authorities for completion of the formalities required for its promulgation;

(b) A draft decree has been prepared stipulating the prerequisites which these institutions must have in terms of the administrative, technical and services standards required for their operation.

89. In the field of training:

(a) The Syrian Arab Republic endeavours to benefit from the expertise of specialists in developed countries who have specialized knowledge of disabled issues. It sends certain members of the staff of institutions for disabled persons on study or training courses or observational visits to Arab and non-Arab countries and it also recruits Arab and non-Arab experts to provide the staff of all these institutions with training in the latest techniques for dealing with disabled children.

(b) Over the last five years a total of 50 training courses have been run to enhance the efficiency of social workers, physiotherapists and vocational trainers in all social welfare institutions throughout the country catering for children with special needs. These courses have been organized in conjunction with Arab and international organizations. Furthermore, numerous training courses have been run in most Syrian governorates to train the families of children suffering from cerebral palsy in the most up-to-date methods of dealing with their children.

90. In the field of development of the work done by institutions for disabled persons:

In addition to the work that has been undertaken to improve the efficiency of these institutions by providing their personnel with training and skills development, the following activities have been pursued:

(a) Cooperation has been established with the Government of Japan for the implementation of a project devoted to the development of social welfare institutions for different categories of disabled persons. The first phase of the project, which was implemented in the city of Damascus, consisted in supplying existing institutions with technical and professional equipment and developing the range of occupations catered for by vocational training centres with a view to enabling disabled persons to undertake training for an occupation that is compatible with their disability, equips them for employment and guarantees them a life of dignity. Modern physiotherapy equipment has also been provided to help with the rehabilitation of disabled persons;

(b) Institutes for the welfare of mentally disabled children have been established in the governorates of Deir ez-Zur and Dara'a, while a vocational training institute for children with cerebral palsy has been set up in Damascus;

(c) A section for ongoing training of the families of children suffering from cerebral palsy has been established in Damascus, while a training centre for families of children with mental disabilities has been installed in the Mazzah district of Damascus;

(d) Educational curricula have been designed for institutes providing for the welfare of mentally disabled children;

(e) In 1997, the Rehabilitation in the Local Community project was launched to prepare disabled persons for employment. A special section of the project is devoted to the welfare of children with disabilities and to training the families of disabled children in all categories in the latest techniques for dealing with their children;

(f) The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour also works to promote the establishment of non-governmental organizations in the field of disability and the creation of new branches of existing associations, particularly those concerned with the welfare of children suffering from physical and mental disabilities or cerebral palsy. The Syrian Arab Republic, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Arab Federation of Organizations for the Deaf, is working on the design of a unified signing dictionary for the Arab world and is currently preparing a workshop for that purpose.

91. Notwithstanding the services provided and the training courses that have been held to enhance the efficiency of the staff of welfare institutions, more needs to be done. In particular, a study should be conducted to analyse the effective situation of society in all Syrian governorates, with a view to defining the real needs of these institutions by means of specialized and comprehensive field studies and surveys devoted to identifying the numbers of children in need of care. A thorough evaluation of all these different kinds of institutions should be carried out in order to verify, improve, modernize and expand the services offered to categories of children and also to define the qualitative training needs of their staff. For this, cooperation must be instituted with governmental and non-governmental organizations. More intensive work is needed in the area of the early detection of disabilities and in the design of appropriate care for the early stages of disability. Efforts need to be made to draw on the experiences of developed countries in integrating children with disabilities into schools and in developing education in institutes for the deaf so as to cover the post-primary stages of education.

B. Health and health-care services (art. 24)

92. Article 46 of the Constitution stipulates:

“The State provides for every citizen and his family in the event of an emergency, illness, disability, loss of a parent and old age.

“The State protects the health of citizens and provides them with the means for prevention, treatment and medication.”

93. Article 47 thereof adds: “The State provides cultural, social and health services and endeavours, in particular, to supply them to villages in order to raise standards therein.”

94. The World Health Organization (WHO) has adopted the following definition of health: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, psychological and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The main goal of the Ministry of Health is to supply the components of health set forth in this definition, within the framework of the provisions of the Syrian Arab Constitution. In order to achieve this, the Ministry of Health adopts the following focuses:

(a) Primary health care remains a fundamental focus of the Ministry's work, because of the comprehensive nature, long-term health effects, and economic benefits of primary health care;

(b) A second focus is the promotion and development of secondary health (general and local hospitals or general clinics) and specialized tertiary health (specialized hospitals), depending on need;

(c) This must go hand in hand with a focus on the equitable distribution of health services so as to guarantee citizens the right of access to these services.

95. There are numerous entities that offer health-care services to citizens, including women and children, in the Syrian Arab Republic. These entities are comprised of governmental bodies (the Ministries of Health, Education, Higher Education, Military Medical Services, Medical Services for the Internal Security Forces, and Social Affairs and Labour), medical facilities catering for the health of workers and their families, and clinics run by the Women's General Federation. Health services are provided by non-governmental organizations, while there is also an active private medical sector. All these entities work in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Health in its capacity as the authority responsible for citizens' health. Tireless efforts are made to improve the quantity and quality of health services with a view to assuring all citizens an appropriate standard of care in the places where they live, with the cooperation and participation of the local community.

96. Primary health-care centres deliver services to all children and persons in other age groups, without regard for their sex, racial, religious or ethnic origin or nationality and without asking for any official identification. Both diagnostic services and treatment are provided free of charge. Ongoing efforts are made to expand the health centre network, particularly in the light of the completion of a health map for Syria which shows the geographical distribution of various health institutions and is used to locate new institutions in areas that are not being served. By the beginning of 2000, a total of 1,105 health centres were delivering health services to citizens, of which 288, or 26 per cent, were situated in urban areas and the remaining 817, or 74 per cent, in rural areas, thereby demonstrating the attention that has been focused on rural areas. Endeavours have also been made to expand the paediatric departments of health centres in order to provide for regular screening of children and the detection of sensory, motor and mental disabilities, and thus to find ways of managing and mitigating their effects. A total of 934 health centres perform these services.

97. The work of constructing hospitals in provincial capitals has also expanded with a view to bringing health services closer to the citizen. The number of Ministry of Health hospitals has risen to 45 and this is in addition to the other hospitals run by the Ministries of Higher Education, Military Medical Services and the Internal Security Forces, as well as workers' hospitals and private hospitals.

98. The Government exerts every effort to guarantee children the health care they need and to provide the requisite budgetary funds therefor. After it adopted the goal of Health for All, the Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care, and the primary health-care approach, the Ministry of Health began to increase the allocations for primary health-care services and health

centres. Since 1991, after international organizations, particularly UNICEF, had provided it with vaccines as a form of aid, the Ministry of Health began to purchase from its own budget the full range of vaccines required for the immunization of Syrian children against serious children's diseases. As soon as an effective vaccine for Hepatitis B had been found, the vaccine was acquired and incorporated into the [immunization] programme, in spite of its high cost compared with other vaccines (a citizen's health is priceless). This vaccine is also paid for out of the Ministry's budget. In 1999, the Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine (for measles, German measles and mumps) was added, together with the cerebrospinal meningitis vaccine. Preparations are being made to include the Haemophilus influenzae B (HIB) vaccine among the vaccines for children. In addition to all this, all the supplies required for the delivery of a comprehensive range of services to children are guaranteed, including the resources for roving vaccination teams and vaccination campaigns, as well as testing and diagnostic equipment.

1. The children's screening programme (Healthy child clinics)

99. As soon as they are registered with paediatric services, newborn babies undergo an examination to assess their state of health and detect the presence of any abnormalities or disabilities. Seventeen per cent of children under one year of age are covered by the healthy child services provided at Ministry of Health centres. In addition, screening is also performed by private sector physicians. Some 3,223 cases of abnormalities or disabilities were detected in 1999, representing 0.85 per cent of the total. A plan is being formulated to strengthen this programme by creating a standard medical card for all children. This card, which is scheduled to be introduced in the near future, will cover the child from birth, and will record all the basic information pertaining to his or her state of health. The card will be updated with every visit to any health institution, regardless of whether the institution operates in the curative, preventive or clinical spheres, and will be valid until the bearer reaches the age of 18 years.

2. The national immunization programme

100. Vaccinations are administered, under the auspices of the national immunization programme, at a wide range of health centres and by roving vaccination teams which make regular visits to villages located far from health centres in order to attend to and continuously monitor newborn babies. Private doctors also give vaccinations.

101. The immunization programme maintains the high rate of coverage of different vaccines among all children, particularly children under one year of age. Tables 8 and 10 clearly show the coverage rates of these vaccines in 1999, and for each governorate. The coverage rate has been high over the past five years (see table 9). The school vaccination programme being implemented through cooperation between the Ministries of Health and Education and which provides for the secondary vaccination of children against tetanus, diphtheria, measles and cerebrospinal meningitis, is regarded as supporting the primary vaccination programme.

Table 8
Vaccination coverage rate, 1999

Type of vaccine	Percentage
Tuberculosis	100
Infant paralysis and triple vaccine, third visit	97
Measles, first visit	97
BCG (measles, German measles and mumps)	94
Hepatitis, third visit	91
Maternal tetanus, second and subsequent doses	90

Table 9
Coverage rate of different vaccines for children under 1 year of age (%)

Vaccines		By year				
		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Tuberculosis (BCG)		100	100	100	100	100
Infant paralysis (Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV))		87	95	89	93	93
Triple vaccine and infant paralysis (OPV and Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT)) vaccine	1	100	100	100	100	100
	2	97	100	100	100	99
	3	92	96	95	97	97
Measles	1	90	95	93	97	97
	2	68	83	94	94	94
Hepatitis B vaccine	1	100	100	100	100	100
	2	90	97	97	99	98
	3	74	82	84	91	91

Table 10
Vaccination coverage rate by governorate, 1999

Governorate	Children under one year of age			
	Tuberculosis	Triple vaccine and infant paralysis	Primary measles vaccination	Secondary measles vaccination
Damascus	100	100	100	100
Damascus hinterland	100	97	98	97
Aleppo	100	93	90	86
Lattakia	97	93	100	100
Tartus	100	96	98	96
Idleb	97	100	96	95
Homs	99	95	96	85
Hama	100	95	92	88

Table 10 (continued)

Governorate	Children under one year of age			
	Tuberculosis	Triple vaccine and infant paralysis	Primary measles vaccination	Secondary measles vaccination
Raqqa	99	100	97	100
Deir ez-Zor	99	100	97	100
Hasakah	100	93	94	85
Dara'a	99	96	100	100
Suwayda	97	96	100	100
Qunaitrah	99	95	95	84
Total	100	97	97	94

Table 11**Cases of contagious diseases covered by immunization programmes**

Diseases	Years				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Infant paralysis (Polio)	4	0	0	0	0
Neonatal tetanus	105	61	45	32	23
Measles	1 383	2 060	6 850	5 400	712
Diphtheria	64	13	11	5	1
Whooping cough	993	943	925	313	183
Tuberculosis	124	163	114	115	154

102. Syria has had great success in eradicating infant paralysis, with no cases of the disease having been reported since March 1995. An excellent and effective surveillance system has been in operation since 1993 to detect potential cases within a period of not more than 24 hours. National vaccination campaigns, consisting in two rounds, are carried out every year and no fewer than 3 million children are vaccinated on each occasion. In addition, house-to-house cleansing operations are conducted in high-risk areas (pockets). Since 1996 the coverage rate of the third dose of polio vaccine has not fallen below 95 per cent (see table 9).

