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Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**Combined second, third and fourth periodic reports
submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural
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Egypt*

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Combined second, third and fourth periodic reports of Egypt on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Introduction

1. Pursuant to the provisions of article 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and in accordance with the guidelines published by the international committee established to monitor implementation of the Covenant, Egypt has the honour to submit its combined second to fourth periodic reports, comprising three parts, as follows:

I. General concepts underlying the protection and observance of human rights in Egypt

II. Substantive discussion of the rights and freedoms enunciated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

III. Replies to the previous recommendations of the Committee on the consideration of the initial report, and a survey of the results of Egypt's efforts in the field of the recognized rights.

2. In this context, Egypt reaffirms its determination to continue to fulfil, completely and effectively, its international obligations arising from its accession to international human rights instruments, and accordingly submits this report, accompanied by the assurance that it is constantly prepared to engage in continuous, constructive dialogue with the Committee and to answer all questions relating to its compliance with the provisions of the Covenant.

Preface

3. Egypt acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by Presidential Decree No. 537 of 1981. Egypt signed the Covenant on 4 August 1967, having regard to the provisions of the Islamic sharia and the compatibility of the Covenant with it. Egypt deposited the instrument of ratification with a reservation to that effect attached, and the Covenant was published in the Arabic language in issue No. 14 of the Official Gazette on 8 April 1982, thereby becoming the law of the land in accordance with article 151 of the Constitution.

4. Pursuant to article 17 of the Covenant, Egypt submitted its initial report on 18 November 1998. In addition, in January 2000 Egypt provided the Committee with a special annex responding to the list of issues and questions from the Committee relating to a number of matters with a bearing on the Covenant. These are addressed in the present report. The report was considered at the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on 2-3 May 2000.

5. In this connection, Egypt wishes to make it clear that the practical application of the provisions of the Covenant has not revealed any incompatibility or contradiction between those provisions and those of the Islamic sharia.

6. Egypt wishes to emphasize the fact that this report, which comprises the combined second, third and fourth periodic reports, will deal only with information and new situations that have arisen during the period following the date of the discussion on the initial report

in 2000, in order to avoid repetition and waste of the Committee's time. Previous reports and data that Egypt has submitted to the United Nations or its specialized agencies will be referred to briefly where relevant, in accordance with article 17, paragraph 3 of the Covenant.

7. Egypt also wishes to note that statistical data contained in this report have been obtained from specialized national agencies, including the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and the Central Bank of Egypt. These statistics are published within the country and internationally via the Internet. Where other sources of statistical data have been used, those sources will be identified.

8. It should be noted that the report was prepared in collaboration with the relevant ministries and specialized national bodies in the domain of human rights, including members of community associations and civil society organizations. During the preparation process, a meeting with a number of representatives from civil society organizations was held for the purpose of enabling them to express their concerns about the rights discussed in this report, including the minimum wage, some statutory provisions on the right to strike, gender equality in the Labour Code, the Penal Code and social insurance funds, environmental pollution, health insurance, property taxes, educational quality, and matters relating to persons with special needs. The Government's efforts to address these concerns will be discussed in our comments on the relevant articles as these are taken up successively.

I. General concepts underlying the protection and maintenance of human rights in Egypt

A. Land and people

Situation and land

9. Egypt lies in the northeastern corner of the African continent and includes part of Asia as well. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east. Its land area is 997,700 km².

10. Egypt is divided into four geographic regions:

- The Nile Valley and Delta, which are approximately 33,000 km² in extent;
- The Western Desert, which covers approximately 680,000 km²;
- The Eastern Desert, which covers approximately 225,000 km²;
- The Sinai Peninsula, the area of which is approximately 61,000 km².

11. Deserts thus account for approximately two thirds of the area of Egypt. The area suitable for agriculture is 13,628 feddans. Between 1996 and 2006, some 2,773 feddans were brought under cultivation.

12. There are a total of 27 nature reserves (marine areas, wetlands, desert areas and geological areas) covering a total of 149,000 km², which represents nearly 15 per cent of the area of the Republic.

Population (census data from 2006)

13. Population censuses have been conducted in Egypt since 1882. At that time, the population of the country was 6.7 million people. Since 1966, a comprehensive census has been conducted every 10 years, the most recent having been that of 2006.

Total population (including both persons living in the country and persons living abroad)

76,480,426 in 2006, compared to 61,492,914 in 1996

Total number of persons living in the country

72,580,000 (comprising 51.1 per cent males and 48.9 per cent females) in 2006, compared to 59,310,000 in 1996

Number of persons living abroad

3,900,000 (5.1 per cent) in 2006, compared to 2,180,000 (3.5 per cent) in 1996

Population distribution

42.6 per cent urban

57.4 per cent rural

Average population growth

Average growth declined from 2.08 per cent during the period 1986-1996 to 2.05 per cent between 1996 and 2006.

Average family size

Average family size declined from 4.65 persons in 1996 to 4.18 persons in 2006

Marriage

Persons who had never been married (women 16 and over and men 18 and over) accounted for 29.33 per cent of total population in 2006, up from 26.71 per cent in 1996.

Some statistical indicators on population characteristics

Numbers of inhabitants, by age group

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Total, 1996 census</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total, 2006 census</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 6	9 032 687	15.23	10 224 256	14.1
6-10	5 448 807	9.19	5 043 247	6.9
10-15	7 864 002	13.26	7 796 386	10.7
15-45	27 360 320	46.13	34 983 045	48.2
45-60	6 194 978	10.44	9 978 402	13.7
Over 60	3 412 120	5.57	4 553 694	6.27

Life expectancy at birth

Average life expectancy was 69.5 years for men and 74 years for women in 2007, up from 65.1 years for men and 69.0 years for women in 1996.

Housing characteristics

- 99.3 per cent of all Egyptian families (99.5 per cent in urban areas and 99 per cent in rural areas) had mains electricity in 2006;
- 89.9 per cent of all buildings had mains electricity in 2006;

- 95.5 per cent of all families had mains water in 2006 (98.8 per cent in urban areas and 92.9 per cent in rural areas);
- 81.1 per cent of all buildings had mains water in 2006;
- 50.5 per cent of all families had mains sewage disposal service in 2006 (82.5 per cent in urban areas and 24.3 per cent in rural areas);
- 28.7 per cent of all buildings were served by main sewage disposal in 2006.

Educational status

- For the 10-and-over age group, illiteracy declined from 39.36 per cent in 1996 to 29.33 per cent in 2006;
- For the 6-18 age group, the school dropout rate was 4.20 per cent in 2006;
- The number of pupils who had completed primary-level education increased from 7,911,817 (17.65 per cent) in 1996 to 11,134,399 (19.43 per cent) in 2006;
- The number of pupils who had completed intermediate-level education increased from 7,408,296 (16.52 per cent) in 1996 to 14,283,340 (24.92 per cent) in 2006;
- The number of pupils who had continued beyond the intermediate level increased from 904,212 (2.02 per cent) in 1996 to 1,808,268 (3.16 per cent) in 2006;
- The number of university graduates and holders of postgraduate degrees increased from 2,547,995 (5.68 per cent) in 1996 to 5,476,704 (9.56 per cent) in 2006.

Persons with special needs

Persons with special needs accounted for 0.48 per cent of the school population in 1996 and for 0.62 per cent in 2006.

Workforce (hundreds)

			2001	2006
15-64 age group	Workers:	Males:	152 129	177 671
		Females:	43 429	51 111
	Total:		193 395	228 782
	Unemployment rate:		22.9%	10.6%

Reproductive health

	2000	2005
Maternal mortality (per 1 000 live births)	84	75
Use of family planning methods	56.1%	59.2%
% births attended by qualified person	61%	74%

Infant mortality

(per 1 000 live births)	2000	2005
Infant mortality rate	44	33
Under-5 mortality rate	54	41

14. Thanks to the sustained efforts of the country's health-care services in this area, there has been a steady decline in infant mortality rates. In 2007, there were 16 deaths per 1,000 live births among newborns, 23 among infants, and 28 among children under five years of age. In the same year, the maternal mortality rate had been reduced to 55 deaths per 1,000 live births.

15. It is clear from these statistical indicators that Egypt has evolved significantly with respect to action to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant and to ensure their enjoyment by all citizens. At the same time, they also show what serious difficulties and challenges are confronting Egypt as a result of population growth. Egypt is endeavouring to address these difficulties through a series of ambitious five-year plans aimed at making optimal use of the country's resources and strengthening international cooperation to attain their objectives within a determined time frame. This report will present, in some detail, national efforts in this connection and the results that have been achieved to date as they relate to the rights enunciated in the Covenant.

B. The political structure of the State

16. Egypt is a State with a democratic republican regime based on citizenship. It has a multiparty political system (in accordance with two amendments to the Constitution, adopted in 1980 and 2007); at the present time, there are 22 political parties.

The executive power

17. The President of the Republic is elected by direct free ballot (in accordance with an amendment to article 76 of the Constitution adopted in 2005 and 2007). The President's term of office is six years, and is renewable.

18. The Government consists of the Prime Minister, his Deputy Prime Ministers, the Ministers, and their Deputy Ministers. The Government is responsible for formulating the public policy of the State and overseeing its implementation in accordance with the laws and presidential decrees. The People's Assembly may withdraw its confidence from the Prime Minister and the Cabinet by adopting, by majority vote, a motion of no confidence sponsored by at least 10 deputies (in accordance with an amendment to article 127 enacted in March 2007).

19. Local administration comprises the governorates, cities and villages, which are administrative units possessing legal personality. Each of them has an elected People's Assembly (in accordance with an amendment to article 161 of the Constitution enacted in 2007). Egypt is currently divided into 29 governorates.

The legislative power

20. There are two legislative bodies:

1. The People's Assembly: deputies are elected by direct free voting every five years. Its membership includes 444 deputies representing 22 electoral districts, and 10 additional deputies who are appointed by the President of the Republic pursuant to Act No. 149 of 2009. Sixty-four seats in the Assembly, distributed among 32 special electoral districts, are reserved for women; the purpose of this arrangement is to encourage women to participate in parliamentary life.

2. The Consultative Council, which is made up of 264 members representing 88 electoral districts. Two thirds of the members are elected and the remaining third appointed to six-year terms. One half of the Council is renewed every three years.

The judicial power

21. The judicial power comprises the judiciary, the Council of State (administrative courts) and the Supreme Constitutional Court. These have been discussed in the previous report of Egypt. Legislative amendments of relevance for the judicial system will be outlined in Part I(D) below.

C. Economic indicators

Gross domestic product and average growth

<i>Gross domestic product (GDP)</i>	<i>2001/02</i>	<i>2002/03</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2004/05</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>
GDP with the cost of all production factors taken into account (billions of Egyptian pounds) (LE)	354.5	365.8	380.8	400.4	426.1	456.2
Growth rate (%)	3.2	3.0	4.3	5.1	6.8	7.1
GDP by market value (billions of LE)	381.7	390.7	406.8	427	454.3	486.5
Growth rate (%)	3.2	3.1	4.1	9.4	6	7

Source of data: Annual reports published by the Central Bank of Egypt.

Changes in investment allocation in social service sectors

Investment allocations under the five-year plan for 2002/03-2006/07 pursuant to Act No. 87 of 2002 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	36 288.6	8.1
Utilities	38 624.0	8.6
Human and social development	-	-
Education	32 351.9	7.2
Health	17 331.4	3.9
Other services	15 596.9	3.4
Total social service sectors	140 192.8	31.2

Investment allocations for Year 1 of the five-year plan (2002/03) pursuant to Act No. 86 of 2002 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	8 623.5	11.6
Utilities	6 347.0	8.4
Human and social development	-	-
Education	4 358.2	5.9
Health	2 849.1	3.8
Other services	3 041.7	4.1
Total social service sectors	25 219.5	34.0

Investment allocations for Year 2 of the five-year plan (2003/04) pursuant to Act No. 97 of 2003 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	7 448.0	10.6
Utilities	5 931.5	8.5
Human and social development	-	-
Education	3 373.6	4.8
Health	2 498.4	3.6
Other services	3 057.0	4.4
Total social service sectors	22 308.5	31.9

Investment allocations for Year 3 of the five-year plan (2004/05) pursuant to Act No. 91 of 2004 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	1 305.3	1.5
Utilities	15 816.0	18.6
Human and social development	-	-
Education	3 580.1	4.2
Health	2 746.5	3.8
Other services	7 103.5	8.4
Total social service sectors	30 551.4	35.9

Investment allocations for Year 4 of the five-year plan (2005/06) pursuant to Act No. 96 of 2005 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	28 192.3	2.0
Utilities	2 457.8	22.3
Human and social development	-	-
Education	4 014.3	3.6
Health	2 718.2	2.5
Other services	6 463.0	5.9
Total social service sectors	43 845.6	36.3

Investment allocations for Year 5 of the five-year plan (2006/07) pursuant to Act No. 86 of 2006 (millions of LE)

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Housing	2 483.1	1.8
Utilities	10 761.3	7.9

<i>Social service sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Fraction of total (%)</i>
Insurance and social security	1 010.3	0.7
Public services and facilities	24 609.5	18.2
Total social service sectors	17 845.6	36.3

Sixth five-year socio-economic development plan (2007/08-2011/12)

List of average growth rates for both gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP) under the five-year plan for 2007/08-2011/12, as issued in Act No. 11 of 2007.

22. The five-year plan contained:

- Growth of 47.5 per cent in GDP by the end of the plan, with an average yearly growth rate of 8 per cent;
- Average growth of 46.5 per cent in GNP, with the cost of production factors taken into account, by the end of the plan;
- An average yearly growth rate of 7.9 per cent.

23. The plan also included the items presented below for certain economic sectors having a bearing on the rights enunciated in the Covenant:

<i>Economic sector</i>	<i>Rate of increase in GNP (%)</i>			<i>Rate of increase in GDP (%)</i>		
Building & construction	120	Average growth rate	17.1	124.4	Average growth rate	17.5
Water	37.6	Average growth rate	6.6	42.1	Average growth rate	7.3
Electricity	51.6	Average growth rate	8.7	54.4	Average growth rate	9.1
Education	51.9	Average growth rate	8.7	54.6	Average growth rate	9.1
Health care	22.5	Average growth rate	4.1	50.4	Average growth rate	8.5
Social insurance and social security	20	Average growth rate	3.7	22.5	Average growth rate	4.1

24. These economic indicators point to the fact that the country's economic situation has been characterized by continued development, as it has been able to apply the five-year plans formulated under the socio-economic development strategy for 2002-2012. The figures also indicate that economic growth rates and social service delivery have been successfully achieved. This situation has been reflected in the form of positive impacts on disadvantaged social groups, confirming the fact that the State has met its obligations, having regard to the available resources, through these ambitious plans to foster the comprehensive development of Egyptian society.

D. Evolution of the general legal framework within which human rights are protected

25. In response to the successive political, economic and social changes that have taken place in Egypt, and consistent with recent international developments relating to the strengthening of an enabling environment in which encouragement is provided for the full, effective implementation of international standards in the field of human rights and freedoms, three constitutional amendments have been enacted in Egypt, all of them having the general aim of introducing a package of political, economic and social reforms. The first of these amendments was adopted through a referendum held on 22 May 1980. It provided for the creation of a second parliamentary body, the Shura Council, the

establishment of a multiparty political system, and the introduction of a Press Authority. The second constitutional amendment was adopted by referendum in May 2005; it provided for direct election of the President of the Republic by a majority of voters, thereby reinforcing and entrenching democracy in Egypt. The new presidential election system was enshrined in Act No. 174 of 2005, and the first elections under the new system were held in that same year. The third constitutional amendment was adopted by a referendum held on 31 March 2007. Under the amendment, 34 articles of the Constitution were amended. Article 1 was amended to enshrine the principle of citizenship, the electoral system was changed to permit proportional representation of women, parliamentary oversight of the Government's performance was strengthened, the legislative role of the Shura Council and the powers of the Prime Minister were also strengthened, the right to a clean environment was added, and the office of the Socialist Public Prosecutor was abolished.