103. With regard to the eradication of measles, Syria gained control of the disease in 1995. It subsequently moved on to the eradication phase, using the following strategies:

(a) Efforts are made to maintain the high coverage rate achieved for the first dose of the measles vaccine, amounting to 97 per cent in 1998 and 1999, and for the second dose, amounting to 94 per cent in 1998 and 1999;

(b) A national campaign is run to cover all children between the ages of 10 months and 15 years, regardless of any previous vaccinations they may have had. During the month of October 1998, more than 6.6 million children, or 99.3 per cent of all children in this age group, were vaccinated, these children representing a proportion of 42 per cent of the total population;

(c) A surveillance system has been set up and implemented for the weekly reporting of measles cases through 1,200 health centres, both publicly and privately owned, 124 public and private hospitals and 700 clinics;

(d) Two laboratories, one in Damascus and the other in Aleppo, have been equipped to test for and isolate the measles virus;

(e) Although an effective surveillance system is in place and sampling has been undertaken, only three clinically proven cases of measles were registered during the first six months of 2000 (see table 11).

104. Syria achieved the goal of eradicating neonatal tetanus in 1995. Only 23 cases were reported in 1999, and this in the presence of an effective surveillance system and after national and local vaccination campaigns had been held targeting women of childbearing age. Efforts were focused on and in high-risk areas, where the vaccination coverage rate for women rose. The coverage rate for the third dose of the measles vaccine among women of childbearing age has climbed to over 90 per cent, compared with a figure of 95 per cent for pregnant women. The protection rate among newborn children amounts to 86 per cent. Table 12 shows the percentage of children born in 1998 and 1999 who were protected against neonatal tetanus by the fact that their mothers were covered by the protection period.

Table 12
Percentage of children protected against neonatal tetanus,
by governorate, 1998 and 1999

Governorate	Years	
	1998	1999
Hama	91	93
Damascus hinterland	90	89
Tartus	90	96
Lattakia	89	90
Suwayda	85	91
Idleb	82	87
Dara'a	81	90
Homs	81	85
Aleppo	81	84
Damascus	78	88
Raqqa	77	81
Qunaitrah	74	76
Hasakah	74	75
Deir ez-Zor	70	82
National percentage	72	86

3. The anti-diarrhoea programme

105. Under this programme, the production, use and availability of rehydration packs has expanded and rehydration units and corners have been set up in hospitals and health centres to offer appropriate treatment. Training has been expanded through workshops, courses and seminars, as well as meetings with public and private sector physicians. Awareness and education campaigns have been run via the different audio-visual and print media to draw attention to the seriousness of diarrhoea and to the importance of using liquids and rehydration solution and of continuing to breastfeed and feed the child even when it is suffering from diarrhoea. See table 6 above on the causes of infant deaths.

4. The programme for the suppression of respiratory diseases

106. Training courses have been held for doctors in eight governorates, focusing on the diagnosis and management of respiratory infections. In addition, information has been provided to the public through the media about ways to prevent these infections and recognize the danger signs.

5. Cerebrospinal meningitis

107. Because of the increasing incidence of cases of cerebrospinal meningitis, the cerebrospinal meningitis vaccine is administered to children over the age of two years and to school students in the first grade of primary school. Health workers have been taught how to examine a patient suffering from a contagious disease and to take the requisite precautions.

6. The Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI)

108. In 1999 the Ministry of Health adopted the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness strategy and sent five doctors abroad to undergo the requisite training. In January 2000 a seminar and a workshop were held on the subject and a higher committee and a technical committee were formed to institute the measures needed to make the strategy workable in practice. Work is under way to implement the programme in a selected number of areas, to modify the programme manuals and to design a publicity scheme for it.

7. The Desert Programme

109. In 2000 the Ministry of Health launched a special programme for the Bedouin population, providing for the formation of roving teams to carry out regular, scheduled visits to desert areas in order to provide citizens and their children with preventive and curative health services.

8. The Healthy Villages Programme

110. This programme takes as its point of departure the notion that the human person is the main participant in and beneficiary of development. It was first implemented in 1995 in three selected villages and later expanded to cover, by 2000, a total of 113 villages throughout all the

governorates. The Ministry of Health runs the programme in cooperation with the relevant Ministries of State (Education, Housing, the Environment, Agriculture, Culture, Social Affairs and Labour) and popular organizations, particularly the Women's General Federation. It also receives support from international organizations (UNICEF, WHO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)). As a result of the successes which this programme has scored, the Syrian Government has drawn up a national plan for its gradual implementation in all Syrian villages. In 2000, in order to continue to support the programme, the Ministry of Health allocated a total of 15 million Syrian pounds (LS) to it from its own budget. Tables 13 to 19 show the changes that took place in the work carried out in selected villages before and after the programme.

Table 13**Services coverage rate before and after healthy villages programme (%)**

Services	Before programme	After programme
Children's vaccinations	79.4	96.2
Tetanus vaccinations for pregnant women	56.7	81.3
Maternal care	49.3	78.4
Family planning	39.6	61.9

Table 14**Environmental indicators before and after healthy villages programme (%)**

Environmental indicator	Before programme	After programme
Drinking water	63	45
Sewage	85	70

Table 15**Type of course and number of trainees**

Course	No. of trainees
Health (men and women)	1 810
Surveys (men and women)	920
Agriculture (women)	218
Literacy (women)	373
Vocational - sewing and knitting (women)	743

Table 16**Implementation of programmed activities in healthy villages**

Programmed activity	Development council	Development committee	Specialized committees	Surveys	Village information centre
%	96.8	98.9	81.2	91.6	81.2

Table 17**Main environmental indicators (%)**

Indicator	Drinking water	Sewage
Before programme	63	45
After programme	85	70

Table 18**Activities carried out at village information centre**

Programmed activity	District representatives	Vital network	Family file	Survey results
%	89.9	72.9	67.7	71.8

Table 19**Coverage rate of main primary health-care programmes in selected healthy villages, showing impact of programme activities on evolution of indicators (%)**

Children's vaccinations		Maternal tetanus		Maternity care		Family planning	
Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
79.4	96.2	56.7	81.3	49.3	78.4	39.6	61.9

9. Nutrition

111. The nutrition plan aims at guaranteeing children access to a reasonably priced, balanced diet, preventing child malnutrition and ensuring that pregnant women and nursing mothers are properly nourished. For its implementation, literature has been distributed containing nutritional information and general publicity about balanced diet and alternative foods, and seminars and training courses have been run to educate the public about nutrition and diet. Only 0.04 per cent of children suffer from severe malnutrition, the most common forms being acute and moderate malnutrition. Mothers are taught about the need to wean their children gradually and to begin them on supplementary foods at the age of 6 months. Some 6.6 per cent of babies born in government hospitals are born with low birth weight.

112. With regard to nutritional elements:

(a) Iodine: in 2000 the rate of consumption of iodized salt for domestic purposes amounted to 80 per cent;

(b) Anaemia or iron deficiency in the blood: according to a 1997 study, the incidence of iron deficiency anaemia among children under 5 years of age amounted to 27.3 per cent, as compared with a figure of 40.6 per cent among women of childbearing age. Cooperation has been instituted with international organizations to add iron to meal in certain areas where the incidence of anaemia is particularly high. Depending on the outcome, the experiment will be extended to all the governorates;

(c) Vitamin A: a study carried out in 1998 showed that the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency in Syria amounted to 8.4 per cent. In 1998, vitamin A tablets gradually began to be dispensed to children in conjunction with the measles vaccine, the practice being extended to children in all governorates in 2000.

113. With regard to food safety, the licensing of the production of children's supplementary food is governed by the same procedures as apply to the manufacture of medicines. In cooperation with Ministries and the competent authorities, the quality and safety of food are monitored, regular inspections are carried out by food safety inspectors, and hygiene regulations are in force in places where food is prepared.

114. With regard to the efforts made to encourage maternal breastfeeding, reference is made to paragraph 163, subparagraph (f), of Syria's initial report.

115. A total of 32 Friends of the Child Clinics had been established by 2000. Of these, 17 clinics had been awarded a Friends of the Child certificate. The remaining clinics are now being evaluated after their personnel have received training. During the first half of 2000 the staff of 15 clinics were given additional training. The clinics will be assessed during the month of August 2000.

10. The reproductive health programme

116. A study carried out at the beginning of 2000 showed that the maternal mortality rate had dropped from 107 per 100,000 live births in 1993 to 71. This reduction can be attributed to the expansion of reproductive health services, including prenatal and perinatal care, the screening of high-risk pregnancies, birth spacing, and the emphasis placed on nutrition for the expectant mother. This has all contributed to a decline in maternal mortality rates and in the proportion of babies being born with low birth weight.

117. The reproductive health programme caters for adolescents and women of childbearing age, and provides pre-, peri- and post-natal care, family planning, contraception and fertility treatment. These kinds of services are provided by health centres and hospitals and also by the private sector. According to the 2000 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the total fertility rate has dropped to 3.66 children per woman from 4.2 in 1993 (the Arab Mother and Child Health Survey). A total of 80.1 per cent of pregnant women have their pregnancy monitored by a qualified health worker, 48.4 per cent of babies are delivered at home and 59.4 per cent of pregnant women have their pregnancy followed by a private clinic.

10.1 Birth attendance

118. The State has adopted numerous measures to ensure that births are attended by qualified personnel. Of these, we should like to mention the following:

- (a) Admission to midwifery schools has expanded;
- (b) A higher certificate in midwifery has been instituted;

- (c) Labour wards are being set up in all hospitals;
- (d) A medical emergency network has been established and supplied with essential equipment;
- (e) Natural birthing centres have been set up at health centres located in rural and remote areas;
- (f) Training programmes for community midwives are being continued.

According to the second Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, a total of 86.5 per cent of births are attended by trained personnel.

10.2 Prenatal care

119. Screening and continuous monitoring of pregnant women is assured from the moment when the pregnancy is confirmed, in order to ensure that high-risk pregnancies are identified and the correct protocols applied. Pregnancies that are at high risk owing to medical reasons are managed using curative, preventive, nutritional and pharmaceutical therapies. Reproductive health is catered for through the expansion of family planning services. The prevalence of pregnancies among very young and older women has begun to decline thanks to better education, the fall in female literacy rates, and the fact that women are more aware of the dangers of early marriage and early and late pregnancies. According to the second Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 19.9 per cent of births are not attended by a trained health professional.

10.3 Family planning

120. All families are able to exercise their right to obtain family planning information and services, which are offered through the channels described below.

- (a) The institutions and directorates of the Ministry of Health, which are found in health centres, medical posts, labour wards and hospital clinics, provide basic information about family planning and advice about appropriate methods of contraception. Whichever method a woman chooses is provided to her free of charge under the supervision of a trained specialist. All well-known methods are available. The results of the 2000 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey show that the percentage of married women using contraception has risen from 39.6 in 1993 to 49.2;
- (b) The private sector (doctors and midwives) supplies information and family planning devices;
- (c) The Family Planning Association, which has branches and clinics in every governorate, offers family planning information, education and services;
- (d) Popular organizations, particularly the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation and the Women's General Federation, also offer assistance;

(e) The various media supply the necessary information about family planning;

(f) In addition, information about family planning services is incorporated into academic curricula in conjunction with the concepts underpinning demographic theory.

11. Health awareness information

121. The print and audio-visual media play an effective role in making local communities and families aware of the importance of primary health care and the places where they can obtain health services. In addition, this information is provided at seminars, meetings, courses and workshops jointly run by the Ministry of Health, other relevant Ministries and popular and international organizations.

12. The Anti-HIV (AIDS) programme

122. AIDS does not constitute a problem for Syria at the present time, nor will it do so in the foreseeable future, since Syrian society is one that clings to its values and its moral and religious precepts. Between 1987 and 10 July 2000, a total of 71 cases were reported. A total of 132 persons have tested positive for HIV, without manifesting any symptoms. Many are foreign workers and students, who have now returned to their own countries.

123. Blood tests are carried out in confidence and without charge at government-approved laboratories, thereby ensuring that all cases can be controlled. Additionally, blood and blood products are tested before being put into circulation to make sure that they are free from infection. The majority of the Syrians who carry the virus are adults, children under 15 years of age accounting for 8 per cent of the total number of cases (although this age group represents 41 per cent of the population).

124. An educational programme has been set up to raise the social awareness of sufferers who are subject to regular monitoring. The programme is designed to explain the disease to them, describe the ways in which it can be transmitted and provide patients and their families with psychological and social counselling. Regular lectures and seminars on the methods of transmission and prevention of the disease are held through courses for trainers who are leaders in society and in popular organizations (the Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation, the Women's General Federation, the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization, the Teachers' Association and people working in related occupations). Table 20 shows the types of activities that have been carried out over the past five years.

Table 20

**Ministry of Health activities connected with the Anti-AIDS
Programme, 1995-1999**

Lectures	Informational seminars	Training courses
1 049	110	89

125. Table 21 provides a clear picture of how the budgets of the Ministry of Health and its directorates evolved between 1996 and 1998.

Table 21
Ministry of Health and departmental budgets, 1996-1998

Year	Ministry of Health budget (central administration)			Health department budgets (local administration)			Grand total
	Current	Investment	Total	Current	Investment	Total	
1996	1 689 879	1 536 000	3 225 879	3 070 213	9 500 630	4 020 843	7 246 722
1997	1 782 899	870 000	2 652 899	3 240 046	1 127 666	4 367 712	7 020 611
1998	1 485 414	950 000	2 435 414	4 035 366	1 192 970	5 228 336	7 663 750

**C. Social security and childcare services and facilities
(art. 26 and art. 18, para. 3)**

126. See paragraphs 60 and 164 of the initial report.

D. Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)

127. See paragraphs 165-168 of the initial report and paragraphs 59 and 134 of the present report. Table 22 shows the increase in the per capita share of GDP.

Table 22
Per capita share of GDP

Year	Per capita share (in LS)
1995	40 343
1996	47 257
1997	49 375
1998	51 018

Table 23
Workforce dependency ratio (15-64 age group)

Average number of dependents per worker		Total dependency ratio	
1995	1999	1995	1999
3.4	3.4	91 per 100 persons	77 per 100 persons

E. Drinking-water and sanitation coverage

128. The child's right to life includes ensuring to him in the environment in which he lives an adequate supply of clean, safe, uncontaminated and unpolluted drinking water and water that is safe to use for the purposes of cleaning, washing, domestic chores, showering and bathing. The demand for drinking water is growing at a fast rate in accordance with various development needs. However, the shortage of groundwater, resulting, in particular, from several years of drought, has meant that water reserves are dwindling and that the State finds it difficult to supply the different sectors of society with water, notwithstanding the numerous water projects that have been implemented. The State is sometimes unable to supply water 24 hours a day from its own networks. In 1999, the drinking-water network catered for 84.2 per cent of the population, while 71.8 per cent of the population was catered for by the sanitation network.

VIII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

A. Education, including vocational education and guidance (art. 28)

1. Formal education

129. Education is free of charge at all stages and compulsory at the primary stage. The Ministry of Education supplies free school textbooks to all children in compulsory education. The textbooks used for the subsequent stages are supplied at below cost and assistance is provided to certain poor children. Education at all stages is transmitted via the Arabic language, the official language of the State, and also in local languages. Consequently, the cost of education to the family is very low. Education has been expanded to reach out even to the smallest communities and school curricula have been developed to incorporate new concepts, update teaching techniques and methods, and prepare and train teachers.

130. The Ministry of Education is working on the development of the subject matter addressed in education with a view to modernizing education and enlisting it in the process of economic and social construction by training the intellect of the human person, developing his practical and technical skills, and enriching his life experiences in such a manner as to ensure that he is balanced in his attitudes, capable of understanding the events and achievements of the contemporary era and of acting as an effective leader in the exploitation of his environment.

131. The Second Conference for the Development of Education was held in 1998 as part of an ongoing evaluation of the state of education, the purpose of which is to develop a strategic vision in preparation for the advent of the twenty-first century. The Ministry of Education has drawn up a plan of action for the implementation of the Conference's recommendations over the coming decade, to include the following elements:

(a) The introduction of informatics into the pre-university stages of education is being pursued as part of a national strategy for the use of informatics in education. For this more staff training, additional training facilities and modern equipment must be supplied;

(b) Educational staff are receiving training at faculties of education. Three new faculties of education have been established and specialized curricula have been designed to offer graduates a choice between subject-specific and comprehensive teacher training;

(c) More in-service training for educational personnel is to be provided by means of informational and long-term training courses, some lasting as long as a year;

(d) Greater attention will be paid to educational technologies. Five factories have been established for the production of educational technology and equipment for the different stages (primary, preparatory and secondary) of education;

(e) Curricula and textbooks will be continuously updated to keep pace with scientific innovations;

(f) Innovative concepts will be continuously incorporated into education concerned with environmental, demographic, health and vocational subjects and with computing and contemporary affairs;

(g) Efforts will be made to keep pace with new educational innovations through, inter alia, the application of the comprehensive education approach, the practical school health strategy, demographic education projects, and animal husbandry projects.

132. In the sphere of new educational concepts, the Ministry of Education has initiated several new projects, including the comprehensive education project launched in 1996 in cooperation with UNICEF. This project aims at promoting the individual's self-awareness and understanding of the factors that affect him and may be affected by him in the country and world in which he lives. It focuses on effective ways and means of maximizing the benefits of education and enhancing the student's relationship with his school and fellow pupils so as to encourage him to develop self-reliance, substitute competition with cooperation, and learn the skills needed to better understand other people. The project was first implemented in the fifth grade of 10 selected schools in 3 governorates. Pilot courses were prepared on subjects including the Arabic language, mathematics, science and social education. The second phase was implemented in the fifth and sixth grades of 200 primary schools throughout all the governorates. Based on the results, the Ministry of Education has adopted a plan to implement the project in all schools by the end of 2010.

133. The school health approach was designed to enhance students' personal and practical aptitudes and skills in order to improve the quality of their lives, and to better protect public health by introducing practical health concepts in the school environment and local community, encouraging correct health behaviours and transmitting health messages via students to their families and society at large. This project promotes health awareness among students and individuals and helps them deal with the health, environmental, and demographic problems associated with life in their local environment.

134. A 10-year comprehensive plan was drawn up and launched during the 1998/99 academic year for students in the third to sixth grades of primary education. The subjects covered vary depending on the grade and the subject matter covered by the curriculum. The plan has now been implemented in approximately 1,000 schools, including healthy village schools. It will be introduced in a further 1,185 schools during the 2000/2001 academic year. The project is being run in cooperation with UNICEF and WHO. In 2000, the Ministry of Education allocated a sum of LS 40 million to it out of its own budget.

135. With regard to the mechanisms created to guarantee all children, including girls and boys with special needs and children living in particularly difficult circumstances, access to education, special schools have been set up for children with different categories of special needs. The schools are run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and follow the official school curricula, which are adapted to take account of the nature of each child's disability.

136. Among the beneficiaries of its services, the Ministry of Education allows children with minor disabilities to attend regular schools in accordance with its guidelines issued in 1995. The Ministry has also set up a special course on techniques for working with children who have special needs and has designed a training manual for primary school teachers on the same subject. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has, in its turn, prepared special curricula for the education of mentally retarded children. These curricula will be introduced in social welfare institutions that care for mentally disabled children at the beginning of the 2000/2001 academic year.

137. Graduates from universities and specialized intermediate colleges assure that there are sufficient numbers of teachers for the different stages of education. They are also required to attend various training courses on the subject of education. In addition, the plan for the future is to train teachers at university faculties of education. Since 1995, the Ministry of Education has been sending working teachers to faculties of education in order to gain a teaching diploma that will help to improve their knowledge and teaching performance. When appointing teachers, preference is given to applicants with a teaching certificate.

138. With regard to the provision of appropriate educational facilities, various teaching aids are provided as part of the educational reform process. These aids have been introduced into primary education with a view to improving the educational process and teaching methods. They are supplied in sufficiently large quantities to satisfy the needs of children in urban and rural schools.

Table 24**Steps on the educational ladder in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Age				School grades
	Higher Education			
23	University education		Intermediate colleges	21
22				20
21				19
20				18
19				17
18				16
17	General secondary education	Technical secondary education	Vocational education	15
16				14
15				13
14	The preparatory stage			12
13				11
12				10
11	The primary stage			9
10				8
9				7
8				6
7				5
6				4
5	Pre-primary education Kindergartens: (optional and fee-paying)			3
4				2
3				1

1.1 Changes registered in the system of education and current initiatives**(a) The stage of early childhood (children under 6 years of age)**

139. In addition to the information supplied in paragraphs 175-178 of the initial report, we should like to add that nurseries cater for children under three years of age, particularly children of working mothers, by offering social, educational, nutritional and health care under the supervision of teachers who are specialized in dealing with children. Nurseries supply the toys

and equipment which children in this age group need for their physical and mental development. The Women's General Federation also takes care to create nurseries in accordance with progressive standards and models. There are a total of 44 mixed nursery schools with 4,798 pupils. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour licenses nurseries that are owned by publicly-owned State institutions in accordance with the terms of the applicable regulatory decrees.

140. In addition to the information supplied in paragraphs 180-182 of the initial report, we should like to point out that kindergartens offering educational facilities for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years can be found throughout rural and urban areas. These establishments aim at providing for the physical, psychological, motor, intellectual, linguistic and social welfare and development of the child. Most of the teachers and instructors who supervise the children have attended professional training courses. Table 25 shows the number of kindergartens that had been created by 2000.