26. The above-mentioned constitutional amendments have led to changes to the legal framework aimed at the strengthening and protection of human rights in Egypt. In the pages below, various aspects of that framework will be discussed, including:

- (a) Continued international and regional participation by Egypt in the elaboration of human rights instruments;
- (b) Domestic legislative innovations;
- (c) Domestic mechanisms for the effective implementation of human rights instruments;
- (d) Domestic means of legal recourse guaranteeing the effective implementation of human rights principles.

(i) Effective international participation by Egypt in the elaboration of international and regional human rights instruments

27. For a discussion of this aspect, please refer to the previous report of Egypt to the Committee. In addition, the instruments to which Egypt has acceded during the period covered in the present report are listed below.

International instruments

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138 of 1973 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 67 of 1999;
- ILO Convention 182 of 1999 on the worst forms of child labour: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 69 of 2002;
- First Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2000, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 104 of 2002;
- Second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2000, on the involvement of children in armed conflict: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 105 of 2002;
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 294 of 2003;
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 295 of 2002;

- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 297 of 2004;
- Presidential Decree No. 145 of 2004 withdrawing Egypt's reservation to articles 20 and 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990;
- Presidential Decree No. 249 of 2007 withdrawing Egypt's reservation to article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979;
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 400 of 2007.

Regional instruments

- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 33 of 2001;
- Arab Women Organization Agreement, 2002: accession pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 133 of 2002.

28. In this context, and with a view to implementing Egypt's voluntary commitments and obligations, as presented to the United Nations General Assembly in April 2007 on the occasion of our bid for membership of the Human Rights Council, Egypt has participated in the elaboration of a number of international and regional human rights instruments, including the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Protocol to the Charter establishing the African Court on Human and People's Rights. Egypt has signed both these instruments, and the constitutional procedures for ratification and accession are currently in progress.

29. As will be clear from the foregoing discussion, Egypt has continued to participate effectively by acceding to international and regional human rights instruments, and this confirms our continuing determination to ensure that those rights possess international legitimacy. It will also be apparent that Egypt is striving unremittingly to give legal force to these principles and enshrine them in clear, unambiguous legal instruments that will set forth signatories' obligation to respect, protect and promote those rights and promote the development of appropriate mechanisms to protect and monitor implementation of the instruments in question at the international level. At the same time, the same legitimacy is reaffirmed at the national level, with the above-mentioned international instruments being deemed to have the force of domestic law after their publication in the Official Gazette. Moreover, as we have seen, Egypt has withdrawn a number of its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is continuing its national efforts aimed at continuous review of the country's legislative structure in pursuit of consistency and congruity between its international obligations and the national considerations that had previously prompted Egypt's reservations to those two conventions.

30. In the context of the Covenant, it is also noteworthy that Egypt has acceded to a substantial number of ILO conventions setting international labour standards, as well as Arab labour agreements concluded under the aegis of the League of Arab States.

(ii) Recently enacted legislative measures

31. Egypt's national efforts during the period covered in this report have been characterized by energetic efforts on the path of political, economic and social reform. Those efforts have had an impact in the field of legislative activity, which has been the scene of many changes aimed at modernizing the legislative structure with a view to reaffirming Egypt's fulfilment of its treaty commitments arising out of human rights

instruments. Thus, numerous amendments to existing law have been enacted, new statutes have been adopted, and presidential decrees have been issued providing for accession to international instruments or the creation of national mechanisms. The outcomes of these efforts are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Acts

- Act No. 1 of 2000, regulating a number of situations and procedures relating to litigation in issues of personal status. This Act authorizes women to apply for the termination of marriage by the procedure of *khul'*;
- Act No. 7 of 2000, providing for the establishment of reconciliation committees in some disputes to which ministries and public corporate entities are parties, such committees to be chaired by retired members of the judiciary in order that their experience may be put to good use in settling administrative disputes before they are brought before the courts, with a view to lightening the burden of caseloads;
- Act No. 1 of 2001, concerning the establishment of the Library of Alexandria;
- Act No. 148 of 2001, concerning real estate financing, with a view to facilitating access to housing for low-income groups;
- Act No. 152 of 2001, amending the Prisons Act (Act No. 396 of 1956), abolishing the use of the lash as a disciplinary punishment in Egyptian prisons, inasmuch as it is a form of corporal punishment that is inconsistent with international human rights norms;
- Act No. 80 of 2002, an Act to combat money-laundering; it criminalizes the laundering of money obtained from various criminal activities, including offences relating to intellectual property and organized criminal acts as defined in international instruments to which Egypt is a party;
- Act No. 82 of 2002, an Act to protect intellectual property rights;
- Act No. 84 of 2002, concerning community associations, which authorizes a variety of activities and permits international non-governmental organizations to engage in their activities in Egypt;
- Act No. 156 of 2002, concerning the establishment of a workers' emergency benefits fund;
- Act No. 6 of 2003, amending Act No. 189 of 1951 concerning elections to chambers of commerce; the Act abolishes the condition that candidates must be male, thereby enabling women to stand for election;
- Act No. 10 of 2003 regulating telecommunications;
- Act No. 12 of 2003, promulgating the Labour Code, which authorizes the right to strike peacefully;
- Act No. 94 of 2003, concerning the creation of the National Human Rights Council in accordance with international standards as recognized in the Paris Principles issued in 1990;
- Act No. 95 of 2003, abolishing the penalty of hard labour (including both types, i.e. penal servitude at hard labour for life and penal servitude for a specified term), and abolishing the Supreme State Security Courts;
- Act No. 10 of 2004, establishing the system of family courts with a view to facilitating procedures and settling domestic disputes within reasonable periods of time in order to preserve families;

- Act No. 11 of 2004 concerning the establishment of the family insurance fund;
- Act No. 154 of 2004 amending the Nationality Act and providing that Egyptian nationality may be granted to the children of an Egyptian mother married to an alien;
- Act No. 142 of 2004 amending the Mayors and Sheikhs Act by abolishing the condition that incumbents must be male, thereby enabling women to fill these posts;
- Act No. 141 of 2004 promulgating the Development of Small Enterprises Act; it provides that the Social Fund for Development (SFD) has competence and shall be responsible for developing such enterprises by providing funding and services. The Act is designed to support small business enterprises and facilitate their participation in human development plans, thereby creating jobs, increasing families' income and raising their standard of living;
- Act No. 2 of 2005, amending the provisions of Act No. 37 of 1958 on the establishment of State awards for intellectual production to promote the sciences, arts and literature; the new Act provides for the establishment of new awards and increases the monetary value of the awards;
- Act No. 3 of 2005 on the protection of competition and the prohibition of monopolistic practices; its aim is to support competition and transparency and to combat corruption;
- Act No. 4 of 2005 amending article 20 of Act No. 25 of 1929, the Code of Personal Status, by introducing the provision that a woman has the right to seek a divorce by the procedure of *khul'*;
- Act No. 15 of 2005 regulating electronic signature and establishing the Information Technology Industry Development Agency, in compliance with the requirements of modern international trade activities, and establishing means of applying the provisions of the Act in domestic trade activities;
- Act No. 91 of 2005, the Income Tax Act, reforming the taxation system by applying a unified income tax regime, raising the personal exemption level, enabling all individuals to enjoy an exemption based on their family responsibilities, and simplifying procedures for economically active persons;
- Act No. 67 of 2006 concerning consumer protection and maintaining the rights of consumers to receive goods and services that meet quality standards;
- Act No. 17 of 2007 amending certain provisions of the Judicial Authority Act (Act No. 46 of 1972) for the purpose of strengthening the independence of the judiciary and giving the Judicial Authority its own budget;
- Act No. 18 of 2007 amending Act No. 73 of 1956 regulating the exercise of political rights;
- Act No. 72 of 2007, concerning compulsory insurance against civil liability arising from motor vehicle accidents;
- Act No. 154 of 2007 amending certain provisions of Act No. 52 of 1981 concerning prevention of the harmful effects of smoking;
- Act No. 113 of 2008 on preserving the sanctity of places of worship;
- Act No. 117 of 2008 amending Act No. 37 of 1958 on the establishment of State awards for intellectual production to promote the sciences, arts and literature; the new Act increases the monetary value of the awards;
- Act No. 120 of 2008, the Economic Courts Act;

- Act No. 126 of 2008 amending the following Acts:
 - Act No. 12 of 1996, the Child Act;
 - Act No. 143 of 1994, the Civil Status Act;
 - The Penal Code;
 - Act No. 180 of 2008 amending the Labour Code by abolishing managerial committees pursuant to a ruling by the Constitutional Court that such committees were unconstitutional;
 - Act No. 182 of 2008 establishing an independent budget for judicial bodies (the Council of State, the Office of Administrative Prosecution and the State Lawsuits Authority) with a view to enhancing their independence;
 - Act No. 194 of 2008 abolishing the Office of the Socialist Public Prosecutor, the Act regulating the Sequestration and Security of the People and the Act on the Protection of Values against Shameful Conduct, all in the context of a package of economic and legal reform measures;
 - Act No. 196 of 2008, the Constructed Real Estate Tax Act, in the context of economic reforms. The Act is designed to unify the existing tax treatment and broaden its scope to include all built-up real estate in all parts of the country, with a view to giving effect to the principle of equality and facilitating the assessment and collection of property taxes;
 - Act No. 71 of 2009 on the care of the mentally ill;
 - Act No. 149 of 2009 allocating 64 additional seats for women, distributed among 32 electoral districts.

Presidential Decrees

32. A number of important presidential decrees have been issued in various fields covered in the Covenant, including the following:

- Decree approving the establishment of 19 private universities;
- Decree approving three international agreements relating to the environment;
- Decree approving 11 bilateral international agreements relating to cultural cooperation;
- Decree approving the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression adopted at a UNICEF conference;
- Decree approving Egypt's accession to the Convention against Corruption on 9 December 2003;
- Establishment of the Mortgage Finance Authority for the purpose of providing the necessary funding for the purchase of a dwelling unit in the amount of 10 per cent of its value;
- Establishment of the Supreme Council on Human Resource Development with a view to achieving optimal use of human resources and formulating the necessary strategies for development plans and programmes;
- Establishment of the National Authority of Educational Quality Assurance.

33. These national legislative and executive initiatives reflect Egypt's determination to continue to fulfil its international obligations by bringing its domestic legislation into line with international human rights instruments to which it has acceded, and by creating

specialized domestic mechanisms designed to expedite the execution, follow-up and implementation of tasks aimed at ensuring that its citizens are able to enjoy the rights protected under the Covenant.

(iii) National mechanisms for the effective implementation of international and regional human rights instruments

34. Egypt is determined to create specialized national governmental mechanisms in the several domains of human rights and freedoms, reflecting its concern to give effect to the State's international obligations arising from the international instruments to which it is a party. Accordingly, it has sought to consolidate its work in that connection by establishing monitoring and reinforcement mechanisms in each of those domains, and by preparing ambitious plans for the propagation of a culture of human rights and integrating a human rights culture into the lives of citizens in terms of their behaviours, lifestyle and future-oriented vision for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

35. This integrated array of mechanisms represents a wide-ranging, expanding monitoring network which is having an effective impact, thanks to its significant powers, on the functions of the Government, civil society, Parliament, the judiciary, the media and trade unions. In exercising their functions, these mechanisms can refer continuously to actual human rights situations. The State's commitment to make effective use of the data they provide and the recommendations they submit reflects the political will to strengthen and develop all national efforts aimed at furthering respect for human rights and realizing the noble goals for which human society is striving. In this context, a number of national governmental mechanisms have been established; these are listed below.

National Council for Human Rights

36. The National Council for Human Rights was established under Act No. 94 of 2003 as an independent national mechanism. The Act provides that the Council shall possess the powers internationally recognized as appropriate for bodies of that kind in accordance with the Paris Principles of 1990. The Act also provides that the Council shall play a role in matters relating to complaints brought before it, and that governmental bodies are required to respond to the Council and to provide it with information upon request. In addition, the Council is required to prepare a yearly report on the human rights situation in Egypt and to submit it to the President of the Republic and to each of the two chambers of Parliament.

37. The president of the Council is Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a prominent international figure who is a former Secretary-General of the United Nations. In March 2005, the Council issued its first report on the human rights situation in Egypt, eliciting a response from the Government affirming that it would study all the recommendations in the report relating to legislation. The Council has continued to publish successive yearly reports, attracting significant attention from the media and in the political sphere. These reports are studied by the competent governmental bodies, which then follow up the initiatives formulated in them and use them as a guide to their own actions.

38. The Council has played a significant role in the work of preparing the mechanisms required to receive complaints from individuals, forward them to the competent bodies and ensure that responses are forthcoming within the time frame set in the relevant Prime Ministerial order, namely 30 days. The Council's reports contain qualitative and quantitative analyses of these complaints and indicate which governmental agency has jurisdiction to respond in each case.

39. The Council has participated effectively in the task of monitoring presidential, legislative and local elections by establishing monitoring networks, in cooperation with

civil society organizations, and appointing persons to oversee the electoral process. The Council issues reports on the results of its activities in this area.

40. The Council was reorganized at its second session, but has since continued to carry out the tasks assigned to it under the Act, working through the various committees that its mandate requires it to establish, pursuing its activities aimed at preparing future-oriented plans for the enhancement of its performance nationally, regionally and internationally.

41. The Council has become a member of international and regional human rights organizations, after having met the required criteria for membership.

National Council for Women

42. The National Council for Women was established pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 90 of 2000. The Council operates in a framework of support for Egypt's efforts to promote the status of women and surmount the various obstacles that prevent them from assuming their role in society. The Council's mandate is outlined below:

- To propose public policy matters for society and its constitutional institutions on the development and empowerment of women in order to enable them to play their socio-economic role, and to integrate their efforts into comprehensive development programmes;
- To draft a national plan for the advancement of women and propose solutions to the problems confronting them;
- To monitor and evaluate public policy relating to women and formulate recommendations and observations in that connection and submit them to the competent agencies;
- To advise on draft legislation relating to women before it is tabled with the competent authority, and to recommend the enactment of such legislation as will contribute to the task of advancing the status of women;
- To advise on all agreements relating to women;
- To represent women in international fora and international organizations concerned with women's issues;
- To establish a documentation centre for the collection of information, data, studies and research on women, and to conduct research and studies in that area;
- To hold conferences, seminars, panel discussions and debates on women's issues;
- To organize training sessions for the purpose of raising awareness of the role, rights and duties of women in society;
- To publish newsletters, magazines and other material relating to the goals and functions of the Council;
- To undertake any other matters referred to the Council by the President of the Republic.

43. The Council's activities, including studies and research, have borne fruit in the form of programmes that are currently being implemented. In addition, legislators have responded to many of the Council's suggestions by repealing statutory provisions that were inconsistent with the principle of equality, or by enacting new legislation to make litigation procedures easier for women. Among the most important legislative amendments to date in that connection have been the repeal of the requirement in the Chambers of Commerce Elections Act and the Mayors and Sheikhs Act that candidates must be male, the introduction of a provision that the children of an Egyptian woman married to an alien are

entitled to Egyptian nationality, the establishment of family courts to facilitate litigation proceedings in personal status cases, and the establishment of the family insurance fund.