Table 25
Kindergartens, 2000

No. of kindergartens	No. of students (boys and girls)	No. of classes	No. of teachers
1 170	115 613	3 444	4 640

141. The measures undertaken to develop kindergartens are described below:

- (a) Standard internal regulations have been adopted for all kindergartens;
- (b) Special curricula for kindergartens have been produced on the basis of contemporary educational theory;
- (c) Kindergarten teachers are trained at teachers' colleges. In the future, their training will be offered at a special department in university faculties of education;
- (d) A series of practical manuals has been produced for kindergarten teachers;
- (e) Children's training workbooks have been produced on the basis of the curricula followed and for the three age groups at the kindergarten stage;
- (f) Kindergartens have been furnished with toys and educational aids;
- (g) Training of kindergarten teachers and instructors is continuing to be delivered through intensive training courses;
- (h) Facilities are being provided for the establishment of kindergartens in accordance with the terms of the Special Education Act and its implementing regulations.

142. In spite of the endeavours made by the Ministry of Education to facilitate the enrolment of larger numbers of children in the pre-primary stage of education, the services offered still need to be expanded and developed. For this, material and technical support is required.

(b) The stage of primary education (children in the 6-11 age group)

143. The Government lends great importance to the stage of primary education. The Syrian Constitution affirms that every child is entitled to an education and that education is compulsory and free of charge at the primary stage. Major efforts are being expended to implement the principle of education for all, as illustrated by the facts adduced hereunder.

(a) The Compulsory Education Act No. 35 of 1981 makes education compulsory for all Syrian children, boys and girls alike, who are aged between 6 and 12 years, and it requires their legal guardians to enrol their children in primary school (art. 2). Any person who employs a child of compulsory school age faces a penalty of two months in prison and a fine. If the offence is repeated, the penalty is doubled and the enterprise employing the child will be closed for a period of two years (art. 6). A new study has been carried out to examine the feasibility of increasing the penalties specified under the Compulsory Education Act;

(b) Any person wishing to obtain a free education can do so by means of the open access granted to the preparatory and secondary stages of education and to technical and vocational schools and colleges and universities, and also to the schools that are provided in all communities throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, approval has been given to extend compulsory education up to the preparatory stage. This will be referred to as basic education.

144. According to the figures produced for the end of the 1998/99 academic year, the total number of students in primary education amounted to 2,754,317 students, of whom 1,288,423 were girls and 1,465,894 were boys. Of these, a total of 2,738,083 students of both sexes were enrolled in primary school, 1,282,493 of them girls and 1,455,590 boys. Table 26 shows the average enrolment rates in primary education.

Table 26

Primary school enrolment rate (%)

Total enrolment rate	Female enrolment rate	Male enrolment rate
99.4	99.5	99.3

145. The following are some of the measures that have been undertaken by the Ministry of Education to enforce compulsory education and bring a halt to the practice of dropping out of school:

(a) The flexible academic year: the purpose of this experiment, which has been conducted in 56 primary schools in the Hama steppelands, is to make the school year fit in with the seasons of the agricultural economy in certain communities. In this way, the scheme aims at encouraging male and female children to attend these schools and at discouraging them from dropping out;

(b) Mobile schools: these schools are set up in caravans and tents and accompany the Bedouin whenever they move camp, so that their sons and daughters can receive an education;

(c) Support classes: these classes are intended to enforce the principle of compulsory education, reinforce students' learning and cater for all students who have dropped out of school on more than one occasion. The classes have helped to eliminate the phenomenon in the schools where they have been set up;

(d) Rural schools: the aim of these schools is to deepen the interaction between the school and its surrounding environment and to achieve greater participation by training students in ways and means of directly applying the information that is imparted. There are a total of 401 such schools. Their work is directed towards fourth, fifth and sixth grade students, who carry out particular agricultural tasks and rural trades in cooperation with the family. The schools teach the theoretical and practical aspects of agricultural science and provide training for certain rural trades that reflect the conditions in the local environment.

Table 27

Development of primary schools, 1995-1999

Year	No. of primary schools	No. of students	No. of classes	No. of teachers	Teacher-student ratio
1995	10 420	2 651 247	104 517	113 384	23.4%
1999	11 213	2 721 203	107 699	118 800	22.9%

(c) The preparatory stage of education (children in the 13-15 age group)

146. The preparatory stage of education lasts for three years. Table 28 shows the number of preparatory schools and students enrolled therein.

Table 28

Development of preparatory schools, 1995-1999

Year	No. of schools	No. of students
1995	2 436	675 822
1999	2 778	765 188

147. Various measures have been undertaken to develop this stage of education by:

(a) Modernizing the methods of teaching foreign languages using language laboratories;

(b) Establishing superior schools and supplying them with activity rooms, special laboratories and audio-visual equipment, as well as personal computers and word processors;

(c) Conducting an international test, in cooperation with UNICEF, to determine the level of attainment of students in the second grade of preparatory education in the subjects of mathematics and sciences.

(d) The stage of general secondary education (children in the 16-18 age group)

148. A course of secondary education lasts for three years. At present the curricula for secondary education are being comprehensively overhauled to take account of new scientific developments. Table 29 shows the development of secondary schools during the period from 1995 to 1999. Superior schools have also been introduced at this stage along the same lines as at the preparatory stage.

Table 29

Development of secondary schools, 1995-1999

Year	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of teachers
1995	1 047	166 142	50 117
1999	978	160 147	56 545

(e) Technical, vocational and technological education

149. In addition to the information supplied in paragraph 190 of the initial report, we should like to add that the Government attaches special importance to technical, vocational and technological education, which accounts for approximately 70 per cent of preparatory school graduates. The Ministry of Education strives to meet the requirements of the enrolment plan in terms of buildings, equipment, staff training, and expanding the range of occupations which are catered for by technical and vocational education. The Ministry is also working to update the subject matter dealt with by educational curricula in keeping with the requirements of our age, and to upgrade the equipment used in this type of education.

150. The following are the most important of the aims of technical and vocational education:

(a) To prepare skilled manpower for all sectors and train students up to the standard of the skilled worker and assistant engineer so that they can contribute to development plans and fulfil the needs of society;

- (b) To forge a link between vocational, technical and technological education and economic development plans in order to meet the evolving needs of the national economy;
- (c) To endeavour to train students in accordance with their aptitudes and preferences and to satisfy the requirements of the different economic sectors and institutions in the light of the practical principles of vocational education;
- (d) To foster integration between theoretical and applied study and teach students how to think and learn for themselves so as to help them to develop their abilities and be constantly innovative and inventive;
- (e) To train students in labour economics, so as to produce at the lowest possible cost and in the shortest time, and prepare them to join and work in the labour market by giving them a proper understanding of the individual's role in society.

151. Technical, vocational and technological education has expanded tremendously in line with the requirements of development and the labour market. Table 30 shows how technical and vocational education changed between 1993 and 1999.

Table 30
Technical and vocational education, 1993-1999

	1993/94	1998/99
No. of Students	68 992	104 434
Education and Training Board	10 580	13 639

(f) School and nutritional health

152. The school health initiative overseen by the Ministry of Education helps to prepare a generation that is sound in mind and body. It also raises health standards in the school community, improves the quality of school health services, provides primary health care to students and educators, creates a safe health environment in school buildings and camps, promotes health and environmental awareness and helps to develop dental health services. There are a total of 170 school dispensaries and infirmaries in the different governorates.

153. It is worth noting that the World Food Programme (WFP) project that was carried out between 1993 and 1998 provided an incentive for students to attend school. However, in spite of the considerable efforts that have been made and the budgets that have been allocated, schools at all stages of education continue to suffer from the shortage of material and technological resources required to improve their health and environmental and educational situation. The Ministry of Education remains in need of extensive logistical support to implement the recommendations made by the 1998 educational development conference.

154. Table 31 shows how educational budgets have changed over the period 1995-1998.

Table 31

Pre-university education budgets, 1995-1998

Year	State budget (in thousands of LS)	Education budget	Percentage	Primary education budget	Primary education budget as percentage of education budget
1995	162 040 000	188 960 070	11.7	10 408 768	55
1996	188 050 000	21 006 417	11.2	11 507 217	54.7
1997	211 125 000	21 597 214	10.2	11 646 753	53.9
1998	237 370 000	24 721 860	10.4	13 985 814	56.5

2. Informal education

2.1 The eradication of illiteracy

155. The Ministry of Education has continued to focus attention on educating illiterate men and women in the 13-45 age group, and this in cooperation with official agencies and the relevant popular organizations. As a result, between 1995 and 1999, the illiteracy rate declined among all age groups, particularly among children and young persons. The statistics show that the rate of illiteracy among the population aged 10 years and over dropped from 17.4 per cent in 1995 to 14.2 per cent in 1999, reflecting the success of the efforts made and measures undertaken in the eradication of illiteracy and the implementation of the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act. The illiteracy rate among persons in the under-18 age group dropped from 4.1 per cent in 1995 (2.6 per cent for males and 5.7 per cent for females) to 3.6 per cent in 1999 (2.3 per cent for males and 5.0 per cent for females).

156. In the 1999/2000 academic year efforts have focused on providing education for illiterate girls in the 13-19 age group who are outside the educational system and who come from the northern and eastern governorates where the illiteracy rate, particularly among girls, is high. The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Women's General Federation and UNICEF, has begun to implement a literacy plan in the governorate of Idleb to train teachers to provide literacy skills to approximately 6,758 girls. Eight teacher-training courses have been set up for this purpose with 345 teachers participating. Literacy classes have been opened for all illiterate girls in this age group and vocational training courses are run for girls who have been emancipated from illiteracy in order to teach them non-traditional life skills such as computing and environmental and manual skills. Awareness campaigns have been conducted in the health, social, legal and economic domains, consisting in lectures on nutritional health, health education, environmental education, women's and children's rights, reproductive health, family planning and other essential topics associated with everyday life. The project will continue until the end of 2000 and the experiment being conducted in the governorate of Idleb will be extended in the coming years to include the north-eastern governorates, where the female illiteracy rate is also

high. Specific projects have been designed for four governorates, but material support from Arab and the relevant international organizations is needed for their implementation. In spite of all the efforts that have been expended in the sphere of the eradication of illiteracy, efforts which have brought about a significant decline in the illiteracy rate, if the rest of the illiterate population, particularly women, are to be helped, the comprehensive national plan must be implemented in its entirety. This in turn requires the concerted efforts of Arab and the relevant international organizations, particularly in respect of the plan to develop the work of formal and informal adult education institutions, since adult education holds the key to the twenty-first century.

157. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Ministry of Culture has run pioneering experimental projects to eradicate illiteracy among girls and women in selected villages and certain parts of some Syrian governorates. The projects aim at providing beneficiaries with vocational training, raising their level of health awareness and delivering health services in certain governorates in collaboration with the Women's General Federation and UNICEF. The projects seek to mobilize society in rural environments where the female illiteracy rate is very high. They were first introduced in 1993. In view of their success, one such project was launched in 1996 in the districts of Tall Barka and Al-Shahadi in the governorate of Hassakah and a second in Jabal al-Hass, in the governorate of Aleppo, in 1998. Specific criteria were used to select the villages for the implementation of each project, such as whether there was a high illiteracy rate and a high drop-out rate from primary education among girls and whether there was a need to provide women with vocational training and to improve the health and environmental situation. The activities involved cater for girls in the 13-19 age group. In addition, the fact that the women beneficiaries of these projects have developed their skills has had a positive impact on the care they provide to their children and the way in which they manage their children's health and education.

158. With regard to academic curricula, care has been taken to incorporate demographic concepts into literacy curricula when designing new textbooks for the basic and subsequent stages of education. This is because illiterate girls are one of the categories most in need of education about demographic issues, having been denied educational opportunities and desperately needing to understand the relationship between family size and income and how mother and child health can be safeguarded by means of family planning and efforts to eradicate the practice of early marriage. This information is all provided in the framework of the projects that have been run by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNFPA. Furthermore, care has been taken to incorporate health and environmental concepts into literacy curricula when designing new textbooks for the basic and subsequent stages, in the context of the projects implemented by means of cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and UNICEF.

159. The following measures have been undertaken:

(a) The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been incorporated into literacy teacher-training courses and workshops that are held every year at the central and local levels. Approximately 20 such courses and workshops have been run for a total of 1,000 participants;

(b) The Convention on the Rights of Child has also been incorporated into annual training courses and workshops for women leaders in official agencies and popular organizations concerned with the eradication of illiteracy. Approximately 20 courses and workshops have been held for a total of 1,500 participants. Efforts have been made to strengthen the link between the eradication of illiteracy among illiterate citizens, the delivery to them of vocational training, particularly for women, and of training in non-traditional occupations and in the way to set up a productive micro-project. The Higher Council for the Eradication of Illiteracy has endorsed the decision adopted by the Women's General Federation to exempt women emancipated from illiteracy at courses run by the Federation from paying fees for enrolment in vocational training courses.

160. The Ministry continues to publish a series of adult education textbooks, the number of which has risen from 12 in 1994 to 21. The following are some of the new books which have been designed and published in the framework of projects carried out in conjunction with Arab and international organizations (the Arab Gulf Programme to support United Nations Development Organizations, UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNFPA and UNICEF):

- (a) The role of women in the social development of the child;
- (b) Popular sayings in health, environmental and demographic education;
- (c) Reproductive health and family planning;
- (d) Women's rights and obligations;
- (e) Education and skills for life.

161. Citizens in the 16 and above age group benefit from the training activities that are carried out in the context of adult education.

162. The following Ministries are involved in adult education:

- (a) The Ministry of Culture (via institutes of popular culture, centres for fine and applied arts and Arab cultural centres);
- (b) The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (via rural development centres and units offering advice on carpet production);
- (c) The Ministry of Construction (via vocational training centres);
- (d) The Ministry of Trade (via the accelerated training scheme and the vocational training scheme);
- (e) The Ministry of Agriculture (via the Department of Home Economy for the Education of Rural Women).

163. The laws regulating most popular organizations, even if promulgated a long time ago, accord these organizations a clear role in adult education. The functions of these organizations in this domain are regarded as fundamental for the achievement of the broad goals that have been set for them. Thus, the nature of the work of these organizations is consistent with the objectives of adult education. These organizations are:

- (a) The General Confederation of Trade Unions, through workers' educational colleges;
- (b) The General Federation of Farmers, through farmers' educational colleges;
- (c) The Women's General Federation, through vocational training centres, production centres and bureaus specialized in education, culture, health, the media and kindergartens;
- (d) The Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation, through educational and vocational activities and its specialized offices;
- (e) The National Union of Syrian Students, through cultural activities;
- (f) The Tradesmen's General Federation, through vocational courses;
- (g) The Teachers' Association, through educational and cultural activities;
- (h) The Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) Organization, through training courses.

164. Private sector training centres have been established in recent years. A total of 140 centres have been licensed by the Ministry of Education to provide training throughout the governorates. Of these, 97 centres offer language training, 37 provide computer training, and 6 centres deliver vocational training, 1 of them in music. Other centres are licensed by the Tradesmen's General Federation. There are 106 of these centres, located in most of the governorates and offering training in different kinds of occupations.

165. The Second Conference on the Development of Education held in February 1998 was an important educational event in Syria's history. The subjects of the eradication of illiteracy and adult education were discussed by one of the Conference committees, which produced a number of important recommendations concerning the provision of the resources required for the comprehensive national plan for the eradication of illiteracy and the whole concept of adult education. The following are some of the most important of those recommendations:

- (a) There should be integration and coordination between the bodies which provide adult education and the authorities responsible for formal education and also among the authorities operating in the sphere of general culture and popular organizations and cultural and social institutions;
- (b) Communication and cooperation should be maintained with Arab and international agencies and organizations concerned with adult education with a view to developing work in this domain;

(c) Attention should be devoted to designing textbooks for adult education. These books should cover all social, health, environmental, demographic, technological, national, and humanitarian topics that serve to raise awareness among citizens and enhance their ability to make a positive contribution to the development of society;

(d) A public commission known as the Public Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy and for Adult Education should be created to supervise and monitor the implementation of the tasks specified in the above-mentioned recommendations.

166. We refer to the information contained in paragraph 197 of the initial report.

167. Syria contributes to the eradication of ignorance and illiteracy in all parts of the world by the means described here below:

(a) At the Arab level, it contributes through the membership of the Syrian Women's General Federation in the Arab Network for the Eradication of Illiteracy and for Adult Education. The President of the Network is a member of the Federation's Executive Office. The Arab Network was set up in 1999 and has its headquarters in Cairo. The Network has set itself the goal of mobilizing and coordinating the efforts of non-governmental organizations and Arab voluntary associations and institutions working in the sphere of literacy promotion and adult education in order to help improve the Arab individual's level of education, culture and training and to empower him or her to participate in the development of society, to exercise his or her rights and meet his or her obligations. The Network's first initiative was launched in the city of Damascus on the occasion of World Literacy Day on 8 September 1999, when, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the Syrian Women's General Federation, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and UNESCO, the Network organized a workshop entitled "Revitalizing the role of non-governmental organizations and voluntary associations and institutions in the eradication of illiteracy and in adult education". The Network is currently preparing for a conference to be held in Cairo at the beginning of 2001 to mark the Arab Day for the Eradication of Illiteracy (8 January);

(b) Syria participates at the international level by the following means:

- (i) The Higher Committee for the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Syrian Arab Republic which is a member of the World Council for Adult Education;
- (ii) The Arab Network for the Eradication of Illiteracy and for Adult Education which is a member of the World Council for Adult Education. Its mandate provides for the establishment of cooperative links with international and regional adult education networks in developing and developed countries;
- (iii) The President of the Arab Network for the Eradication of Literacy and Adult Education who is also the Vice-President of the World Council for Adult Education for the Arab Region.

168. It is worth emphasizing that the World Council for Adult Education, which has its headquarters in Canada, is one of the most distinguished councils in the world, in terms of the goals which it strives to attain, the size of its membership and the success of the global activities which it has consistently pursued ever since it was founded in 1973. The Council's Executive Committee will hold a regular session in the city of Damascus during the month of September 2000.

B. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)

169. The Government accords great importance to ensuring that children make profitable use of their leisure time, as can be seen from the activities carried out by the different Ministries, popular organizations, trade unions and voluntary associations that are concerned with children.

170. The Ministry of Education undertakes targeted and general activities aimed at discovering students' special talents so as to improve the teaching of set curricula, identify, develop and foster students' natural gifts and love of learning, and teach them a variety of different skills. The activities carried out in collaboration with the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Baath Vanguard) are described hereunder:

(a) At Tala'i activity schools students engage in various activities outside of their regular schooling which are designed to instil a spirit of wonder and creativity in the child. Arts, sports, self-expression and public speaking are some of the most important of the activities undertaken;

(b) Tala'i centres for gifted students have been established at schools where there are sufficient numbers of gifted children wishing to follow advanced, special and distinctive types of activities. These centres have scientific, literary, artistic, environmental and sports sections;

(c) "Pioneer" competitions are run by the Tala'i organization, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, to promote a spirit of enterprise and constructive competition between children. Creative and gifted children are selected firstly by school, then by district and finally by governorate. National competitions are then held in a variety of fields and the winners are rewarded with prizes such as a stay in a recreational camp or a trip abroad.

171. The Ministry of Culture publishes approximately 150 original language and translated books and periodicals. It also lends special importance to the writing and publishing of children's books and literature dealing with child-related topics. Between 1995 and 2000 approximately 74 such books were published, while the Ministry continues to publish approximately 25,000 copies of each issue of the Usamah magazine for children, the monthly Usamah book and the Ma'rifa (knowledge) magazine dealing with child-related topics, which seek to attract "pioneers" from among both children and adults.

172. The number of new cultural centres that have been established has grown from 132 centres in 1995 to 321 in 2000. The centres perform a variety of functions, including the following:

- (a) They promote cultural awareness;
- (b) They foster aesthetic sensibility;
- (c) They disseminate popular culture through popular culture institutes, literacy programmes and the mobile cultural unit. There are a total of 53 such centres, in which the following facilities are available:
 - (i) A children's library;
 - (ii) Lecture, seminar and film screening rooms equipped with a stage where various types of artistic performances can be shown;
 - (iii) The mobile cultural unit, which is equipped with books and cinema and sound equipment and which disseminates knowledge to rural children;
 - (iv) Art technologies and equipment which is used for artistic and musical activities of all kinds.

173. All adolescents, male and female alike, are able to enrol in educational, vocational and technology courses virtually free of charge.

174. The Arab Music Conservatories in Damascus and Aleppo accept students from the age of 7 years onwards. The Conservatories have a combined total of 320 students. The Arab Music Conservatory in Damascus is affiliated with the School for Expressive Dance (ballet) that was established pursuant to Decree No. 39F of 1992, and it admits students between the ages of 7 and 18 years.

175. The Centres for the Fine Arts that are found throughout the governorates of the country admit large numbers of students and amateurs. The centres hope to refine and develop their students' talents. They have played an important role in preparing students who go on to pursue their studies at various fine arts institutes. The courses of study last for six months, are offered free of charge, and consist in evening classes in which the students are taught academic principles. The number of students attending these centres rose from 233 students in 1995 to 338 in 1999.

176. The Ministry of Culture has a children's puppet theatre which puts on special shows for children every year. A total of five shows have been staged since 1995.

177. In the world of film, between 1995 and the middle of 2000, the Public Film Institute produced a series of films for children with the following titles:

- (a) Him and Her (an animated film);
- (b) One thousand and one pictures (an animated film);
- (c) Memoirs of a Bedouin man (an animated film).

178. In the framework of the Damascus Film Festival which is held every two years and whose eleventh edition took place between 30 October and 11 November 1999, a prize is given for the best film on the subject of children. It is presented by the Tala'i al-Ba'ath (Ba'ath Vanguard) Organization in collaboration with the Festival's organizers.

179. The Ministry of Information pursues its activities in the field of recreation and the selection and screening of children's television series that are produced locally or in the Arab region or are imported from certain friendly States. In addition, it produces new children's radio and television programmes and stages plays dealing with children's issues, particularly the rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

180. The Ministry of Local Administration is working to create more public gardens in residential districts and to equip them with playground equipment so as to contribute to the physical development of children and help them learn to take part in organized games.

181. Reference is made to the information contained in paragraph 207 of the initial report.

182. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, working in collaboration with the General Sports Federation, has established the Disabled Sports Federation with branches throughout the Syrian governorates. Through this Federation, children with disabilities are able to pursue different types of sport according to the nature of their disabilities. Disabled children have taken part in numerous sports events and have been awarded many medals.