National Council for Childhood and Motherhood

44. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood was established by Presidential Decree No. 54 of 1988. Under the decree, the Council is the highest authority mandated to propose public policy for adoption, and to take any decisions it may deem fit to attain the goal for which it was founded. Its functions are summarized below:

- To propose public policies in the domain of childhood and motherhood;
- To draft a comprehensive national plan on childhood and motherhood in the framework of the general State plan aimed at the protection of childhood and motherhood in various areas, including in particular social and family welfare, health care, education, culture, information and social protection;
- To follow up and evaluate the application of public policy and the national plan on childhood and motherhood in the light of reports received from ministries, departments, agencies and other bodies, and to provide directives for the elimination of obstacles;
- To gather all available information, statistical data and studies in fields relating to childhood and motherhood, to evaluate the indicators and results obtained, and to identify areas in which they can be turned usefully to account;
- To propose training programmes that will contribute to raising performance levels in activities relating to childhood and motherhood;
- To propose appropriate cultural, educational and information-related programmes designed to heighten awareness and mobilize public opinion in the area of problems relating to childhood and motherhood and methods of addressing them practically and soundly;
- To encourage voluntary activity in an effort to attract larger numbers and broaden the available pool of volunteers in the domains of childhood and motherhood;
- To cooperate with governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in the domains of childhood and motherhood at the regional and international levels;
- To advise on agreements relating to childhood and motherhood, and to participate in the work of implementing aid and assistance agreements offered to Egypt by foreign States and organizations operating in those domains;
- To take decisions and issue rules of procedure in financial, administrative and technical matters independently of governmental regulations, and to issue regulations governing personnel matters, after coordinating with the Central Organization for Administrative Affairs and Management.

45. The decree provides that ministries, agencies, and local administration and public sector entities shall, upon request, provide the Council and its subsidiary bodies with data, reports and research findings that are relevant for its work, and also with periodic reports on the measures they have taken to implement the Council's policy, plans and programmes with a bearing on childhood and motherhood.

46. The decree also provides that the decisions of the Council are final and binding, and that all ministries, agencies, local administrations and public sector entities shall be required to implement plans, projects and programmes formulated by the Council in the field of childhood and motherhood, working in cooperation with the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

47. The Council has done much important work, both theoretical and practical, conducting scientific research and social surveys of interest for childhood and motherhood issues. One of its significant successes has been to bring about a reduction in the prevalence of female genital mutilation. It launched a nation-wide campaign against the practice, and a decree was issued banning it except on the grounds of medical necessity. In addition, in 2008 the Council proposed an amendment to the Child Act raising the age of criminal liability and the age of marriage, making female genital mutilation a criminal offence, and establishing penalties for criminal acts as prescribed under the international instruments to which Egypt is a party. The proposed amendment also gave the Council a statutory basis.

Directorate of Human Rights Affairs and International Social and Humanitarian Questions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

48. In accordance with the remit of the Ministry, which is the official channel of communication responsible for announcing achievements within the country in various regional and international fora, and in the light of its awareness of the importance of human rights issues in their interrelated, interlocking aspects, including the fact that those issues directly impact Egypt's image in the rest of the world, early in the 1990s the Ministry established a new directorate expressly mandated to follow up human rights issues. The terms of reference of the new directorate include international social and humanitarian questions in addition to its basic function, which is to track all matters with a bearing on human rights raised in various international and regional fora and to crystallize them in the form of announcements, decisions, agreements, protocols or other instruments, and subsequently presenting the most important activities, programmes and projects implemented by the Ministry with a view to strengthening and supporting human rights:

- The Ministry, working in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, organizes training courses for police officers, public prosecutors, members of the judiciary, media personnel and journalists in an effort to enhance Egypt's national capacities for propagating a culture of human rights in the country;
- It fulfils Egypt's treaty obligations in the domain of human rights by participating in meetings of the Ministry of Justice committee that is tasked with drafting Egypt's periodic reports to United Nations treaty committees, and also working in coordination with the various relevant ministries and national councils that contribute to the preparation of those reports;
- A new mechanism in the form of an advisory committee on human rights (with members from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office) has been established. The committee meets periodically at the Ministry to consider responses to human rights complaints and questions put by various international human rights bodies (including United Nations treaty committees and mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights). In addition, a permanent mechanism for coordination with the National Council for Human Rights has been established;
- Recommendations for the protection and promotion of human rights are forwarded to the political leadership, as are proposals for working with other States in the domain of human rights;
- The communication network of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is used to transmit images of Egypt's achievements internationally, thereby strengthening the State's programmes and affording opportunities for cooperation with donor agencies, as well as giving State bodies and embassies in search of information a longer reach. The network also transmits the most recent news items about discussions within Egypt with a bearing on the Ministry's activities;

- Egyptian initiatives are submitted at international human rights fora in an effort to muster international support for Egypt's view of current human rights matters based on the defence of humanitarian principles, impartiality, avoidance of transition measures and politicization, and protection of the rights of peoples. At the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in April 2005, the Commission adopted, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution sponsored by Egypt on the protection of civilians during armed conflicts. The resolution enshrined the support of the international community for compliance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and human rights law, and for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts and under foreign occupation;
- The Ministry prepares Egypt's position on human rights for presentation in various international and regional fora;
- The ongoing role of the Ministry as a fundamental communication link between Egypt and the outside world in the domain of human rights;
- It responds to complaints from foreign sources about human rights violations;
- It contributes to the drafting of Egypt's periodic reports on human rights;
- It is currently preparing for the establishment of a dedicated human rights unit tasked with scientific and structural preparations for dealing with Egypt's international obligations by developing a data base and training technical staff in that connection.

Directorate of Human Rights Affairs at the Ministry of Justice

49. This Directorate was established under an order of the Minister of Justice, Order No. 308 of 2002. Its functions are as outlined below:

- Development of a data base containing all international and regional treaties, resolutions, recommendations and other initiatives, and all Egyptian statutory instruments, decrees and court judgements with a bearing on human rights;
- Representation of the Ministry on human rights committees established by governmental, scientific and academic bodies;
- Participation in the work of preparing the legal aspects of Egypt's periodic reports to United Nations treaty committees and regional human rights bodies;
- Conducting legal research and studies aimed at investigating the extent to which national legislation and statutes are compliant with international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions;
- Advising, upon request, on legislation with a bearing on human rights;
- Keeping track of recent legislation and court judgements of relevance for human rights;
- Preparing replies and legal reports on questions and requests for information from the United Nations or its subsidiary bodies, or the African or Arab Commission on Human Rights;
- Representing the Ministry on United Nations treaty committees, at conferences and seminars, and on international, regional or national human rights bodies, and preparing the studies required to implement the recommendations issued by those bodies;
- Organizing and holding conferences and scientific seminars on human rights issues;

- Organizing and holding, in coordination with relevant international, regional or national bodies, training courses for members of the judiciary and administrative personnel;
- Gathering data and statistics in fields with a bearing on human rights that are published by specialized governmental bodies.

50. The post of Deputy Minister of Justice for Human Rights was created pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 233 of 2003.

51. The Directorate of Human Rights Affairs has established a main committee, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice, with the mandate of working jointly with relevant governmental bodies to prepare reports for submission by Egypt to international and regional human rights bodies.

52. The Directorate works in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize training courses for members of the judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office in an effort to propagate and generate awareness of international and regional human rights instruments. It has also prepared an Egyptian compendium of international and regional instruments to which Egypt is a party and Acts and other statutes relating to national mechanisms, with a view to facilitating the work of judges, having regard to the fact that, under the Constitution, these instruments are part of Egyptian law.

List of training courses for members of judicial bodies and family court experts organized by the Directorate of Human Rights Affairs in cooperation with the Human Rights Capacity Building Project of the United Nations Development Programme

<i>No.</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>No. of participants</i>
1	Council of State	21-28 December 2005	6 days	189
2	Office of Administrative Prosecution	18-23 February 2006	6 days	179
3	State Lawsuits Authority	19-27 March 2006	6 days	184
4	Public Prosecutor's Office	16-19 April and 9-10 May 2006	6 days	141
5	Assessment meeting on training courses (Public Prosecutor's Office, Office of Administrative Prosecution, State Lawsuits Authority)	13-15 June 2006	3 days	135
6	Family court experts	25-28 June and 16-17 July 2006	6 days	180
Total number of participants				1 008

Supreme Commission on Human Rights at the Ministry of the Interior

53. Pursuant to an order of the Minister of the Interior (order No. 22562 of 2001), a Supreme Commission on Human Rights was created within the Ministry of the Interior. The membership of the Commission includes senior representatives from all the security and police organs within the Ministry. Its mandate comprises the tasks outlined below:

- Consideration of means of ensuring the protection of human rights in interactions between the various components of the Ministry and citizens, and action to communicate its conclusions;
- Observation of methods used in connection with the duty of maintaining human rights and fundamental freedoms by all employees with the various components of the Ministry;

- Consideration of any obstacles that may hinder an individual's enjoyment of all his rights and fundamental freedoms, and the formulation of optimal solutions for the removal of such obstacles;
- Consideration of concerns that may be raised about human rights in Egypt, and action to take appropriate measures to address those concerns; formulation of proposals in connection with support for the Ministry's plan in the domain of human rights protection;
- Proposals for the organization of seminars, conferences and training courses aimed at enabling Ministry officials and other personnel to acquire a fuller understanding of the concept of human rights;
- Exploration of methods of developing various procedures designed to enhance the legally mandated protection of human rights.

54. The Commission has functioned as a mechanism for the protection of human rights and the maintenance of fundamental freedoms. It has also endeavoured to propagate a culture of human rights among the officials, rank-and-file personnel and civilians within the various sectors of the Ministry with a view to enabling them to acquire a fuller understanding of human rights concepts. Furthermore, it has developed a set of procedures with which Ministry personnel are required to comply in order to facilitate citizens' dealings with them, expedite timely, state-of-the-art service delivery, investigate any allegations of unsatisfactory performance on the part of the Egyptian security system, ensure that security, police and legal procedures are valid, and to make its findings in that connection known, thereby enabling the security apparatus to pursue its efforts and confirming its determination to protect and promote human rights and freedoms. The Commission's efforts have yielded significant accomplishments, including the organization of courses, seminars and competitions in the domain of human rights, not only within the various sectors of the Ministry, but also at security directorates throughout the country.

55. The Ministry of the Interior subsequently issued its order No. 716 of 2006 establishing a Human Rights Directorate within Legal Affairs at the Ministry. The function of the Directorate is to receive and investigate complaints from civil society organizations. Similarly, Human Rights Divisions have been established in all security directorates for the same purpose.

Human Rights Committee within the Ministry of Social Solidarity

56. Pursuant to Ministerial Order No. 41 of 1 March 2004, a Human Rights Committee was established within the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The members of the Committee are senior Ministry personnel, and its function is officially as follows: "The task of the Committee shall be to prepare periodic reports on the Ministry's efforts in the domain of human rights and to look into complaints from citizens relating to the human rights of certain groups such as children, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly."

Human Rights Committee of the People's Assembly

57. In the light of the ongoing process of consolidating and entrenching national human rights mechanisms, the People's Assembly established a Human Rights Committee to operate alongside other national mechanisms in the framework of the Assembly's representative powers. The Committee was formed specifically as a new mechanism to monitor the Government's performance in that domain. The Committee has carried out numerous field inspections and tracked the Government's performance at various sites, and it has issued many important recommendations in that connection.

Civil society organizations

58. Civil society organizations are an important pillar of the structure of human rights in Egypt. Under Act No. 84 of 2002, the Community Associations Act, it is lawful to establish civil society organizations working in the domain of human rights, and branches of international organizations may also be established in Egypt. There are currently 81 registered organizations in that field.

59. These organizations play a major role in the task of propagating a culture of human rights and heightening awareness of international human rights instruments. Their activities in that connection have included the holding of conferences and seminars and the publication of a variety of informational materials. Leading figures from a number of civil society organizations were among the founders of the National Council for Human Rights.

60. With a view to strengthening and supporting the role of civil society organizations and emphasizing their participation in the work of preparing national reports, meetings with representatives of non-governmental organizations have been and are being held on an ongoing basis during the preparation of Egypt's reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Convention here under consideration (see the Foreword).

Trade unions and professional associations

61. Trade unions and professional associations are deemed to be important legal entities that enjoy freedom and independence in terms of their structure and functions, thanks to the fact that the members' rights are protected and that a close watch is kept to detect any violations in the practical application of their exercise. Senior officials of these unions and associations are elected, and are deemed qualified to perform the duties associated with their posts, namely upholding their members' rights and securing benefits for them. These unions and associations constitute an important mechanism for promoting and protecting the rights enunciated in the Covenant.

The Press Authority

62. The press is considered to be an important human rights mechanism: article 207 of the Constitution provides that the Press shall exercise its function freely and independently in the service of society through all means of expression. It shall thus interpret the trend of public opinion, while contributing to its information and orientation within the framework of the basic components of society, the safeguarding of public freedoms, rights and duties, and the respect of the sanctity of citizens' private lives, as provided in the Constitution and defined by law.

63. The area of press activity in Egypt is occupied by numerous newspapers, some national in scope, some published by political parties, and others published by public or private corporations.

64. Owing to the fact that the press is so pervasive, it is deemed to be an important mechanism for propagating a culture of human rights, heightening awareness of international human rights instruments, and monitoring and tracking all international, regional or domestic violations and significant events.

65. These integrated structures represent a far-reaching, constantly expanding, effective national monitoring network with very significant capabilities at the governmental, community, Parliamentary, judicial, media and trade-union levels. These mechanisms can refer constantly to the human rights situation in the exercise of their functions. The fact that the State makes good use of their data and recommendations is a reflection of its political will and determination to strengthen and encourage all national efforts aimed at promoting

respect for human rights and realizing the noble goals toward which the human community aspires.

(iv) National means of recourse serving to safeguard the effective enjoyment of human rights in Egypt

66. For this subject, Egypt refers the Committee to its initial report and the Annex containing the replies to the list of questions in order to avoid repetition. New rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court and other bodies of the judiciary that have been issued during the period covered by this report will be found in Part II below, in the commentary to the several articles of the Covenant.

67. Those rulings are adding to the constant effort to enhance the independence of the judicial authority and the courts through legislation, including Act No. 17 of 2007, amending certain provisions of Act No. 46 of 1972, the Judicial Authority Act, which strengthened the independence of the Judicial Authority and gave it its own budget, and Act No. 182 of 2008, which gave the several subsidiary judicial bodies their own budgets as well.

68. In addition, under Act No. 194 of 2008, the Office of the Socialist Public Prosecutor was abolished, and Act No. 34 of 1971, the Act regulating the Sequestration and Security of the People, and Act No. 95 of 1980, the Act on the Protection of Values against Shameful Conduct, were both repealed.

E. Information, diffusion, awareness and teaching of human rights principles in Egypt

69. Egypt realizes that action to disseminate awareness of human rights is a necessary, fundamental precondition for strengthening the effective implementation of those rights at the international and national levels. The second World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) recommended action to promote human rights education, training and public education as being essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. This was followed by the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

70. Egypt is determined to ensure that human rights principles, awareness of those principles and action to promote behaviour and concepts that respect individual dignity, freedoms and rights in society become firmly rooted among the population, so that they come to constitute the dominant pattern in the daily lives of all. Accordingly, the Government has embarked on the task of providing information about those principles, the better to disseminate them. They are also being integrated into educational curricula at all levels, along with action to heighten awareness of them and provide training in them. This agenda is being implemented through a consistent, integrated, step-by-step package of plans, programmes and initiatives designed to attain the end in view and bear fruit in the form of comprehensive, sustainable human development. Egypt's efforts in the areas of dissemination, education, training and information will be summarized in the paragraphs below.

Dissemination

71. As we have seen, as part of the ratification procedures by which Egypt acceded to the Covenant that is the subject of this report, the text of the Covenant itself was published in the country's Official Gazette on 8 April 1982. The Official Gazette is an Arabic-language publication containing all legislative statutes, presidential decrees and

international agreements. The importance of publication in the Official Gazette arises from the fact that it is a means of enabling all persons to become aware of the laws of the land and the dates of their coming into force.