183. The Women's General Federation concerns itself with the welfare of children, through nurseries and kindergartens. It organizes recreational programmes, games and leisure activities for children, consisting in group and individual intellectual pursuits such as drawing, crafts and the recycling of environmental waste. It also runs programmes where children are taken to theatrical shows that serve social, moral and educational goals and are organized either by the Directorate of Theatres of the Ministry of Culture or by private theatre companies. The Federation further encourages children to undertake certain theatre and acting roles in simple theatrical performances that are presented by children with the help of kindergarten teachers and shown on national occasions. These shows focus on the kindergarten and the things that children learn there and also on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The children's guardians attend these performances.

184. In coordination with the Society for the Protection of Animals in Syria, work has been initiated to supply some zoos with domesticated animals for the purpose of strengthening the bonds between the child and the local environment and encouraging him or her to take an

interest in the protection of animals and to participate in their care. Children at kindergartens run by the General Women's Federation visit museums, nearby archaeological sites, industrial and tourist installations and other facilities found in society with which we deal on a daily basis, so that they can learn about the world around them.

185. The Tala'i al-Ba'ath Organization concerns itself with the psychological, mental, physical and social aspects of children's development and organizes regular activities in these domains. These activities now constitute the largest part of Tala'i activities at national festivals, summer camps and Tala'i clubs. The Organization has also devoted efforts to the establishment of clubs, of which there are now more than 80 winter and summer clubs, where children are able to pursue certain types of study as well as cultural, literary, sports and recreational activities. In addition, the Organization takes an interest in children's culture and the various ways and means that culture can be transmitted to children via books, cinema, the press, theatre and television. This gives these activities central importance in supporting the integrated welfare of the child, helping him or her to adapt more quickly in society and his strengthening connection with the issues that affect the nation, the Islamic world and all humanity. The Organization has also improved the services offered to children in its basic installations, particularly the fixed camps located throughout the country.

186. The Shabibat al-Thawra (Revolutionary Youth) Federation caters for children aged 12 years and above. It organizes the recreational activities mentioned in paragraph 205 of the initial report, activities which expanded during 1998/99, as described here below:

- (a) Six tourist camps have been established to cater for 900 participants, both boys and girls;
- (b) Three cultural competitions have been run at the central level with the participation of 110 boys and girls;
- (c) A total of 650 Shabibat clubs for sciences and computing have been formed and 594 students have graduated from computing courses run by the scientific clubs, operating at the central level;
- (d) A total of 3,890 environmental clubs have been formed with a total of 80,850 members;
- (e) The Federation participates in the national reforestation campaign;
- (f) Fifteen hundred clubs with 19,820 members have been formed to raise awareness about ways of combating narcotic drugs and tobacco smoking;
- (g) The Federation runs the Central Theatre Festival for the preparatory and secondary stages of education, which holds 16 theatrical performances involving 329 participants;
- (h) The Federation organizes the Central Arts Festival for the secondary stage of education, involving 625 participants.

187. Notwithstanding the activities mentioned above, children's culture remains problematical, because of the scarcity of cultural resources, such as books, stories, intellectual games, films, magazines and newspapers, for young children, most cartoon films, fantasy films and short films being translated and suitable only for children aged 7 years and above.

IX. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

A. Children in states of emergency

1. Refugee children (art. 22)

188. Refugees who come to the Syrian Arab Republic do so because they are facing either persecution, war or civil strife that is tearing them and their countries apart. This was the case with the Palestinian refugees who fled for fear of their lives from the massacres unleashed against them by the Haganah and Stern gangs. They came to Syria, because they knew that it would provide them with a safe haven (see paragraphs 211-215 of the initial report).

189. The Syrian Government has given all Palestinian refugees every facility necessary to make their stay more comfortable, and it has provided them with resources and assistance to guarantee a basic subsistence. The Government has issued and continues to issue Palestinian refugees with temporary identity papers for themselves and their children and with travel documents with which they can travel in and from the country. It has facilitated their access to and provided them with the means to secure a basic subsistence and supply their daily needs. Schools and educational institutions have been established for their children in order to provide them with a good and proper education, in cooperation with international organizations and specialized agencies. Moreover, the Government has granted these refugees the same rights as any Syrian citizen to work and to travel, without any discrimination or impediment.

2. Children in armed conflict (art. 38), including physical and psychological recovery and social integration (art. 39)

190. We should like to reaffirm the information provided in paragraphs 216-222 of the initial report.

191. In the northern part of the occupied Golan lie the Syrian Arab villages of Majdal Shams, Mas'ada, Buq'ata, Ayn Qunya and Al-Ghajar. The total population of these villages amounts to approximately 22,500 persons. There are 11 schools in these villages, divided between the primary, preparatory and secondary stages of education and catering for a total of 5,500 male and female students.

192. Israel, the occupying State, is flagrantly violating the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law and international humanitarian law, particularly the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is also

blatantly defying all the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as the decisions adopted by United Nations human rights bodies. The violations perpetrated by Israel in the human rights domain consist in the following:

(a) The first human rights violation is the occupation itself. Israel has refused to implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council decided that the decision of Israel promulgated by the Knesset on 14 December 1981 to annex, and impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on, the Golan was null and void and without international legal effect;

(b) Israel imposes Israeli nationality on Syrian Arab citizens;

(c) Israel persists in maintaining the occupation and expanding the settlements on, and the expropriation of, cultivable land, which is the principal source of income of the population in the occupied Golan. The people are being pushed into becoming workers in Israeli factories as a way of more easily imposing economic hegemony over them;

(d) The exploitation of water in the Golan, the levying of excessive rates of taxation against Syrian Arab citizens and the employment of Arab children, including girl children and women, in the same types of heavy labour as is performed by adults but at half the rate of pay, are further examples.

193. In the field of education, the Israeli occupying authorities have endeavoured to impose a policy of deliberate ignorance on the children of the Golan, as illustrated by the following:

(a) Syrian Arab academic curricula have been entirely eliminated from all village schools in the occupied Golan and replaced with Israeli curricula that were used for Palestinian Arab students in 1948;

(b) The history, culture and struggle of the Arab peoples is misrepresented in order to serve Israeli aims;

(c) Qualified teachers are dismissed from schools and unqualified teachers and Israeli teachers are appointed to serve the purposes of the occupation. Control of teachers is assured by forcing them to sign yearly employment contracts and dismissing them, if they fail to comply with Israeli directives;

(d) Applications from Syrian Arab teachers for teaching vacancies are rejected and the few teachers that are appointed are threatened with dismissal if they participate in national celebrations and events;

(e) Schools in the Golan suffer from a shortage of classrooms and appropriate school buildings and half the student population studies in rented classrooms that were built as commercial shops or garages. In addition, large numbers of children are crowded into a single classroom and their guardians are required to pay exorbitant rates of taxation on the pretext of paying for education;

(f) Students in the occupied Syrian Golan are denied access to university education, because it is virtually impossible for them to enrol in Israeli universities owing to the high fees and costs entailed and because any person who has an opportunity to enrol in university is subjected to the general persecution that is directed towards Syrian students;

(g) Obstacles are placed in the way of students from the Golan wishing to enrol in Syrian universities, in terms of travel restrictions and threats that their study will be interrupted if they participate in any national activity. This is in addition to the humiliating treatment meted out to female students at Israeli checkpoints, the obstacles that are created to recognizing their university degrees, the delays in the equivalence procedure and attempts to intimidate them;

(h) In order to provide our citizens in the Golan with support, the mother country, Syria, broadcasts educational television programmes for our sons in the area. These programmes are well received and are closely followed by our people in the Golan. The country also offers university scholarships and UNESCO scholarships are made available, upon request, by the Syrian Government.

194. There is no acceptable or effective health system in the Golan nor are there any hospitals available to Syrian Arabs.

195. Among the methods of repression and terrorism which Israel pursues, the Israeli occupation forces have laid mines everywhere in the villages of the occupied Golan, particularly in the agricultural areas belonging to our citizens, thereby denying children even the right to play, for fear of setting off a mine.

196. Having provided this brief overview of the unyielding and permanent policies and practices pursued by Israel, it is incumbent on us to reaffirm the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to the search for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region, requiring Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

197. We call upon the international community to condemn Israeli policies and practices, to refrain from recognizing any measures undertaken by the Israeli occupation authorities in the Syrian Golan, to refuse to provide any form of cooperation or assistance in respect of these measures and to take the necessary action to bring a halt thereto, thereby showing solidarity with the children of our Arab people in the Golan, who are being subjected to death, infirmity, subjugation and deprivation at every moment of their lives.

B. Young offenders

1. Administration of juvenile justice (art. 40)

198. The information below is provided in addition to that contained in paragraphs 223-229 of the initial report.

199. Under the terms of the Juveniles Act, children begin to have legal responsibility after attaining the age of 7 years (art. 2) and cannot be held criminally liable until they have reached the age of 15 (art. 29). There is no sex-based discrimination in the definition of the age of responsibility.

200. Accordingly, the Juvenile Delinquents Act No. 18 of 20 March 1974 divides juveniles into the following distinct categories in respect of legal and criminal responsibility:

(a) The first category refers to children who are incapable of discernment, meaning children who have not attained the age of 7 years and whom the law regards as being entirely absolved of responsibility for any act or offence which they commit, whether it takes the form of a contravention, misdemeanour or felony. Children of this age cannot be tried, prosecuted, arrested or interrogated, nor can general proceedings be taken against them;

(b) The second category refers to adolescents from 7 to 15 years of age. They cannot be sentenced to penalties for acts committed, but may be subject to special reform measures, the purpose of which is to provide for the welfare and reform of the child and ensure that he or she is safely reintegrated into society upon release. For details, please refer to paragraph 227 of the initial report;

(c) The third category refers to adolescents who are aged between 15 and 18 years. Penalties are applied in respect of these juveniles only in one case, namely where they perpetrate a legally designated criminal offence. The penalties are lighter than those imposed on adults who commit the same offence. For example, where the crime committed by the juvenile would attract a penalty of death if committed by an adult, that penalty is replaced by a term of six years in prison. This penalty cannot be increased to more than 12 years, even if there are aggravating circumstances (article 29 of the Juvenile Delinquents Act No. 18 of 1974). Otherwise, if a juvenile over the age of 15 years commits a contravention or a misdemeanour, he or she is not liable to penalties, but only to reform and welfare measures.

201. Pursuant to the provisions of article 28 of the Constitution, a juvenile is considered innocent until proven guilty. Juveniles are tried before special courts (see paragraphs 226-228 of the initial report). The Ministry of Justice strives to appoint women juvenile court judges in order to help the children to feel comfortable and at ease and to explain what they have done wrong and the reasons for their wrongdoing. For further information, see paragraph 56 of this report.

202. Children have the right to file a complaint on their own behalf with the magistrate in every governorate designated to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (as appointed by the Ministry of Justice) or directly with the Department of Public Prosecutions, where he or she is wrongly subjected to a criminal penalty. In cases where compensation for damages is sought, a case must be brought by the child's legal guardian or tutor.

203. In legal proceedings against minors over the age of 15 years accused of committing a felony, the court is obliged to hear the minor's statements in the presence of a lawyer charged with defending his or her interests. If the juvenile is poor or the guardian or tutor has failed to appoint a lawyer for him or her, the court defers the hearing of the juvenile until defence counsel has been appointed for him or her in cooperation with the Bar Association.

204. The Juvenile Delinquents Act ensures that the best interests of the child are given the primary consideration. Numerous of its provisions stipulate the necessity of taking account of the juvenile's psychological and social state and family circumstances when selecting the reform measures to be applied. The Act also requires the person into whose custody the juvenile is delivered and his or her supervisor to pledge to comply with the court's instructions. The Act stipulates that the juvenile must be placed in a special institution capable of providing for his or her care, in the absence of any other person who is fit to perform this task. Further details are provided in tables 32 and 33 here below.

Table 32

No. of juvenile magistrates in Syria

No. of magistrates who are not full time	No. of full-time magistrates	Level of court
-	3	Court of Cassation
9 (juveniles and children who have reached their majority).	9	Examining magistrates
-	13 plus 26 educational counsellors holding certificates of higher education	Mixed (criminal and misdemeanours) courts
137 (juveniles and children who have reached their majority)	12	Criminal courts (simple infractions and misdemeanours)

Table 33

Juveniles sentenced to criminal penalties and subject to reform measures

Years			Juveniles
1997	1996	1995	
2 435	2 144	2 072	Found guilty by a juvenile criminal court (15-18 years of age)
24	16	12	Subjected to reform measures
997	-	829	Placed under supervision

205. Juvenile reform institutions admit juveniles who are subjected to the reform measures set forth in the Juvenile Delinquents Act (placement of the juvenile in a special juvenile reform institution) under the terms of an order issued by a competent court. When the juvenile arrives at the institution, the director notifies his or her guardian of the fact that the juvenile has been placed in the institution and invites the guardian to visit the child and to provide him or her with reassurance, if such be in the young person's interest.

206. The social worker greets the young person and informs him or her of the rules of the institution. The social worker also prepares a detailed social report on the young person's situation, after contacting his parents or the person responsible for his care. In some cases, this report does not contain all the information, because of the shortage of social workers and the lack of the requisite resources for its preparation. In addition, there are certain social circumstances which make it impossible to obtain detailed information from the persons in the child's circle and in the society in which he or she lives.

207. Young persons in these institutions pursue their studies at schools established by the Ministry of Education in 1998. These schools cater for the grades of the primary stage of education, in which students study the curricula prescribed by the Ministry of Education for this stage, taking into account the young person's circumstances and level of education. Older teenagers who have gone beyond the primary stage of education can attend local schools, if the terms of the legal judgement that has been handed down regarding them so permit. Otherwise, they are taught in the institution by teachers or the institution's qualified staff.

208. Young persons in these institutions also receive training for certain occupations, although there are many difficulties associated with vocational training, of which the most important are:

- (a) The shortage of vocational teachers and trainers, owing to the fact that many have left their jobs for various reasons (retirement, death, etc.) or are unable to continue their work for a number of reasons, of which the most important is the poor rate of pay;
- (b) The meagreness of the financial provisions allocated for training;
- (c) The fact that the available equipment is old and needs to be repaired or replaced;
- (d) The fact that these occupations do not meet the requirements of the market.

209. Following a survey of juvenile welfare institutions and centres that was conducted in 1998, in cooperation with the Association for the Welfare of Prisoners in Damascus and Aleppo and for the purpose of monitoring the effective situation in these establishments and identifying their needs, the following measures were taken to improve the conditions prevailing therein:

- (a) A volunteer lawyer was appointed to track juvenile cases in judicial chambers;
- (b) A religious instructor was appointed to provide juveniles with advice and guidance, awaken their moral conscience and, on two days a week, to teach them the religious precepts which will deter them from wrongdoing;

(c) A physician was appointed to examine and treat the juveniles and verify the health situation in the institutions on three days each week;

(d) Reading and study rooms were set up and the requisite resources were provided;

(e) In cooperation with UNICEF, new crafts were introduced in keeping with the evolving demands of life.

210. With regard to scheduled training activities for the professionals working in these institutions and centres, a number of training courses have been run, in cooperation with Arab and foreign organizations, to cater for social workers, reform institution supervisors, juvenile court probation officers and women professionals who provide for the welfare of female juvenile delinquents.

211. The Ministry of Justice has held numerous courses in all the governorates of the country to provide juvenile judges appointed to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, magistrates of the Department of Public Prosecutions, and Shariah Court judges responsible for children's issues with training aimed at assuring children justice, safeguarding their interests and protecting their rights. Training is also provided to police officers who work with juveniles and to religious clerics (see table 7 above).

2. Sentencing of juveniles, particularly the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a))

212. See paragraphs 249-253 of the initial report. In general terms, the authorities concerned undertake the requisite measures to ensure that children are not subjected to torture or other similar types of treatment.

3. Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

213. See paragraph 86 of the present report.

C. Child victims of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

1. Economic exploitation, including child labour (art. 32)

214. The information supplied below is in addition to that provided in paragraphs 39-44 and 254-258 of the initial report.

215. Child labour in the Syrian Arab Republic is a matter of concern for the government authorities, which endeavour to enact special labour legislation aimed at protecting children and imposing penalties that serve as a deterrent for any person who infringes this legislation.

216. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour oversees the inspection of labour in the industrial and agricultural sectors, particularly child labour, through inspectors who are officials appointed by the Ministry and who take a legal oath and carry official identification. The

inspectors ensure that the prevailing labour laws are being properly implemented by carrying out labour inspections and reviewing all matters concerned with the protection of workers, and particularly child workers. Inspections are carried out both at night and during the day, during and outside of working hours, whenever the inspector sees fit. These inspectors furnish employers and workers with technical information and practical advice as to the proper application of the provisions of labour law and they may take, in respect of any person who infringes the provisions of labour law, measures such as the issuance of technical advice and guidance to the employer, the delivery of a verbal or written warning, and the compilation of a report to be referred to the competent court for the infliction of the requisite penalty.

217. Inspectors of agricultural labour inspect the work performed in this sector and monitor the implementation of all principles and provisions pertaining to employment protection, agricultural workers, agricultural employers, child and female labour and the taking of technical precautions for work on modern agricultural machinery. The inspectors are entitled to enter all places to be inspected without prior notice and to use all methods of investigation, monitoring and inquiry to perform their tasks at night, during the day, and outside and inside of official working hours.

218. A good education which meets the needs of children and their families is regarded as the most effective tool for the eradication of child labour, since school attendance does away with the employment of children, particularly in hazardous work, by reducing the number of hours in which children can work. Great strides have been made towards the elimination of child labour.

219. The Ministry of Education takes numerous steps to monitor the implementation of the compulsory education process in the field in all the Syrian governorates and to bring a halt to the phenomenon of dropping out of school. The most important of these measures are:

(a) The establishment of educational offices and committees in every governorate, region, province, village or district to monitor the process of compulsory education and school drop out rates;

(b) The formation of committees that travel to commercial enterprises and industrial and professional establishments to ascertain whether children covered under the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act are being unlawfully employed;

(c) The holding of national awareness seminars and educational symposia and the convening of family councils for the purpose of making the child's parents aware of their responsibilities for educating their children.

220. The Syrian Arab Republic has ratified the following international conventions:

(a) The Minimum Age (Underground Work) Convention, 1965 (No. 123), article 2, paragraph 3, of which stipulates: "The minimum age shall in no case be less than 16 years";

(b) The Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965 (No. 124), article 2 of which stipulates that: “A thorough medical examination, and periodic re-examinations at intervals of not more than one year, for fitness of employment shall be required for the employment or work underground in mines of persons under 21 years of age”;

(c) The Labour Inspection Convention, 1948 (No. 81), which was ratified by Presidential Decree No. 944 of 23 May 1960 and which stipulates in article 3, paragraph (a), thereof that the functions of the system of labour inspection shall be to secure the enforcement of the legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work, such as provisions relating to hours, wages, safety, health and welfare, the employment of children and young persons, and other connected matters, insofar as such provisions are enforceable by labour inspectors;

(d) The Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), which was promulgated pursuant to Decree No. 247 of 23 March 1972.

221. The Syrian Arab Republic has also ratified the following Arab Conventions:

(a) The Arab Convention on Employment Standards, 1966 (No.1);

(b) The Arab Convention No. 6 of 1976 amending the above-mentioned Convention, while retaining the provisions of articles 6, 57 and 58 thereof;

(c) The Arab Convention on Occupational Safety and Health, 1977 (No. 7).

222. The Syrian Arab Republic is undertaking a study to raise the minimum age for the employment of minors to 15 years, in preparation for the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 134).

223. It should be stressed that Syria’s accession to any international or Arab convention renders the instrument in question a part of its enforceable domestic legislation, which is binding on all.

224. Notwithstanding all the legislation and measures undertaken to bring a halt to child labour, numerous difficulties remain, of which the most important include:

(a) The fact that the number of labour inspectors is small compared with the number of establishments and factories;

(b) The fact that inspection agencies lack certain operational resources;

(c) The fact that labour inspectors do not have sufficient training to be able to identify and address more of the special problems associated with child labour;

(d) The fact that some children need to work at an early age to support their families;

(e) The fact that child workers are not covered by the provisions of the Social Insurance Act No. 92 of 1959.

225. The 1998 field survey on under-age child labour which was designed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was conducted in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics and the office of UNICEF in Damascus for the purpose of defining the proportion of children in work, the geographical distribution of working children, the age, sex and educational composition of the working child population, the socio-economic characteristics of working children's family, the reasons why children go to work and the impact of work on their physical and psychological health.

226. The results of the survey (based on a sample of 50,000 families taken from the different Syrian governorates and from which a detailed analysis of 1,000 working children from the sample was prepared) are contained in tables 34 and 35 here below.

Table 34

Proportion of children engaged in work (%)

Age groups	Town			Country			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
6-11	0.52	0.05	0.30	0.44	0.30	0.37	0.54	0.11	0.34
12-14	10.4	0.58	5.82	10.4	6.3	8.5	11.7	2.1	7.3
15-17	29.9	1.97	16.8	30.9	9.8	20.9	32.8	3.4	18.9
Total	10.6	0.7	5.9	9.9	4.1	7.2	11.1	1.4	6.6

Table 35

Structure of child labour, by sex (%)

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Car repair, upholstery and painting	12.4	-	12.0
Buying and selling	13.9	12.5	13.8
Agriculture and shepherding	5.9	29.1	5.9
Building and construction	16.3	4.2	15.9
Industrial and craft work	43.9	50.0	44.2
Services	6.5	4.2	6.4
Other	1.9	-	1.8
Total	100 [99.8]	100	100

227. The results of the survey highlight some of the negative aspects of child labour, of which the most significant are the following:

- (a) A total of 89 per cent of working children are employed for more than 6 hours;
- (b) No rest break is provided in 23 per cent of the establishments in which children are employed;
- (c) In 17 per cent of cases children are required to work overtime;
- (d) In 33 per cent of cases children are employed in night work;
- (e) In 16 per cent of cases children work during the weekly holidays and on national festivals.

228. This means that stringent measures are required to monitor child labour, enforce the Compulsory Education Act and make society more aware of the dangers and need to eliminate certain forms of child labour which affect the child's physical and mental development. In addition, there is a need for greater effort to be focused on income-generating programmes and projects in both rural and urban settings so as to improve the socio-economic status of the family and thereby eliminate the need for child labour.