72. The Official Gazette is published in the form of successive regular issues and occasional special issues. It is sold at outlets specializing in Government publications, and can be purchased by anyone. It is also available by subscription, and subscribers receive successive issues through the post. It is sold at a very low price, one that does not cover the cost of publishing it, in order to ensure that it is accessible to everyone.

73. The Official Gazette is regarded as an important periodical to which public and private bookshops are eager to subscribe so as to have issues of it among their stock. It is also a periodical which all personnel in the field of law like to possess, as it specializes in publishing Acts of Parliament in accordance with Article 188 of the Constitution, which provides that all such Acts shall be published in the Official Gazette within two weeks of their date of adoption, and shall come into force one month from the day following the day of publication, unless another date is set for that purpose. The provisions of all statutes apply only from the date of their entry into force; however, provisions to the contrary may be adopted in other than criminal matters, with the approval of a majority of the members of the People's Assembly (article 187 of the Constitution).

74. Despite the fact that it is publication in the Official Gazette that serves to make legislation known to the people and determines its date of coming into force, scope and applicability, and, in brief, represents what legal experts call a "critical threshold" in the legislative process, yet from another standpoint it is international human rights instruments that attract particular attention from all segments of the population in Egypt. The reason for this is that the Government seeks to foster awareness and recognition of the provisions of these instruments and United Nations resolutions issued in the domain of human rights and freedoms and endeavours to ensure that they are implemented, because of the invaluable human values that they represent. As such, they are another "critical threshold" in the process of social development and education, which alone will ensure that the behaviour and upbringing of future generations is instinct with those values and those rights, and that in times to come their advantages will be understood and their results desired.

75. Accordingly, international human rights instruments, including the Covenant with which we are here concerned (which is one of the two Covenants that are archetypal formulations of the principles of human rights and freedoms), along with the concepts, definitions and values that they contain, have now become fundamental subjects that are taught at both levels of basic education (primary and intermediate) and also in many colleges and universities, especially colleges of law, at both the graduate and postgraduate levels, police colleges, and national specialized training and research centres. The reasoning here is that the young people who study these instruments will be among the first to be committed to their objectives and to implement their provisions, and best placed to defend others for their sake. Moreover, thanks to their skills and qualifications, those young people will undoubtedly be able to enhance the effectiveness of their human rights activities. At the same time, Egypt has been concerned to develop curricula for all educational levels in order to ensure that pupils become acquainted with these instruments and the noble goals and objectives enshrined in their provisions, in pursuit of the aims outlined above.

76. A further consideration is that, needless to say, the State's efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy—an important national obligation under the Constitution—may be deemed a significant and effective contribution to the task of disseminating awareness of the principles of human rights and freedoms and human rights instruments, inasmuch as persons who become literate acquire the ability to learn about and become familiar with those rights and freedoms and to cherish them. This will unquestionably ensure that the

numbers of those who are familiar with their rights and know how to secure and uphold them will steadily increase.

77. Furthermore, national newspapers, newspapers published by political parties and independent newspapers, political parties, trade unions, professional associations, and civil society organizations are deemed to be legal entities with branches throughout the country. They, too, play a pioneering role in heightening awareness of human rights and freedoms, employing methods and approaches suited to the circumstances and nature of their objectives, the culture of their members, and the nature of the several professions and types of work whose associations they serve. In addition, the adult literacy efforts of the Government and civil society organizations throughout Egypt play an important, albeit indirect, role in promoting a greater degree of familiarity with and understanding of international human rights instruments among all groups and categories of the country's citizens.

78. Egypt's efforts, initiatives and plans in the area of education, training and awareness campaigns are summarized in the paragraphs below.

Education

79. As regards the education system, Egypt has focused mainly on curriculum development at the basic, secondary and university levels with a view to ensuring that each stage in the educational process is commensurate with the pupil's ages and having regard to educational quality. An account of how this has been accomplished will be found in the following pages.

Curriculum development at the basic and secondary education levels

80. Egypt believes that the human rights principles enshrined in international instruments, with the lofty values and noble goals enunciated in them, constitute a main foundation-stone of a broad system of formal education encompassing an array of behaviours, orientations, concepts, values and traditions underpinning the development of children and young people. This is the road leading upward for society, and accordingly, Egypt is determined to integrate human rights concepts and principles into curricula at the basic education level, in keeping with the spirit of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

81. In pursuit of this objective, a number of conferences on curriculum development have been held for the purpose of integrating human rights principles into the curricula of Egyptian schools. A national conference on primary curriculum development was held in 1993, followed by one on intermediate-level curriculum development in 1994. Planning for a national conference to upgrade secondary-level curricula is currently under way.

82. To give effect to the outcomes of these conferences, the primary and intermediate-level curricula were overhauled and revised to include those principles, with emphasis on subjects and issues with a bearing on pupils' daily lives, in an effort to provide them with an opportunity of assimilating the scientific, social, economic, technological and political changes occurring around them. Among the most important issues that have now been integrated into school curricula are human rights, the rights of the child, and the rights of women, including the right to freedom from discrimination, health, including both preventive and curative measures, reproductive health and its implications for population growth, religious tolerance, education for peace, national unity, the preservation of the environment, globalization, integration among peoples, and legal awareness of rights and duties.

83. Inevitably, the task required study of international, regional and Arab instruments enunciating those rights. The next step was to hold meetings with experts in concepts

associated with the issue of human rights (as we have seen, this is standard procedure with all issues) for the purpose of developing analyses of them in progressively greater depth, beginning with a relative simple survey for the lower grades and proceeding to a more sophisticated exploration for older pupils. Lastly, an exhaustive sequential analysis of the concepts was performed in preparation for the task of selecting the ones that should be introduced in the various subjects studied in every grade at every level of the school system.

84. In-depth exploration of the content of the concepts of human rights and freedoms yielded the following breakdown:

- The right to a life of dignity;
- The right to education and continuing education;
- The right to equality and non-discrimination;
- The right to decent housing;
- The right to personal freedom;
- The rights of civilians in times of war;
- The rights of children, women and elderly people in times of war;
- The right to practise religious rituals;
- The right to enjoy security and safety;
- The right to safe motherhood;
- The right to practise sport;
- The right to diversity;
- The right to found a family;
- The right to esteem and respect;
- The right to comprehensive health care;
- The right to nourishing food;
- The right to travel and movement;
- The right to participate in political and social life;
- The rights of prisoners in times of war;
- The right to work;
- The right of assembly;
- The right to the enjoyment of leisure time;
- The right to choose and make decisions;
- The right to own property.

85. The curriculum development process has now reached the third grade of the intermediate level, i.e. the final grade of basic education, and is projected to continue to the end of the secondary level. A conference on secondary-level curriculum development will be held in the near future; preparations are currently under way, and the necessary preliminary studies and research are being conducted.

86. Human rights issues will be integrated into the school curricula for students in that age group; it is anticipated that they will be incorporated into the teaching methodology in

the manner outlined above. Concepts that are appropriate for pupils in a particular age group will be selected and explored in depth, and may be used in direct teaching and guidance.

87. Along with the inclusion and integration method, there have been suggestions that secondary-level curricula should be designed on the basis of a core curriculum characterized by a group of subjects to be taken by all pupils, but with additional subjects that they would select on an optional basis, depending on their preferences and aptitudes. Thus human rights or civil education or life skills might be taught as separate subjects within the core curriculum in general, or the pupils might be offered, on an optional basis, a course that would cover important issues that were appropriate in terms of the requirements of their age group.

88. An additional need is a sustained effort aimed at teacher training, preparation and professional development. Secondary-school teachers must learn how to handle these concepts, no less than their primary-level and intermediate-level counterparts.

89. In pursuit of this objective, Egypt has worked in cooperation with a number of international organizations with specialized technical expertise, including UNESCO and the United Nations Population Fund.

90. Concurrently, in the framework of the educational process, Egypt is introducing creative drawing and writing competitions on peace, tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, and the establishment of a culture of tolerance and peace, working in coordination with UNESCO. Egypt is also interested in emphasizing the human right to life in a clean environment. Hence the "green corner" project for schools, a place where pupils are encouraged to go to read books about the environment in the hope of fostering a sense of beauty in them.

Development of human rights education in university programmes

91. During the past few years, there has been a great wave of intense activity at many universities in Egypt in the domain of human rights education. This activity has taken the form of the preparation of studies on the introduction of human rights in programmes of study, and grants have been made available to students and faculty members to enable them to attend training courses on the subject, both in Egypt and abroad.

92. Numerous university colleges have worked in cooperation with international institutions and non-governmental organizations active in the field of law and human rights to develop human rights education. A number of seminars and workshops have been organized for the purpose of discussing how human rights issues can best be integrated into the various university-level programmes; the outcomes of these are summarized below.

- Human rights could be taught in university colleges in the framework of the social sciences and the study of public law, especially international human rights law and international organizations. Alternatively, it could be taught in the framework of political science, especially political theory, social relations, philosophy, social science and history. New branches of study have been introduced into the programmes of colleges of law and politics, not only at the undergraduate level but also at the graduate level. Doctoral candidates are being encouraged to devote their dissertations to this subject, and universities are being encouraged to create cultural and scientific links for their students and to organize lectures and seminars devoted to human rights.

93. As international interest in these matters has steadily grown, Egypt has endeavoured to keep pace by developing curricula, programmes of study and teaching methods, both in formal university education and at the informal level. In 1990, for the first time, a college of

law added human rights as a separate programme for fourth-year students, with a special diploma for students in advanced studies. Human rights are currently being studied at a number of colleges, including colleges of law, the College of Economics and Political Science, the College of Commerce and the Police Academy, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as an independent subject. Courses cover international human rights protection, human rights in Islamic law, the legal protection of human rights, different kinds of rights, and the philosophy of human rights. The importance of human rights studies at the postgraduate level arises from the fact that many of the students who take it will subsequently hold posts in the judicial sector, as lawyers with the Public Prosecutor's Office, as police officers, or as school or university teachers, and their studies will equip them with the information and legal, political and scientific expertise they will require and help them in their careers.

94. The Egyptian Parliament adopted a recommendation to the effect that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments should be incorporated into the curricula of colleges of law, literature and social service, education and early childhood education, on the grounds that it was essential for information about those rights to be disseminated as widely as possible. This has been done to varying degrees, depending on the nature of the several programmes and curricula at those institutions.

95. Egyptian universities are interested in developing their activities along lines that will foster the dissemination of knowledge and values with a bearing on human rights, and to that end, they have established specialized research centres for the study of human rights. They are well aware that teaching and scientific research are important means of ensuring that human rights and respect for them become firmly rooted in society and for the younger generation to believe in them. These centres have conducted research on human rights, published books and articles on the subject, and organized education, training and information courses and programmes for the purpose of propagating knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms and fostering a general culture that will encourage respect for human rights principles.

Training

96. Egypt is determined to ensure that the personnel of the various State departments and agencies, including in particular those concerned with the various aspects of the administration of justice, receive human rights training, and to that end, intensive training programmes, both in-house and external, have been organized, with coordination among the ministries concerned and learned institutions in that domain. In addition, students attending police colleges follow the curricula of colleges of law dealing with human rights issues throughout their years of study, and during their postgraduate studies at institutions of higher education. The training, information and awareness programmes cover all international human rights instruments and discuss how those rights can be respected in practice.

97. In this context, Egypt and UNDP have signed a cooperation agreement on a pilot project for the promotion of human rights which is considered to be the first of its kind in the region. Under the agreement, funding will be made available for a seminar on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and for training courses for the benefit of personnel in the field of the administration of justice and law enforcement, including members of the Public Prosecutor's Office. The first course began in July 2000. The agreement was subsequently renewed and its scope of its participant pool expended to include all members of judicial bodies (the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Bench, the Council of State, the Office of Administrative Prosecution and the State Lawsuits Authority) and their staff members, media personnel, lawyers, members of

the diplomatic service, civil society organizations and student associations. It is currently being implemented, with the following outcomes to date:

- To the end of 2005:

Number of participants: 1,287

- September 2006 – December 2007:

Number of workshops: 78, including 34 held outside Cairo

Number of participants: 3,442, including 1,324 from outside Cairo

Students:

Number of workshops: 6

Number of participants: 2,782

98. The Ministry of the Interior, for its part, has sponsored programmes designed to train senior police officers and heads of police academies in respect for human rights principles. These programmes are offered at the Leaders Training Centre, and have included training courses and seminars aimed at enhancing participants' awareness and understanding of the issues of human rights and freedoms. The Supreme Police Council has decided to make human rights a basic subject in advanced courses of study for police officers, while the Police Academy, working in cooperation with a number of international organizations, is upgrading its human rights programmes and encouraging students to pursue research aspects in that field. The Academy's library, for its part, has supported the publication of works dealing with human rights, thereby helping to enlarge the area of knowledge available to persons conducting research in the field. The Academy has organized training courses on human rights in partnership with the United Nations with a view to enabling trainees to acquire international experience and to emphasize respect for international human rights principles and criteria.

99. Furthermore, a Criminal Justice and Human Rights Division has been established at the Police Research Centre. The purpose of the Centre is to monitor scientific activities with a bearing on the multifarious aspects of criminal justice issues in all fields, and also research on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Over and above all this, the Ministry of the Interior holds courses, seminars and competitions in the domain of human rights, and it has established specialized units in its various sectors and directorates and in the country's governorates which organize competitions for police officers at all levels, with cash prizes for the winners.

Information and awareness

100. According to the Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO, the first step in combating violations of human rights is to raise awareness of the content of those rights in the minds of men. That awareness grows, firstly, through the development of patterns of behaviour that make citizens act, in their daily lives, in ways that are consistent with the content of human rights, and, secondly, through encouragement for participation by individuals in the work of strengthening human rights.

101. Consistent with the above, and as a reaffirmation of it, Egypt's view is that respect for human rights will not be realized until there is a widespread culture of human rights, beginning in childhood and extending throughout all stages of education and on to persons who hold important posts in various relevant places, those who develop educational programmes, media personnel, the press, and others.

102. In this context, scientific research bodies, both governmental and non-governmental, are concerned to propagate awareness of the principles of human rights and fundamental

freedoms by encouraging research and publication in that field and by organizing conferences and seminars where these issues can be discussed in the interests of greater awareness of them and action to foster dialogue about them.

103. At another level, media outlets, national newspapers, newspapers published by political parties and independent newspapers, political parties, and civil society organizations, including trade unions and professional associations, are playing an important role in the work of heightening awareness of human rights by organizing training courses and holding workshops (which are widely reported in the media) for the purpose of propagating human rights principles, or by publishing research and references in which those principles are discussed. These efforts target all groups in society, including in particular students and research personnel, owing to the significant future role that they will play in the work of dissemination, with the aim of enhancing their research capabilities and implanting human rights principles in their consciousness. The training courses and workshops deal with issues of historical development and the philosophical and ethical foundations of human rights principles. They seek to familiarize participants with the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms and ways of realizing them. Such issues as the universality of human rights and the distinctive nature of Arab culture are also discussed. In addition, they are concerned with promoting awareness of the role of community associations in propagating those principles.

104. As regards implementation, in recent years a number of conferences, seminars and workshops on human rights issues have been organized, some within Egypt and others that have been international in scope. These events have been held in cooperation with national, regional and international organizations, including UNESCO, UNDP and the League of Arab States.

105. With respect to the Government's efforts, we may note that the awareness plans and programmes of all information agencies are formulated having regard to an information policy aimed at attaining the objectives outlined below:

- Familiarity with human rights principles as formulated by the United Nations and enshrined in international and regional human rights agreements, and presentation of the various aspects of their application in Egyptian society, with emphasis on Egypt's full respect for those principles and its compliance with the associated criteria, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and domestic legislation;
- Emphasis on the fact that Egypt believes firmly in and acknowledges the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination and the right freely to dispose of their natural resources;
- Awareness of Egypt's desire to have relations with all the peoples of the world based on respect for their political freedoms, maintenance of their cultural identities and their right to economic, social and cultural development;
- Awareness of the State's efforts to strengthen respect for women's rights and to foster equality between the sexes, which is a right enshrined in the Constitution;
- Emphasis on the fact that Egypt and its people acknowledge and call for the right to peace and the right to enjoy the common heritage of mankind, as affirmed by the civilizations specific to the world's peoples, each of which stands upon the achievements of others. We respect dialogue between civilizations, with supporting examples;
- Awareness of the fact that conformity to human rights criteria and action to put them into practice will come about only through the interlinked efforts of peoples, nations and public and private institutions at all levels;

- The fact that in the field of human rights, Egypt, by harvesting the fruits of scientific progress, is working hard to join the company of advanced States, and accordingly has devoted special attention to scientific and technological research with a view to enabling it to strike deep roots in Egypt and thereby promoting prosperity, progress and development;
- Awareness of the freedom of belief and the respect for minorities and all the races of humanity that are enjoyed by Egypt and its people;
- Realization of the efforts that have gone into environmental protection and action to ensure the availability of a clean environment that is safe for the lives of individuals, including not only the efforts of the State but also those of community institutions and associations; this kind of action is also regarded as a human right;
- Awareness of how Egypt lives now in the age of freedoms and democracy, and how it has broadened the scope of freedom of opinion and the opinions of others through its multiplicity of political parties and freedom of the press;
- Realization of the State's interest in and concern with the social situation of low-income and disadvantaged groups and its action to ensure that the means to a life of dignity are available to them at every step in the area of development and in relevant legislation and decrees;
- An invitation to address some human rights problems within society, such as illiteracy and unemployment, the broadening of the health care safety net, action to confront poverty and low wages in some sectors, various aspects of environmental problems and population growth, and the problem of land mines, particularly in the El Alamein region.

106. As the above summary has shown, Egypt is increasingly striving, both at home and internationally, to strengthen means of heightening and propagating awareness of human rights and providing information, training and teaching about them and the international instruments in which they are enshrined. These efforts reflect the significance that these matters have come to assume, in terms of action by the Government and by non-governmental actors alike, as well as the extent of Egypt's compliance with the provisions of international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions with a bearing on human rights issues.

107. Those efforts have born fruit in the strengthening and enhancement of public awareness of them and in the creation of a general culture structured around these issues among all segments and groups in society. They have also contributed significantly to improved collective and individual performance as regards the issues raised by these matters in terms of relations and links at the public and private levels. In practical terms, this evolving situation has been reflected in the fact that individuals are making more use of the right to litigation that is guaranteed for all, and in the growth of legal awareness apparent in the fact that the Supreme Constitutional Court has had to settle various cases involving interpretations of these issues and questions relating to them. The Court's rulings in constitutional disputes that have come before it have helped to expand awareness of human rights principles and fostered a concern to uphold them and to track down initiatives that are at variance or inconsistent with them or legislation that contravenes them. The decisions of the Supreme Constitutional Court in many cases involving interpretations and legal precedents with a bearing on human rights and freedoms have been fully consistent with international criteria derived from international and regional human rights instruments.

II. Substantive discussion of the rights enunciated in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Article 1

Right of peoples to self-determination

108. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

109. To reaffirm a point made in Part I of this report, the Egyptian people, through its constitutional elective institutions, does exercise self-determination, and participates freely and actively in the management of the affairs of society through referenda on the Constitution or other important matters on which it is consulted. Another expression of its self-determination consists in the statutes enacted by the elected legislative power which represents the people. These include not only Acts of Parliament but also international agreements adopted by Parliament and the monitoring of their implementation by State institutions in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres in pursuit of the country's ambitious development plans in all areas.

110. Egypt's natural resources are deemed to be publicly owned under article 33 of the Constitution, which enshrines the sanctity of public ownership and states that its protection and consolidation is the duty of every citizen in accordance with the law. Consequently, the country's natural resources may be disposed of only through the laws enacted by the legislature, which is elected by the people and consists of their representatives; this ensures that optimal use will be made of those resources, and that the accruing benefits will be used judiciously and to best advantage. In the light of the foregoing discussion, it will be clear that the people of Egypt enjoy full freedom with respect to the disposal of their natural resources in comprehensive development plans adopted by means of statutory instruments enacted by the elected People's Assembly. Furthermore, those resources may be exploited and used only pursuant to authorization issued under the law of the land, duly enacted by the legislature, or under international instruments with which the People's Assembly is required to comply and which have the force of domestic law under the Egyptian legal system.

111. The third paragraph of this article does not apply, as Egypt is not responsible for administering any non-self-governing or trust territories in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

112. In the matter of international cooperation, Egypt, as a member of the United Nations and in the light of its regional responsibility, participates willingly and effectively with the international community and all States in all domains and at all levels of international relations. In general terms, this is a matter of contributing to the realization of the goals and benefits that are common to all States and are the ultimate aim of international relations among equals, such as exchanges of experience and cultures in pursuit of the full attainment of the rights enunciated in the Covenant. In the course of the period covered in this report, Egypt has acceded to many international human rights instruments and entered into a number of bilateral agreements in the same domain:

- Ratification of three international instruments on environmental protection;
- Ratification of 11 bilateral international agreements on cultural cooperation;

- Accession to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris on 20 October 2005.

113. With a view to strengthening international cooperation and opening up new areas for assistance between Egypt and the States of the world, in 1992 Egypt established the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States, between Egypt and the republics of the former Soviet Union. As of 2006, the Fund had 18 Member States. It works along the main lines summarized below:

- Training for senior officials of those States; as of January 2009, 875 training courses had been organized, with a total of 17,203 participants, in the fields of public health, education, information, tourism, agriculture, security, economics, banking and archaeology, besides diplomacy, social work and information technology;
- Provision of Egyptian expertise in accordance with the needs of these States. At the present time, 31 Egyptian experts have been assigned to work in the various States of the Fund;
- Provision of humanitarian assistance (in cash and in kind), such as medicines, clothing and blankets, in response to natural disasters and destruction, the founding of a number of hospitals, schools and Government buildings and furnishing and equipping them to enable them to carry on their activities;
- Support for participation in international meetings on emergency relief, and support for development and reconstruction plans in war-torn States.

114. Egypt has also established a Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, structured along the same lines as the one just discussed. In addition, Egypt participates in regional economic blocs in Africa and the States of the Mediterranean basin, and is also a party to various agreements and protocols arising out of its bilateral economic and commercial relations with many States in various parts of the world with a view to exchanges of expertise, skills and needs. Egypt supports bilateral relations with those States in all areas.

Article 2

Guarantee of equality in the exercise of the rights enunciated in the Covenant

115. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007.

116. Generally speaking, human rights principles enjoy constitutional and legal protection in Egypt, and the Covenant that is the subject of this report is deemed, under the Constitution, to be part of the law of the land. Its provisions are tantamount to constitutional provisions dealing with the protection of rights, in the context of the full conformity with the principle of equality and the prohibition of bias and discrimination that is enshrined in article 40 of the Constitution, and also with rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court on the right to equality, which have been considered earlier in this report.

117. In essence, all the rights and freedoms enunciated in the Covenant are, from a legal standpoint, protected in the Egyptian legal system in the form of the relevant constitutional provisions and legislation. Here we find, in the framework of the Committee's third general observation, the guarantee of the direct implementation of the articles of the Covenant: they are effectively Egyptian statutes, and as such are applicable to and effectively enjoyed by all. At the same time, the means of legal recourse in Egypt are such that individuals have

full judicial protection from practices contravening the provisions of the Covenant or legislation with a bearing on these rights. In its previous report, Egypt noted that the Criminal Court of Cairo had relied on the Covenant in handing down a verdict of innocent in the case of the railway workers' strike.

118. The process of economic reform and the transition from a socialist system to a free market system has been accompanied by difficulties and obstacles. None the less, the above statements find confirmation in Egypt's commitment to implementing its obligations under paragraph 1 of the article here under review and its action to guarantee to citizens the full enjoyment of the rights enunciated therein. To that end, it has endeavoured to ensure the optimal scientific use of its available resources in the framework of the national five-year development plans, working in coordination and cooperation with the appropriate State organizations. Moreover, the Government has pursued its efforts, in partnership with national human rights mechanisms and in coordination with civil society institutions, to address effectively and seriously, using all available measures, any misguided practices and forms of behaviour that have persisted as part of the country's social heritage. Action along these lines is regarded as a national challenge for all State agencies, which are working to discourage these practices and forms of behaviour, minimize their repercussions, and promote awareness of their hazards and harmful impacts, with a view to their elimination, thereby enhancing prospects for successful implementation of the five-year development plans, with all the benefits that that would entail.

119. In terms of the practical application by the courts of the principle of equality, it is noteworthy that the Supreme Constitutional Court has handed down numerous rulings in the course of exercising its oversight function, determining whether legislation and regulations are consistent with that principle, as noted in Egypt's initial report to the Committee. There have also been a number of other rulings with a bearing on the same principle, and some of these are summarized in the paragraphs below.

- The Court ruled that a number of Acts granting periodic increases in pensions were unconstitutional on the grounds that they were too restrictive in their applicability to persons entitled to pensions, providing as they did that one of the qualifying requirements was that the beneficiary must be of the specified legal age for entitlement to a pension, and no other age (judgement handed down in case No. 174, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 9 January 2005);
- The Court ruled that article 2, paragraph 1, of Acts No. 150 of 1988, No. 85 of 2000, No. 19 of 2001, No. 150 of 2002, No. 91 of 2003 and No. 88 of 2004 were unconstitutional on the grounds that they awarded increases in the pensions payable only to persons who had completed their service, and did not award a comparable increase to persons whose service had been terminated by resignation, thereby infringing the right of private ownership enshrined in article 34 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 33, year 28, rulings of the SCC, session of 1 July 2007);
- The Court ruled the article 23, paragraph 2 of Act No. 79 of 1975 (the Social Insurance Act) was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided that pension due should be deducted from the adjusted pay of every employee whose service had been terminated by resignation, but not from that of other employees whose service had been terminated for other reasons; this, the Court found, was discrimination and as such contravened the principle of equality enshrined in article 40 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 310, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 4 March 2008);
- The Court ruled that article 1, paragraph 2, subparagraph 2 of Act No. 88 of 2004 was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided for a cap on pension increases

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

120. Egyptian law regulates the extent to which aliens enjoy these rights in Egypt (the right to work, the right to own property, and the right to social insurance and social security). The relevant statutes are Act No. 13 of 2003, Act No. 79 of 1975 and Act No. 30 of 1977 on social security, and the Acts governing ownership by non-Egyptians of built-up land, vacant land, agricultural land and desert land. As was noted in the previous report, Egypt is committed in all cases involving these issues to the principle applied in international relations, which is essentially the principle of equal treatment.

Article 3

Equal rights for men and women

121. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007, and the reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

122. We may add that during the period covered in this report, Egypt's implementation of its reform programmes has included the adoption of numerous statutory instruments (both Acts and decrees) designed to strengthen equality between men and women. Its action in this area has been in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and amendments thereto and in line with its international commitments arising from the international human rights instruments to which it is a party, to say nothing of the fact that promoting gender equality is one of the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, Egyptian women have continued to score many successes in various domains. The most important items of legislation will be discussed in the paragraphs below, followed by some leading statistical indicators.

Acts and other statutory instruments with a bearing on the promotion of gender equality

- Act No. 1 of 2000, regulating a number of situations and procedures relating to litigation in issues of personal status. This Act authorizes women to apply for the termination of marriage by the procedure of *khul'*;
- Act No. 6 of 2003, amending Act No. 189 of 1951 concerning elections to chambers of commerce; the Act abolishes the condition that candidates must be male, thereby enabling women to stand for election;
- Act No. 142 of 2004 amending the Mayors and Sheikhs Act by abolishing the condition that incumbents must be male, thereby enabling women to fill these posts;
- Act No. 154 of 2004 amending the Nationality Act (Act No. 26 of 1975) and providing that an Egyptian mother married to an alien has the right to transmit her nationality to her children. The adoption of this Act was also a response to the efforts of the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood;

- Act No. 4 of 2005 amending article 20 of Act No. 25 of 1929, the Code of Personal Status, by introducing the provision that a woman has the right to seek a divorce by the procedure of *khul'*;
- Act No. 126 of 2008 amending the Child Act, the Civil Status Act and the Penal Code by setting 18 years as the uniform minimum age of marriage for both men and women, criminalizing female genital mutilation, and prescribing the issue of a birth certificate in the mother's name in cases where the father is unknown;
- Act No. 149 of 2009 allocating 64 additional seats for women, distributed among 32 electoral districts;
- Presidential Decree No. 249 of 2007 withdrawing Egypt's reservation to article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 pursuant to an amendment to the Nationality Act.

Some statistical indicators with a bearing on gender equality and changes in the status of women and their situation in the workplace

- In the 2004/05 school year, women accounted for 48.1 per cent of students enrolled in pre-university education;
- In the 2005/06 academic year, women accounted for 47.8 per cent of all students enrolled at universities;
- Women graduates are 52.1 per cent of the total;
- Women account for 46.8 per cent of all students enrolled at technical institutes;
- Women account for 50.9 per cent of all students who graduate from those institutes;
- Women accounted for 50 per cent of all students who were awarded B.A. degrees in the 2003/04 academic year;
- Women accounted for 40 per cent of all students who were awarded Master's degrees in the 2002/03 academic year;
- Women accounted for 40 per cent of all students who were awarded doctorates in the 2002/03 academic year;
- Women accounted for 43.17 per cent of all personnel employed at research centres, institutes and other facilities in 2005;
- Women accounted for 38.4 per cent of all persons registered on voters' lists in 2005, up from 35 per cent in 2000;
- Elected and appointed women members accounted for 5.7 per cent of the total membership of the Shura Council in 2002;
- Elected and appointed women members accounted for 1.8 per cent of the total membership of the People's Assembly in 2005;
- There are a total of 857 women members of local councils. This figure represents 80.5 per cent of the 1,064 women candidates for election to those councils, for all the governorates of the country. Furthermore, women account for 1.8 per cent of the members of local people's councils (the total membership of those councils, for all governorates, is 47,636);
- Trade union election results for the 2006-2011 cycle revealed that 1,067 women workers had been elected to membership of the boards of directors of the various trade union organizations. One woman was elected to the board of directors of the

Egyptian Trade Union Federation, and 31 women were elected to the boards of directors of general trade unions;

- Women account for 47 per cent of all faculty members at Egyptian universities;
- As of 30 June 2006, the Egyptian Radio and Television Union had 27,112 women employees, representing 68.29 per cent of the total;
- Pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 26 of 2003, a woman judge was appointed as a member of the panel of substitutes at the Supreme Constitutional Court;
- There are 99 women members of the State Lawsuits Authority, holding various ranks, including 26 who hold the rank of Deputy President of the Authority;
- In 2007, 30 women were appointed judges of courts of first instance pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 95 of 2007, and 12 more were appointed in 2008;
- In 2008, for the first time, a woman was appointed to the post of *ma'dhun*, an official with authority to perform civil marriages;
- The recent shuffle of Cabinet posts featured the appointment of three women ministers: the Minister of International Cooperation, the Minister of Labour, and the Minister of the Family and Population are now women;
- Women account for 18.2 per cent of all deputy ministers;
- In 2007, 14.4 million women were registered on voters' lists, representing 39.8 per cent of all registered voters.