2. Illicit use of narcotic drugs (art. 33)

229. See paragraphs 259-263 of the initial report.

230. It came to the attention of the Syrian legislature that drug traffickers and gang members were exploiting children to supply adults with narcotic drugs, since children are immature and cannot understand what they are doing or the adverse affects thereof on society. In order to protect our Syrian society against this peril, the legislature, by the provisions of the Narcotics Act No. 2 of 12 April 1993, increased the penalties to be imposed on any person who exploits children for this purpose. Article 40 (f) of the Act stipulates that the higher penalty shall be applied if the narcotic drugs are sold or peddled in an educational establishment or services facility, a cultural, sports or reform establishment or in the direct vicinity of an educational institution. Likewise, article 39, paragraph 3, subparagraph (b), of the Act stipulates that no mitigating factors will be taken into account in cases involving the use of a minor in the perpetration of the offences of smuggling, manufacturing or peddling of narcotic substances, in respect of which the penalty of capital punishment is retained.

231. The National Committee on Narcotics Affairs was established pursuant to a decision of the Prime Minister. It consists of representatives from a number of related Ministries and popular organizations and its function is to establish a national plan for the suppression of narcotic drugs. Syria celebrates International Anti-Drugs Day and organizes campaigns and seminars on the suppression of drugs via all media and popular organizations.

232. Treatment is provided to drug addicts in the Ministry of Health clinics. No punishment is inflicted on a person who volunteers to receive treatment nor are any public proceedings taken against him.

233. A national anti-smoking committee has been formed from several Ministries, for the purpose of combating smoking on the basis of a national plan. Syria celebrates World No Tobacco Day, on the occasion of which scientific, cultural and medical seminars are run to draw attention to the dangers of smoking. Ministries and popular organizations also organize awareness programmes for children, young persons and teenagers. During 1999 the Shabibat-al-Thawra Federation held 1,550 awareness seminars on the suppression of narcotic drugs and smoking, attended by a total of 19,820 participants. It also published 32 publications on the dangers of smoking.

3. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)

234. See paragraphs 226-231 of the initial report.

4. Sale, traffic and abduction (art. 35)

235. See paragraphs 272-274 of the initial report.

5. Other forms of exploitation (art. 36)

236. See paragraph 271 of the initial report.

D. Children belonging to minorities or indigenous population groups (art. 30)

237. See paragraphs 275 and 276 of the initial report.

238. We should like to add that Kurdish men, women and children in the Syrian Arab Republic enjoy the full rights of Syrian citizenship on the same footing as other Syrian citizens and, like them, have risen to occupy high-ranking positions. However, a large number of persons of Kurdish origin have, from time to time, illegally entered the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic from neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Turkey, because of the difficult circumstances they were facing in those countries.

239. Although these persons are residing illegally in Syria, the Syrian Government has shown concern for the rights of their children to obtain an education in accordance with the terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (particularly article 28 thereof). Accordingly, the Syrian educational authority, in spite of the illegal status of these children, admits them into schools and educational establishments at different levels with a view to ensuring that they are provided with the necessary training to cope with the demands of their future lives (article 29 of the Convention). Even though these children are not officially registered, the authorities seek to provide them with an opportunity to receive an education and gain access to the requisite information to prepare them for the future on the same footing as any other Syrian child, and in accordance with a flexible and uncomplicated set of procedures.

240. The Syrian Nationality Act does not provide for the acquisition of Syrian nationality by persons or their children arriving in Syria illegally from neighbouring countries and who do not declare their nationality of origin. This is for a number of reasons, of which the most important is the fact that these persons enjoy an original nationality which regulates their status and the legal status of their families and children.

241. Although the Syrian legislature has shown concern to grant Syrian nationality to the offspring of parents who have no nationality, with a view to delivering them from the category of clandestine or stateless persons and in order to safeguard the rights of these children who are children today and will be men tomorrow, the principles established by the Syrian legislature for dealing with these cases (article 3 of the Syrian Nationality Act No. 276 of 24 November 1979) provide that they should be handled on a case-by-case basis, for humanitarian reasons, and not with a view to facilitating the infiltration of the country by groups of foreigners seeking Syrian nationality.

242. Finally, it must be pointed out that the phenomenon of statelessness or clandestinity has begun to disappear progressively from various States, particularly from our country, as the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has launched wide-ranging settlement campaigns for the Bedouins, encouraging them to stay in one place and to put down roots. The Bedouins used to be permanently on the move in the Arab region, sometimes staying in Iraq, and at others in Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Gulf States and also, from time to time, in Syria. They would cross the borders between these States looking for grazing land and pastures for their animals and for temporary sources of income.

Conclusion

243. Finally, the human person, meaning the child, the man and the woman, remain the central focus for the Syrian Government and the nation's most precious investment. It is on the human person that Syria depends to face the future and its challenges.

244. Perhaps these aims are best summed up in the last words addressed by the late President Hafez Al-Assad to the President of the Lebanese Republic, President Amin Lahoud: "Our destiny is to build a promising future for our children and our duty is to leave them the best possible legacy."

Notes

¹ Document CRC/C/28/Add.2.

² Note of the Secretary-General LA 41 TR/221/1 (4-11 (a)), confirming that approval for the amendment was deposited with him on 16 June 2000.

³ The legally prescribed period during which a woman may not remarry after being divorced or widowed.

Annex 1**The Higher Committee for Childhood, established pursuant to
Prime Ministerial Decree No. 1023 of 31 January 1999**

Deputy Prime Minister for Services Affairs	Chairman
Minister for Social Affairs and Labour	Vice-Chairman
Assistant Minister for Social Affairs and Labour	Member
Assistant Minister of Education	Member
Assistant Minister of Health	Member
Assistant Minister of Justice	Member
Assistant Minister of Information	Member
Representative of the Council of Ministers	Member
Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Member
Representative of the Ministry of Culture	Member
Representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	Member
Representative of the Ministry of Finance	Member
Representative of the State Planning Institute	Member
Representative of the Ministry of Industry	Member
Representative of the Central Bureau of Statistics	Member
Representative of the General Women's Federation	Member
Representative of the Teachers' Union	Member
Representative of the General Federation of Trade Unions	Member
Representative of the Tala'i al-Ba'ath Organization	Member
Representative of the Shabibat al-Thawra Organization	Member
Representative of the Trades Federation	Member
Representative of the Federation of Charitable Associations	Member
Representative of the Chamber of Industry	Member
Departmental Director, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	Rapporteur

Annex 2**The Drafting Committee**

Ms. Ghada Murad	Member of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary - Attorney-General of the Syrian Arab Republic
Ms. Ghada al-Jabi	Director for the eradication of illiteracy, Ministry of Culture
Dr. Haidar Dakk al-Bab	Director, Office of the Health Council at the Office of the Prime Minister
Dr. Akram al-Harshi	Director of School Health, Ministry of Education
Ms. Intisar al-Khaimi	Director, Department of the Family and Child, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
Ms. Anfwan al-Na'ib	Third Secretary, Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ms. Widad Ridha	Member of Executive Office, Director of Office of Nurseries and Kindergartens
Ms. Siham Dalu	Programme Director, UNICEF, Damascus

Annex 3

Field studies conducted during 1995-1999

1. First Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 1995
2. Second Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2000
3. Girls dropping out of primary school in north-eastern governorates (field study)
4. Study of the reasons why students in the Hasaka governorate drop out of school, 1998/99
5. Study of the reasons why students in the Dayr al-Zur governorate drop out of school, 1998/99
6. International test of level of attainment in mathematics and sciences in the second grade of preparatory school, 1996/97
7. Effects of early marriage on girls, 1998
8. Children working under the legal age (18 years), 1998
9. Disabled children under 18 years of age, 1998
10. Survey of institutes and centres for juvenile delinquents, 1999
11. Study of children's awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1999
12. Study of children's radio and television programmes, 1999

Sources

1. The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic promulgated in Decree No. 208 of 1973.
2. The Constitution of the Arab Baath Socialist Party.
3. The Civil Code promulgated in Legislative Decree No. 84 of 1949.
4. The Personal Status Act No. 59 of 1953.
5. The Code of Civil Procedure.
6. The Law of Evidence.
7. The Private Associations and Institutions Act put into effect by Legislative Decree No. 93 of 1958.
8. The Labour Act No. 91 of 1959.
9. Act No. 60 of 1950, establishing reform centres for juvenile delinquents, as amended.
10. Legislative Decree No. 144 of 1958, establishing model institutions for the rehabilitation of the blind.
11. The Suppression of Prostitution Act No. 10 of 1960.
12. The Military Service Act.
13. The Foundlings Act No. 107 of 1970.
14. The Eradication of Illiteracy Act No. 7 of 1972.
15. The Juvenile Delinquents Act No. 18 of 1974, as amended.
16. The Passports Act No. 42 of 31 December 1975.
17. The State Employment Statute No. 1 of 1985.
18. The Narcotics Act No. 2 of 1993.
19. Legislative Decree No. 40 of 1970, establishing centres for the education of the deaf and dumb.

20. Legislative Decree No. 54 of 1970, establishing a vocational training centre for the disabled.
21. Legislative Decree No. 13 of 1982, concerning domestic servants.
22. Ministerial Ordinance No. 415 of 26 August 1959, promulgated by the Minister for Social Affairs and Labour, specifying occupations in which young persons under 15 years of age cannot be employed.
23. Ordinance No. 417 of 26 August 1959 specifying occupations in which young persons under 17 years of age cannot be employed.
24. Ministerial Ordinance No. 156 of 1972, promulgated by the Minister for Social Affairs and Labour, concerning day nurseries for the children of mothers working in private sector facilities.
25. Ruling No. 28 of 23 January 1979 (Syrian Court of Cassation).
26. Ruling No. 156 of 3 March 1979 (Syrian Court of Cassation).
27. Ministerial Ordinance No. 321 of 31 March 1979 promulgated by the Minister of the Interior.
28. Decision No. 3803 of 20 November 1985 promulgated by the Prime Minister, approving the model rules of procedure for public bodies subject to the uniform Employment Statute No. 1 of 1985.
29. Circular No. 1908/1/31 promulgated by the Prime Minister on 31 July 1983, concerning the establishment of day nurseries.
30. Decision No. 1023 of 31 January 1999 promulgated by the Prime Minister concerning the establishment of the Higher Committee for Children.
31. Decision No. 134 of 3 January 1998 promulgated by the Minister of Justice, concerning the appointment of full-time presidents of juvenile courts in the Syrian governorates.
32. Decision No. 2108 of 1 October 1999 promulgated by the Minister of Justice, concerning the establishment of a judicial committee for the family and the child in every governorate of the country.
33. "The rights of the child in Syrian legislation", by Dr. Hassan Ajamieh.

34. National report on child labour in the Syrian Arab Republic, prepared in 1998 in collaboration with the International Labour Organization.
35. First national follow-up report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995.
36. Field studies published by Ministries and popular organizations concerned with children.
37. Official publications of the Ministries and popular organizations concerned on activities carried out in monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995-2000.
38. Publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics.