123. It is noteworthy that the Government of Egypt has taken the necessary measures to address discrimination against women in the workplace, including hiring and pay issues, through such mechanisms as Labour Offices and the 32 Equal Opportunity Units that have been opened in 26 governorates and three more within the structure of Government. In this context, the Committee is referred to Egypt's latest report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which outlines Egyptian women's accomplishments as full partners in the development process. The data there presented reveal the ongoing effort to promote and upgrade the status of women in Egypt and confirm the success achieved by national mechanisms created to that end, most notably the National Council for Women, which have ensured that all fields of employment are now open to women. In recent years, those mechanisms have continued to address the major remaining challenges, including action to reduce illiteracy among women and boost participation by women in general elections.

124. In the matter of combating violence against women, the Government is currently studying a number of proposals submitted by the National Council for Women to amend the Penal Code so as to eliminate any discriminatory treatment against women in the matter of adultery, limit the power of judges to hand down lenient sentences in cases of rape and gross indecency, and criminalize sexual harassment in the workplace. At the level of executive policies designed to combat the various kinds of violence against women, Egypt has adopted a number of programmes aimed at countering prevalent negative social customs and traditions and promoting the economic advancement and liberation of women through various projects funded year by year under the State investment plan.

Article 4

Organization of the scope of enjoyment of the recognized rights

125. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007.

126. The human rights enunciated in the Covenant are enshrined in Egypt's Constitution and domestic laws. As was also noted in the previous report of Egypt, those rights are established, regulated and protected through the criminalization of violations or infringements of them. These statutory instruments regulate the rights in question for the purpose of enhancing the general welfare and benefiting society.

127. We also refer the Committee to the rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court in this domain that are outlined both in the present report and in its predecessor.

Article 5

Prohibition of limitations on recognized rights or freedoms

128. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007.

129. We may add that, confirming the information contained in the initial report and the replies to the questions, the human rights instruments to which Egypt is a party are deemed to constitute part of Egypt's Constitution and domestic law, now that the ratification procedures have been completed and they have been published in the Official Gazette in the Arabic language, pursuant to article 151 of the Constitution. Those rights and freedoms have thereby acquired the protection afforded by the relevant constitutional provisions, inasmuch as they are enshrined in the Constitution. This ensures that Egyptian legislators are committed to upholding them, and any legislative measure that disregarded them would be liable to a ruling of unconstitutionality by the Supreme Constitutional Court that would be binding upon all authorities in the State.

130. The Supreme Constitutional Court has set, in its case law, limits on legislators' freedom to enact laws regulating rights and freedoms. The relevant passage runs as follows:

“With respect to the rights and fundamental freedoms of the citizen, the content of the body of law which, in a State governed by the rule of law, takes precedence over them, is in practice subject to limitations, given the level of those rights and freedoms which democratic States have consistently upheld in their societies, and must therefore be in accordance with them. It follows that a State governed by the rule of law may not derogate from the protection that it affords for the rights and freedoms of its citizens beyond the minimum limits of the general requirements in effect in democratic States, and may not subject their enjoyment and exercise to restrictions of such a nature as to be injurious to the application of them that is the practice of democratic regimes. On the contrary, a State governed by the rule of law is limited by the democratic concept itself, the gist of which is that its legislation does not infringe the rights the granting of which is deemed, in democratic States, to be a primary prerequisite for the establishment of the rule of law and a fundamental guarantee of the maintenance of human rights and integral personal dignity.”

131. It is clear from this that the reasoning of the Supreme Constitutional Court and the principles and criteria on which it relies in this matter are consistent in terms of content and are fundamentally related to the provisions of article 5 of the Covenant. Accordingly, any activity designed to infringe or restrict those rights would be deemed to contravene the

Constitution and the law, and would entail criminal, administrative or civil liability, depending on the cases and situations involved.

132. The provisions of Egypt's domestic law regulating the rights and freedoms enunciated in the Covenant are framed in such a way as not to restrict or evade those rights in any way. One example is Act No. 12 of 2003, the Labour Code, which prohibits agreements to contravene its provisions. Under article 5, every condition or agreement that contravenes the provisions of the Code is deemed null and void, even where it predates the coming into force of the Code, inasmuch as it must entail a curtailment of the workers' rights enunciated in the Code. Moreover, benefits and advantageous conditions set forth in collective or individual work contracts must remain in effect. In that context, under article 21 of Act No. 139 of 1981, the Education Act, it is a criminal offence for parents or guardians to fail to enrol their children in school for the compulsory grades, while parents who allow their children to be absent without a valid excuse are liable to fines. Under article 25 of Act No. 12 of 1996, it is a criminal offence for parents or guardians not to have their children vaccinated as required by law, and persons found guilty of that offence are liable to fines.

133. As regards judicial action to uphold the rights and freedoms enunciated in the Covenant, the Supreme Constitutional Court has handed down numerous rulings in exercising its function of determining the constitutionality of Acts and regulations. Some of the most noteworthy of these are summarized below.

- The Court ruled that a number of Acts granting periodic increases in pensions were unconstitutional on the grounds that they were too restrictive in their applicability to persons entitled to pensions, providing as they did that one of the qualifying requirements was that the beneficiary must be of the specified legal age for entitlement to a pension, and no other age (judgement handed down in case No. 174, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 9 January 2005);
- The Court has ruled that various provisions of Acts and regulations setting a maximum limit to cash remuneration for the unused balance of paid leave are unconstitutional where the reason why the leave has not been taken is because the beneficiary had to work (one ruling of this kind was the one handed down in case No. 156, year 25, rulings of the SCC, session of 13 February 2005);
- The Court ruled that article 2, paragraph 1, of Acts No. 150 of 1988, No. 85 of 2000, No. 19 of 2001, No. 150 of 2002, No. 91 of 2003 and No. 88 of 2004 were unconstitutional on the grounds that they awarded increases in the pensions payable only to persons who had completed their service, and did not award a comparable increase to persons whose service had been terminated by resignation, thereby infringing the right of private ownership enshrined in article 34 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 33, year 28, rulings of the SCC, session of 1 July 2007);
- The Court ruled the article 23, paragraph 2 of Act No. 79 of 1975 (the Social Insurance Act) was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided that pension due should be deducted from the adjusted pay of every employee whose service had been terminated by resignation, but not from that of other employees whose service had been terminated for other reasons; this, the Court found, was discrimination and as such contravened the principle of equality enshrined in article 40 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 310, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 4 March 2008);
- The Court ruled that article 1, paragraph 2, subparagraph 2 of Act No. 88 of 2004 was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided for a cap on pension increases for pension holders who were not employees of the State, whereas no such cap was

imposed on those employees, despite the fact that the purpose of the provision was the same in both cases, namely to address the burden of constantly increasing pension entitlements; in passing this Act, the legislature had exceeded its authority in the matter of regulating entitlements, thereby contravening articles 17 and 122 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in Case No. 20 of year 27, rulings of the SCC, session of 8 June 2008).

134. In this context, trade unions and professional associations are deemed to be important legal entities that enjoy freedom and independence and protect their members' rights. A close watch is kept to detect any violations in the practical application of their activities. Senior officials of these unions and associations are elected, and are deemed qualified by virtue of their posts to perform their duties, namely upholding their members' rights and securing benefits for them.

Article 6

The right to work

135. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007.

136. We may add here that a new Labour Code (the proposed main lines of which were mentioned in the previous report of Egypt, when the legislation had not yet progressed beyond the draft bill stage) was promulgated in Act No. 12 of 2003. Under article 12 of the Code, every individual who is able and willing to work has the right to submit an application to have his name registered with the competent administrative authority for the district where he resides. Under article 14 of the Code, every employer has the right to appoint any person of his choice. The Code devotes particular attention to ensuring that the right of freedom of choice or acceptance of employment is protected: under article 375, every person who infringes another person's right to work, right to employ or not to employ any individual, or right to belong to an association, by force, threats, violence, intimidation or any other unlawful means, whether directed against the person concerned or his wife or children, is liable to a penalty of imprisonment and a fine.

137. Vocational and technical training is regulated under Part III of the Code, on vocational guidance and training (articles 131 to 144). This section of the Code provides for the establishment of a Higher Council for Human Resource Development and a workforce development and employment programme. The Council is tasked with the drafting of a national policy for human resource development planning and the preparation of a national programme for optimal workforce employment. These articles also cover financing for training, licensing conditions for vocational and technical training activities, and the procedure for the legal establishment of a fund to provide financing for training and skills development, with resources consisting partly of appropriations made available by the State, plus 1 per cent of the net profits of establishments subject to the provisions of the Code, and any contributions and donations that it may receive.

138. A discussion of the Government's efforts to give effect to this right and to address the problem of unemployment and gradually reduce the unemployment rate, despite the problem of continued population growth, will be found in the comments on article 11 of the Covenant and Part III of this report. Those efforts have included development plans, skills development and training programmes, and support for small business enterprises and family-based production.

Article 7

Conditions of work

139. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007, and the reports submitted by Egypt to the International Labour Organization on Conventions to which it has acceded.

140. We may add here that Egypt has consistently striven to keep pace with recent developments and the obligations incumbent upon it under international human rights instruments. Its efforts in that connection have included the enactment of the Labour Code. The main lines of the Code's provisions governing conditions of work, in so far as they relate to the terms of this article, are summarized in the four paragraphs below.

Fair wages

141. The Labour Code provides for the establishment of a National Council for Wages tasked with setting wages throughout the country with a view to striking a balance between wages and prices. It also sets minimum yearly increases in pay, prescribing that they shall be not less than 7 per cent. The Council is thus a national mechanism that is an ongoing reference for the minimum wage, providing for periodic increases and ensuring that it keeps pace with increases in prices, thereby acting to maintain an appropriate standard of living for workers and their families.

142. Under article 35 of the Labour Code, discrimination in wages on the grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or creed is prohibited. Under article 247, every employer who does so discriminate is liable to a fine multiplied by the number of workers who have been subjected to such discrimination, and the fine is doubled if the offence is repeated.

Safe and healthy working conditions

143. Part V of the Code deals with occupational safety and health and a secure work environment, including all the conditions governing those matters that are set forth in international instruments to which Egypt is a party, while labour conventions to which Egypt is not a party are taken into account as well. Ministerial Order No. 211 of 2003, on the limits of safety and the necessary conditions and requirements for protection from physical, mechanical, biological and chemical hazards and work environment safety, provides that international criteria and standards in that area shall be observed, thereby ensuring appropriate conditions and a satisfactory work environment.

Promotions

144. The Labour Code contains no explicit provisions relating to promotions as such. However, the Constitution does guarantee equality, and this is something that, as a practical matter, must be taken into account in the regulations on labour issued by the relevant governmental departments and agencies. It is the organizational and functional structures derived from those regulations that determine the setting of objective criteria for promotion, based on competence, experience and level of education; there can be no discrimination among workers in that respect. If any citizen does experience discrimination, he or she has the right to seek redress through the courts on the grounds of his or her right of equality under the Constitution.

Rest and leave time

145. In the matter of rest and leave, the Labour Code provides that “Working hours shall include one or more break periods, totalling not less than one hour, for meals and rest. In determining this period, care shall be taken to ensure that the worker shall not be made to continue working continuously for more than five hours.” It also provides that “The work shall be organized at the establishment so that each worker shall have a weekly period of rest of not less than twenty-four complete hours after at most six continuous working days. In all cases, the weekly period of rest shall be reckoned as paid time.”

146. The Code also provides that every worker who has completed one full year of service is entitled to 21 days of annual leave with pay, and this entitlement is increased to 30 days annually for every worker who has completed ten years of service. Furthermore, every worker over 50 years of age is entitled to not less than 30 days of annual leave. Official holidays and weekly rest days are not counted as part of the total of annual leave days. If the worker’s service is less than one year, he is entitled to leave time that is proportionate to the length of his service, provided that he has been employed for not less than six months. In all cases, workers in hard or dangerous occupations, workers whose work is hazardous for their health, and workers in remote areas are entitled to an additional period of seven days of annual leave with pay pursuant to an order issued by the Minister of Manpower and Migration.

147. In this connection, the Supreme Constitutional Court has issued a number of rulings upholding a worker’s right to cash compensation for leave days that he has been unable to take because of circumstances beyond his control. See the discussion on article 5 above.

148. Egypt is among the States that have ratified the basic International Labour Organization conventions. It is also implementing a national decent work programme in cooperation with the ILO under the Decent Work Agenda. A collective dialogue programme has been under way since 2008, in cooperation with the ILO, with the aims of enhancing the capacities of the three labour partners—the Government, employers and workers—building an independent mechanism to develop agreed solutions to labour problems, including action to deal with the negative situation arising from the repercussions of the global financial crisis, and regulating the exercise of the right to strike and engage in collective bargaining, in accordance with the above-mentioned basic ILO conventions.

Article 8
Right to form trade unions

149. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt’s previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee’s questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

150. With reference to paragraph 1, subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d), unions in Egypt are divided into two types: trade unions proper and professional associations. Trade unions are regulated by Act No. 35 of 1976 and the amendments made thereto by Act No. 1 of 1981 and Act No. 12 of 1995. The formation and functioning of professional associations are regulated by Act No. 100 of 1995. Under these Acts, both trade unions and professional associations exist to protect the lawful rights of their members, defend their interests, improve their circumstances and working conditions, propagate awareness of union action, enrich their members culturally and professionally, improve their health, and promote their economic and social advancement. Trade unions and professional associations also participate in the discussion of draft socio-economic development plans. They also

participate in various labour-related activities at the Arab, African and international levels and reaffirm the role of the Egyptian trade union movement in those activities.

151. In pursuit of their goals, trade unions are allowed to put their funds into various safe investments in accordance with the rules set forth in the financial regulations of union organizations. In addition, trade unions endeavour to settle individual and collective disputes involving their members, enter into collective employment agreements, and participate in the work of drafting production plans at industrial establishments.

152. Under Egyptian law, workers in professional or industrial associations may form nation-wide federations. It is also lawful to establish a general federation of all trade unions. Trade unions enjoy independence in the management of their operations, and are free to participate in similar trade-union activities internationally. The Labour Code does not include any restrictions on trade-union activity apart from the requirement to observe the provisions of the Code and to refrain from decisions and acts that are deemed to be criminal offences under the Code's prohibition of the offences of incitement to hatred or contempt or action to overturn the rule of law. The Code also prohibits any action, use of force, intimidation, threats or infringement of the rights of others in respect of the employment or non-employment of any person or that person's membership of any association (article 70). These are restrictions that are necessary to the preservation of national security, public order and the rights of others.

153. Under the Code, a worker may devote himself exclusively to trade union work, and a worker who is a member of the union's board of directors may be separated or laid off only pursuant to a court order (articles 45 and 48). Under article 74, every employer who compels one of his workers to join or leave a trade union organization is liable to prosecution and subject to a penalty that is multiplied by the number of individuals so compelled.

154. Concerning the right to strike, under article 192 of the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003), workers have the right to strike peacefully through their trade union organizations in defence of their professional, economic and social interests. However, strikes at vital strategic establishments, where a work stoppage would result in harm to the national security or to the basic services that they provide for citizens, are prohibited.

155. A number of Acts regulating the country's 21 professional associations have been adopted. Those associations include the Bar Association and the analogous associations for members of the teaching profession, the medical profession, engineers, musicians, actors, filmmakers, the visual arts, social experts, trade experts, tourist guides, nurses, practitioners of natural medicine, athletes and agriculturalists.

156. For remarks on paragraphs 2 and 3, the Committee is referred to the previous report of Egypt. We may recall here that Egypt is a party to the above-mentioned ILO convention on freedom of the right to organize since 6 November 1957. The Committee is also referred to the various reports on the matter that have been submitted to the ILO.

157. In addition, intensive studies are currently being conducted with a view to amending the Trade Unions Act to bring it into line with recent national and international developments of relevance for the labour movement.

Statistical indicators from the results of the most recent trade union elections (2006-2011)

- Number of professional associations: 21;
- Number of general workers' trade unions in Egypt: 23;
- Number of general trade union committees: 410;

- General federation: 23 (22 men, 1 woman);
- General unions: 483 (452 men, 31 women);
- Union committees: 1801 (1677 men, 42 women);
- Number of members of general associations: 3,207,137

158. In this context, we may note that a delegation from the ILO visited Cairo in April 2009, where it met with representatives of parties to social dialogue and labour partners with a view to reaching agreement on a way to propel the dialogue programme forward in the near future in order to help Egypt meet its international commitments and implement basic labour conventions, including convention No. 87 on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize. Continued cooperation with the ILO is anticipated in the future, as the Organization has shown itself to be prepared to furnish the necessary technical assistance.

Article 9 The right to social security

159. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

Statistical and financial indicators on the practical application of the above-mentioned statutory instruments dealing with social insurance and social security during the period covered in this report

Social insurance

160. Social insurance in Egypt is regulated by a number of statutory instruments that were discussed in the previous report. A list of those instruments is as follows:

- The Social Insurance Act (Act No. 79 of 1975), which is concerned with the civil service and the public and private sectors;
- Act No. 108 of 1976, providing for extension of social insurance coverage to employers;
- Act No. 50 of 1978, concerning social insurance for Egyptians working abroad;
- Act No. 112 of 1980, concerning insurance coverage for non-organized workers.

161. A summary table showing changes over time in numbers of beneficiaries under these Acts and the financial costs that their implementation has entailed is presented below.

Numbers of social insurance recipients and benefits paid, 2001-2005

Year	Old age		Death		Disability		Unemployment	Work accident
	No.	Value (000)	No.	Value (000)	No.	Value (000)	No.	Value (000)
2001	1 872 777	365 654	1 158 443	142 722	243 496	59 105	693	20 969
2002	1 965 186	406 567	1 152 343	150 077	256 354	67 570	338	11 351
2003	2 046 038	447 349	1 130 994	157 771	264 798	75 115	214	9 977
2004	2 081 452	487 304	1 107 363	165 894	282 026	83 210	571	12 433
2005	2 108 898	529 649	1 081 143	173 941	278 358	91 539	306	16 674

Numbers of insured persons and numbers of pensions

Year	No. of insured persons					No. of pensions				
	Val. 75/97	Val. 76/108	Val. 50/78	Val. 80/112	Total	Val. 75/97	Val. 76/108	Val. 50/78	Val. 80/112	Total
2001	5 607	1 876	18	5 941	13 423	1 269	325	5 308	1 676	3 275
2002	5 776	1 924	15	5 941	13 656	1 341	343	5 605	1 687	3 377
2003	5 876	1 966	16	5 966	13 824	1 397	359	5 864	1 683	3 445
2004	5 970	2 418	16	5 506	13 910	1 446	376	6 990	1 636	3 463
2005	6 355	2 468	17	5 166	14 006	1 498	394	6 920	1 576	3 470

162. As will be seen from these statistical data, the numbers of social insurance beneficiaries has increased, as have the monetary amounts paid to cover the cost of implementing this right.

Social security system

163. The Government's plans and programmes are aimed at providing low-income families with financial stability by ensuring that groups in society who are unable to work because of their social circumstances, health problems or age, who have no means of support and who are not covered under the social security system, receive a minimum level of income. The social security system is a social protection mechanism for those families, providing them with a level of income adequate to meet their essential needs. This philosophy comprises care for individuals and families, regardless of social category and age group, including in particular children, persons with disabilities, widows, divorced women, persons unable to work and the elderly. Act No. 30 of 1977, the Social Security Act, defines groups that are eligible for social security and the cases in which it may be paid, and sets forth the four beneficiary coverage regimes, namely social security benefit, child benefit, monthly assistance payment, and lump-sum payment. These are discussed in greater detail in the paragraphs below.

Social security benefit

164. The groups listed below qualify for this type of benefit:

- Orphans, widows and divorced women;
- The children of a divorced woman upon her death, marriage or imprisonment;
- Disabled persons;
- Women 50 years of age or older who have never been married;
- The family of a person who is serving a term of imprisonment of not less than three years;
- Persons 65 years of age or older.

165. A number of successive Acts have been adopted providing for increases in pensions in response to successive price increases resulting from Egypt's shift to a market economy. Another statutory instrument was Prime Ministerial Order No. 1613 of 2005, which provided for an increase in the monthly entitlement, which now ranges from a minimum of LE 70 to a maximum of LE 100, depending on the number of persons in the family.

166. Since 2005, every family that qualifies for social security benefit has been entitled, under Prime Ministerial Order No. 1736 of 2005, to a study grant for every child enrolled in basic or general secondary education or the equivalent. The purpose of these grants is to

encourage pupils to complete their basic education and combat the dropout phenomenon. The amount of the grant is LE 20 per month during the school year (eight months). The family is entitled to one such grant for each child in school, up to a maximum of LE 100 per family.

Child benefit

167. Under article 49 of the Child Act (Act No. 12 of 1996 as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008), the following categories of children are eligible for monthly child benefit payments:

- Orphans or children whose fathers or father and mother are unknown;
- Children whose mother is the family breadwinner or divorced, upon her marriage, death, or imprisonment for a term of not less than one month;
- Children of a person who is being legally detained, confined or imprisoned for a term of not less than one month.

168. Under the Act, the minimum monthly amount of child benefit is LE 60, subject to the condition that it is payable in accordance with the provisions of the Social Security Act.

Monthly assistance payment

Categories of persons entitled to monthly assistance payments

- Pregnant women, beginning with the third month of pregnancy and continuing until delivery;
- Nursing infants, to the end of the second year;
- Families whose breadwinner is in prison or has been sentenced to a term of more than two months but less than three years. The amount of the assistance is equal to the pension payable to an orphan, a widow or an elderly person, depending on the composition of the family;
- Invalids: families whose breadwinner has been affected by an illness that prevents him from working or affects his income. The amount of the assistance is equal to the pension payable to a disabled person, depending on the composition of the family;
- Families whose breadwinner has emigrated and has been absent for a period of not less than six months, where his place of residence is unknown. The amount of the assistance is equal to the pension payable to an orphan, a widow or an elderly person, depending on the composition of the family.

Lump-sum payment

169. The Act provides that a lump-sum cash payment may be made to needy individuals and families for the purpose of starting new small business enterprises or supporting existing ones, both sole proprietorships and corporate entities, regardless of whether they are formal or informal. The aim of this provision is to develop human resources. The value of such lump-sum payments is not less than LE 1,000 and not more than LE 3,000. Priority is given to persons who are receiving monthly assistance payments and social security assistance and their families. Urgent cases are defined as those where the assistance is required to enable the family to meet educational costs, funeral costs or childbirth costs.

Allowances for former workers

170. The Act provides that allowances may be paid to former civil servants and public sector employees who had completed not less than three consecutive years of service and

who, after their termination, are subject to the provisions of Acts concerning social insurance or other pensions in the event of illness, educational costs or marriage.

Numbers of social security support recipients and benefits paid, 1999-2005

No.	Year	<i>Social security benefit and child benefit</i>		<i>Social security payments</i>		<i>Former workers' allowances</i>		<i>Local relief payments</i>	
		<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Amt.</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Amt.</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Amt.</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Amt.</i>
1	1999/2000	347 761	162 500 000	96 019	11 694 000	2 455	350 000	238 960	20 000 000
2	2000/01	660 784	576 500 000	91 935	13 424 000	4 028	350 000	78 974	185 000 000
3	2001/02	776 000	48 600 000	109 000	24 000 000	2 415	350 000	47 000	20 000 000
4	2002/03	812 739	434 400 000	151 000	36 000 000	2 586	385 000	56 000	20 000 000
5	2003/04	827 695	516 600 000	203 135	41 500 000	2 554	400 000	52 666	20 000 000
6	2004/05	843 259	48 800 000	223 724	40 000 000	2 418	400 000	58 964	20 000 000

171. The value of these cash payments has been repeatedly increased in response to inflation indicators.

Judicial applications

172. In this area, individuals have made considerable use of the national means of redress and exercised their right to litigate, as may be seen from a number of Supreme Constitutional Court rulings in cases with a bearing on statutory instruments governing social security allowances. A number of these are summarized below.

- The Court ruled that article 2, paragraph 1, of Acts No. 150 of 1988, No. 85 of 2000, No. 19 of 2001, No. 150 of 2002, No. 91 of 2003 and No. 88 of 2004 were unconstitutional on the grounds that they awarded increases in the pensions payable only to persons who had completed their service, and did not award a comparable increase to persons whose service had been terminated by resignation, thereby infringing the right of private ownership enshrined in article 34 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 33, year 28, rulings of the SCC, session of 1 July 2007);
- The Court ruled the article 23, paragraph 2 of Act No. 79 of 1975 (the Social Insurance Act) was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided that pension due should be deducted from the adjusted pay of every employee whose service had been terminated by resignation, but not from that of other employees whose service had been terminated for other reasons; this, the Court found, was discrimination and as such contravened the principle of equality enshrined in article 40 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in case No. 310, year 24, rulings of the SCC, session of 4 March 2008);
- The Court ruled that article 1, paragraph 2, subparagraph 2 of Act No. 88 of 2004 was unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided for a cap on pension increases for pension holders who were not employees of the State, whereas no such cap was imposed on those employees, despite the fact that the purpose of the provision was the same in both cases, namely to address the burden of constantly increasing pension entitlements; in passing this Act, the legislature had exceeded its authority in the matter of regulating entitlements, thereby contravening articles 17 and 122 of the Constitution (judgement handed down in Case No. 20 of year 27, rulings of the SCC, session of 8 June 2008).

Article 10

Protection of the family

173. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007, and the comments on the previous articles. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

Recent legislation and applications with a bearing on various aspects of protection of the family, women and children during the period covered in this report

Family protection initiatives

174. Egyptian domestic law, based as it is on the principles enshrined in the Constitution, affords many aspects of family protection with a view to ensuring that the family can continue to perform its function as the fundamental unit of society. A number of those aspects were discussed in detail in the previous report of Egypt and its annex, and others, which have been introduced through legislation in the course of the period covered in this report, will be considered below.

1. The pension of either spouse may be combined with that of the other spouse;
2. Women in the workforce are granted tax exemptions in consideration of their family responsibilities on the same footing as men;
3. Special family courts have been established.

175. The family courts were established pursuant to Act No. 10 of 2004 with a view to facilitating procedures and settling domestic disputes within reasonable periods of time in order to preserve and protect families. The Act provides for the creation of offices for the express purpose of settling domestic disputes. The parties to a dispute meet at these offices and their statements are heard; the presiding officer then tries to make them see the various aspects of the dispute, the prospective impacts they will have, and the consequences that will ensue if the parties persist in their quarrel. The presiding officer offers them sound advice and guidance in an attempt to settle the dispute amicably, in the hope of preserving the family entity. These efforts take place during the fifteen days following the date of submission of the original petition. If the parties are reconciled, the presiding officer confirms the fact in a statement which the parties sign and which is attached to the record of the session at which the hearing was held. The presiding officer has the power to issue the executory papers required to enforce the settlement. If the efforts of the parties and the settlement office fail to bring about an amicable settlement in all or some respects and the originator of the petition persists in proceeding with it, the presiding officer writes a report stating the facts; the parties sign it, and it is forwarded to the competent family court within one week of the date of a request to that effect by one of the parties to the dispute.

4. Family insurance fund

176. The Family Insurance Fund was established pursuant to Act No. 11 of 2004. The purpose of the Fund is to provide families with financial assistance in the cases set forth in the Act, including, in particular, monies owing to a woman under to a court ruling made pursuant to the legislation governing personal status.

5. Nationality Act

Act No. 154 of 2004, amending the Nationality Act (Act No. 26 of 1975) provides that Egyptian nationality may be granted to the children of an Egyptian mother married to an alien. This Act serves to strengthen and apply the principle of gender equality.

6. Application by the courts

178. The Supreme Constitutional Court has handed down a number of rulings on the protection of families, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution. Some of the most important of these are summarized below.

- The Court ruled that article 99 of the Universities Act was unconstitutional. Under that article, child care leave counted against the total of ten years of leave to which university teaching staff members are entitled in the course of their service. The Court held that that provision was detrimental to the family unit, which, according to the Constitution, is deemed the foundation of society, and contravened the principle of equality before the law enjoyed by working women in Egypt (judgement handed down in case No. 81, year 25, rulings of the SCC, session of 13 February 2005);
- The Court ruled that article 82 of the Postal Workers Regulations, providing that leave for spousal accompaniment could not exceed six years, was unconstitutional on the grounds that it was detrimental to the family unit and its cohesiveness (judgement handed down in case No. 184, year 25, rulings of the SCC, session of 13 February 2006).

Protection of motherhood

179. Egyptian law contains many provisions relating to the protection of motherhood and working women, in line with relevant international instruments. These issues were discussed in the previous report of Egypt. Recent developments are outlined in the paragraphs below.

Act No. 12 of 2003, the Labour Code

180. Legislation in this area is formulated to conform to the provisions of the international instruments to which Egypt is a party, and also to the provisions of the Constitution relating to protection of the family and care of mothers and children. Part VI, chapter 2 of the Labour Code regulates the employment of women (articles 88-97).

- Article 88 provides that all provisions of the Code regulating the employment of workers shall apply to women workers without discrimination, where working conditions are the same;
- Under article 92, every employer is prohibited from dismissing a woman worker or terminating her service during maternity leave;
- Article 93 provides that a woman worker who is nursing a child is entitled, during the period of 24 consecutive months following the date of birth, to two nursing breaks in addition to the regulation rest period, and that she may combine the two breaks;
- Article 94 provides that every woman worker in an enterprise employing 50 or more workers is entitled to leave without pay for a period of not more than two years to care for her child. Such leave may not be taken more than twice in the course of the employment of the worker concerned;
- Under article 96, every employer who has 100 or more workers on his payroll is required to establish day care facilities on the premises. Employers with fewer than that number of workers are required to join with other employers in the same district to provide such facilities;

- Under article 249, every employer who contravenes the provisions of the Act commits a criminal offence and is liable to a fine, such fine to be multiplied by the number of employees affected by the contravention.

The Civil Status Act (Act No. 143 of 1994)

181. Under article 31 *bis*, which was inserted by Act No. 126 of 2008, the minimum age of marriage was raised to 18 years for women. The Act also provides that prospective marriage partners must undergo a medical examination to determine whether they are free of certain disorders that may affect their lives and health or the lives and health of their offspring. These amendments were formulated in an effort to protect families from potentially disruptive factors and ensure that they will continue to be able to perform their function.

Child Act (Act No. 12 of 1996)

182. Under article 70 of the Act, as amended by Act No. 126 of 2008, every woman worker is entitled to three months of maternity leave with full pay. She may take such leave not more than three times during her service.

183. The Act also provides that every pregnant woman's daily working hours shall be shortened by one hour beginning with the sixth month of her pregnancy. Furthermore, a pregnant woman may not be required to perform overtime work during her pregnancy and for six months after her child is born.

Childhood protection initiatives

184. Childhood in Egypt is protected in a host of ways; the issue was discussed in detail in the previous report of Egypt. Recently enacted legislation of relevance for childhood protection is outlined in the paragraphs below.

Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003)

185. Part VI, chapter 3 of the Code regulates the employment of juveniles (articles 98-102). It is not lawful for any juvenile to be employed before he or she has completed the basic education stage. However, they may be trained in the cases and under the conditions set forth in the Code. Juveniles may not work for more than six hours per day. During the working day they are entitled to one or more breaks totalling not less than one hour, and they may not be kept at work for more than four hours consecutively. The Code provides that the provisions of this chapter also apply to juveniles working in the agriculture sector.

186. Under article 248, every employer who contravenes the provisions of the Act commits a criminal offence and is liable to a fine of LE 500 to LE 1,000, such fine to be multiplied by the number of employees affected by the contravention.

187. Ministerial orders implementing these provisions were issued in 2003, including:

- Ministerial Order No. 118 of 2003, defining the regime governing the employment of juveniles and setting forth the requirements and standards that must be met, with a view to improving working conditions for young persons who have reached the minimum age at which they may lawfully be employed and prohibiting their employment in hazardous situations (article 44);
- Ministerial Order No. 175 of 2003, concerning the rules and procedures regulating apprenticeships as they relate to underage persons who become apprenticed to an employer for the purpose of learning a trade within a specified time period, under an agreement to that end between the worker or his legal guardian and the employer. Underage persons are prohibited from receiving training in hazardous occupations in

which underage persons may not be employed pursuant to the relevant ministerial orders.

Child Act (Act No. 12 of 1996)

188. Pursuant to Egypt's international obligations entailed by its accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two protocols, and the two relevant ILO conventions, the Child Act was amended by Act No. 126 of 2008. The resulting changes to the Child Act are summarized below.

- Insertion of a paragraph 2 to article 1 of the Act, providing that the State shall guarantee, at a minimum, the rights of children set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments in force in Egypt;
- Insertion of an article 7 *bis*, providing that the State shall guarantee children's right to receive social and health care services and treatment and their right to a sound, healthy, clean environment, and abolishing all practices that are harmful to their health;
- Insertion of an article 7 *bis* (a), providing that no parent or guardian shall deliberately place a child at risk of bodily harm, and that the child protection committee shall take appropriate measures in every case of contravention of this provision;
- Insertion of an article 7 *bis* (b), providing that underage persons shall not be employed in war industries and guaranteeing their rights in the event of war, armed conflict or natural disasters. The new article also provides that persons committing war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity shall be prosecuted;
- Insertion of an article 31 *bis*, providing that day care facilities shall be available at all women's prisons and that children may be cared for in those facilities until the age of 4 years. The new article also provides that mothers shall not be separated from their children during their first year of life, and that they may not be prevented from seeing and caring for their children as a disciplinary measure;
- Raising of the minimum age of employment from 14 years to 15 and the minimum age of training from 12 years to 13. Prohibition of the employment of underage persons in types of work defined in ILO Convention 182 of 1999 (articles 45-46);
- Institution of a system of transfer outside the regular court system in cases where a child would be at risk, and establishment of special child protection committees outside the regular court system to explore appropriate measures to deal with cases of danger (article 98);
- Raising of the age of criminal liability from 7 years to 12.

189. An item on children has been a feature of the general State budget since 2006, and the national five-year socio-economic development plan includes a "Motherhood and childhood" component. In 2007, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood established a unit to combat trafficking in children. A free, round-the-clock child assistance hotline has been opened, along with a special line serving children with disabilities. Intensive training courses for police officers, personnel of the Public Prosecutor's Office and teaching institutions are now offered with a view to heightening awareness of children's rights, and an ongoing media campaign aimed at fostering such awareness has been launched.

190. With a view to combating the worst forms of child labour, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration has adopted a number of projects, working in cooperation with

the ILO. These have borne fruit in the form of an announcement that five governorates (Luxor, Aswan, North Sinai, South Sinai, and New Valley) were free of the worst forms of child labour.

Penal Code

191. Under article 242 *bis* of the Penal Code, which was added to the Code pursuant to Act No. 126 of 2008), female genital mutilation is a criminal offence punishable by a term of imprisonment or a fine.

192. Under article 291 of the Penal Code, which was added to the Code pursuant to Act No. 126 of 2008, selling children, offering them for sale, treating them as though they were slaves, exploiting them for sexual or commercial purposes, and exploiting them for hard labour or other unlawful purposes are criminal offences. Every person who commits such an offence, incites another to do so, or facilitates its commission is liable to a severe term of imprisonment and a fine, even where the offence is not committed or was committed abroad. The Code prescribes heavier penalties where the offence is committed by an organized group of criminals. The Code also prescribes a heavy prison sentence for every person who removes from a child any part of its body or a fragment thereof, regardless of whether the child or legal guardian has consented to such removal.

Civil Status Act

193. A new article 31 *bis* has been added to the Act, prohibiting the conclusion of any marriage contract where either of the parties was under 18 years of age. The purpose of this amendment is to prevent the marriage of minors who have not reached an age of sufficient maturity to be fit to assume the burdens and responsibilities of founding a family.

194. In this context, it is noteworthy that much of the work of implementation has been done by the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. These bodies are specialized national mechanisms which, as we have seen in some detail in Part I above, wield extensive powers in their respective fields. Each of them has developed numerous plans and programmes aimed at the protection of women or mothers and children, as the case may be, with the object of ensuring that women enjoy the protection and care they need in order to be able to perform their function in society as fundamental partners in development plans and programmes, and to perform their function as mothers, bringing up the younger generation adequately. Each of the Councils, as we have seen, has played an effective pioneering role in preparing a package of draft Acts and amendments to existing legislation, and also a number of proposed amendments to the Penal Code, which are currently under consideration.

195. These efforts reflect the concern of national Egyptian agencies, in the light of their obligations under the Constitution and in the framework of implementational plans and programmes, to comply with Egypt's international human rights commitments and to continue to strive to bring the country's domestic legislation into line with those commitments, both by identifying and penalizing practices that are harmful to women and children, and by strengthening procedures designed to protect families, women and children and ensuring that the State will enforce them.

For more on these issues, the Committee is referred to the detailed discussion contained in the reports submitted by Egypt to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

196. An account of the Government's efforts to address the problem of street children will be found in Part III below.

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

197. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

Right to the improvement of living conditions

198. In all sectors, governmental policies, plans and programmes, in accordance with Egypt's national responsibilities and constitutional commitments, are intensifying their efforts to mobilize and develop the country's natural resources and turn them to account with a view to realizing an appropriate standard of living for all citizens and provide them with the means of achieving a life of dignity, with adequate food, clothing and housing. These plans and programmes are marked by a high degree of diversity, aiming as they do at a range of different goals within a framework of concern for the social dimension, having regard to the requirements of the economic reform policy that Egypt is pursuing. However, they share a number of major themes, and these are outlined in the paragraphs below.

Major theme I: providing low-income citizens with the basic necessities of life at affordable prices, with the resultant financial burdens being borne by the State budget

Food

199. A feature of programmes in this area is State support for supplies of bread, children's milk and energy, as well as a number of basic foodstuffs which are made available to low-income citizens through a system of ration cards. At the present time, approximately 10.5 million ration cards have been issued, with some 40 million beneficiaries. Ration cards are of two kinds:

- Full support ration cards, of which 8,232,223 have been issued, with 31,742,817 beneficiaries;
- Partial support ration cards, of which 2,131,454 have been issued, with 7,718,550 beneficiaries.

200. In this connection, it is noteworthy that under Act No. 111 of 2008, a new item was opened in the general State budget with an allocation of LE 85 million to cover the costs arising from the issue of ration cards to 15 million additional citizens.

201. One practical issue that appropriate plans are currently being developed to address is the question of ensuring that support reaches those who are entitled to it and putting an end to unlawful trafficking in the foodstuffs in question, including State-subsidized flour in particular. A number of projects have been devised in an effort to deal with this situation, including those outlined in the paragraphs below.

- A project featuring the separation of production from distribution in the case of subsidized bread, with the bread being distributed directly to households in return for a nominal monthly contribution. This project is currently being implemented in a number of districts in the governorates of Cairo and Giza;
- A project featuring a system of competitive bidding on flour supplies in three governorates (Alexandria, Minya and Ismailia), pending its extension throughout the country. The aim of this system is to stop the smuggling of wheat, reduce shortages, and cut down on trafficking in wheat and flour.

202. The issue of food availability is addressed in the various plans and programmes in accordance with a number of basic guidelines. These are outlined in the paragraphs below.

- Expanding the land area suitable for cultivation: the area under cultivation did increase from 6,918 feddans in 1990 to 7,833 feddans in 2000 and to 8,279 feddans in 2004;
- Increasing the productivity of agricultural land: aggregate quantitative food production increased from 1.126 in 2002 to 132.5 in 2004;
- Increasing self-sufficiency in important foodstuffs: by 2004 this had been achieved in the case of certain foodstuffs, including rice, vegetables, potatoes, citrus fruits, eggs, dairy products and industrial cooking butter;
- Supplementing Egypt's food commodity needs through reciprocal international agreements in a framework of mutual international cooperation. The Egyptian Government has endeavoured to meet its citizens' food needs through a sustained drive for self-sufficiency in wheat and other basic foodstuffs.

203. Concerning the achievement of Millennium Goal 1, the statistical indicators summarized below are significant:

- The incidence of malnutrition in Egypt declined from 25.6 per cent in 1990/91 to 14 per cent in 1999-2000 and is expected to be eliminated completely by 2015.

204. Determined as it is to ensure food security and deal with rising food prices in its pursuit of social justice, the Government has prepared a plan of action in that connection. The main features of the plan are outlined in the paragraphs below.

(a) Attacking the phenomenon of rising prices by driving down the inflation rate and controlling prices;

(b) Development of a domestic trading system that will afford a means of breaking the monopoly of middlemen and reduce the gap between the producer's price and the retail price. In pursuit of that objective, a consumer protection agency and a competition board have been established with a view to creating an appropriate atmosphere that will enable consumers to reap the actual benefits of honest competition and prevent harmful monopolistic practices;

(c) Providing support for the groups that are most in need of it; in that connection, direct support for food commodities has been increased repeatedly in recent years. In addition, exhaustive studies and social surveys are currently being conducted with a view to the preparation of a data base that will constitute a precise scientific tool for addressing the issue of support, identifying beneficiaries and making it possible to develop mechanisms to ensure that the support reaches the persons entitled to it.

Housing

205. In the framework of the criteria contained in the Committee's general observation No. 4 on the right to decent housing, we may note that wage increases and pensions for workers are mandated under applicable provisions of domestic law. The procedure consists of adopting special Acts that serve to increase people's income by providing for social increases. Government plans and programmes aimed at giving effect to the right to housing rely on the establishment of new cities to accommodate the growing population and low-cost housing blocks for young people. Among relevant projects here are two entitled "Housing for young people" and "Build your own house". Under these and other similar projects, low-interest, long-term loans are available through banks and international cooperation programmes with various organizations.

206. Civil society also plays an important role through cooperative housing associations, which provide housing units and land for their members, thanks to the legal facilities available to associations of that kind. There is a network of cooperative community associations, including workers' organizations, including both trade unions and professional associations.

207. Under Presidential Decree No. 277 of 2001, a public corporation for real estate financing was established as a means of encouraging citizens to own their own homes. The corporation helps people to buy their homes by making loans available on easy terms, depending on the borrower's income, covering 10 per cent of the purchase price.

208. Under Act No. 101 of 2007, concerning the budget appropriation for the first year of the five-year socio-economic development plan for 2007/08-2011/12, funds were allocated for housing loans on easy terms, with financing from the National Investment Bank, broken down as follows:

- LE 195 million for popular housing loans in the various governorates;
- LE 150 million for cooperative building and housing loans;
- LE 200 million for Ministry of Housing projects

Total: LE 545 million

209. The national housing programme is one of the most important projects launched by the Government in an effort to overcome the problem of providing decent housing for low-income people: half a million housing units are to be built over a six-year period. One of the programme's main lines of emphasis is action to meet citizens' needs, having regard to their different tastes and inclinations in the matter of housing, in cities where they want to live, or near their places of work, and consisting of units that are appropriate to the family income level. The approach that has been adopted is to acquire the necessary building land in the various governorates and in new cities, with financial support from the State, to make 20-year loans available on easy terms, and to enlist the services of the private sector to build housing units with 63 m² of floor space. The State provides facilities and infrastructure, including drinking water, sanitation, electricity, roads and communications at every stage. Part III of this report contains a more detailed account of the National Housing Programme and the results it has achieved since its inception in 2005.

210. In addition, the State is working full out to address the widespread problem of illegal construction, which is on the increase in terms both of the number of dwellings and their density. The goal is to put a stop to the practice, and to eliminate the existing belt of chaotic structures and reorganize, replan and redevelop it, while ensuring that no one is deprived of basic services in the interim.

Clothing

211. There are undoubtedly some difficulties as regards the provision of adequate clothing for people in various social groups at prices they can afford. Public and private firms and small business enterprises are there to meet people's needs in that connection, and civil society plays a role through community associations that distribute suitable blankets and clothing free of charge on such occasions as festivals and national holidays.

Supply of clean water and sanitation services

212. Egypt's strategy in this area is based on an array of programmes and plans structured around two main themes:

Preventive plans and programmes

213. The aim of these plans and programmes is to eliminate the hazards to which individuals in areas that are still without these services are exposed as a result of using water that is unfit to drink, does not conform to health specifications, or is at risk of pollution from surface water sources. In pursuit of that aim, public awareness campaigns are conducted to warn citizens and school children of these hazards and how they can be neutralized. Civil society organizations and community associations participate in these campaigns, as does the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

Plans and programmes for complete coverage

214. These plans and programmes are designed to set target dates for complete clean water and sanitation coverage for all cities and villages. Achievements to date are summarized below.

Clean water

215. A number of massive projects have been executed throughout Egypt, producing 25 million cubic metres per day, at a cost of LE 32 billion. The results of these projects are as follows:

- As of 2007, all 222 of the country's cities and towns enjoyed complete coverage;
- As of 2007, 4,617 villages, representing 98 per cent of the total, enjoyed services.

216. The country's water-producing capacity is being increased to ensure that all villages will have water and to increase the daily per capita quantity of water available.

Sanitation

217. A number of ambitious sanitation projects have been executed all over the country at a cost of LE 48 billion. The results of these projects are as follows:

- As of 2007, 125 cities and towns, representing 60 per cent of the total, had sanitation services;
- As of 2007, 170 villages, representing 4 per cent of the total, had sanitation services.

218. The plans call for complete coverage of all cities, towns and villages in 15 years. For the cities and towns, the coverage rate will have reached 100 per cent by the end of 2010, while for the villages, the coverage rate is expected to have reached 40 per cent by the end of 2012, and will be progressively extended to all villages thereafter. The Ministry of Health monitors compliance with global standards for safe drinking water production and supply and wastewater disposal. The Government recognizes that there are problems in this area, but practical measures are being taken to address them.

219. In this connection, it is noteworthy that in June 2009, Egypt received the United Nations independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation. Her conclusions and recommendations recognized the level of Egypt's political commitment to providing its citizens with drinking water and sanitation services, the significant achievements to date, and the Government's determination to pursue its efforts to meet the challenges confronting it at many levels.

Major theme II: periodic increases in wages, salaries and pensions to cope with successive increases in prices and keep the former in balance with the latter

220. Increasing incomes is the second main theme of Egypt's effort to raise its people's standard of living. In the context of its economic reforms, the Government deemed it

necessary to embark on a transition to a market economy, and one result of this has been successive price increases. Consequently, the Government has had to prepare parallel plans to close the wage-price gap by applying a stable income adjustment factor for civil servants, public sector employees and pension recipients. The adjustment factor has varied between 10 and 30 per cent, the latter being the figure applied in 2008.

221. To apply these adjustments, special Acts have been adopted:

- Acts Nos. 89, 90 and 91 of 2003;
- Acts Nos. 86, 87 and 88 of 2004;
- Acts Nos. 95, 155 and 156 of 2005;
- Acts Nos. 85, 140 and 160 of 2006;
- Acts Nos. 77, 78 and 169 of 2007;
- Act No. 114 of 2008.

222. We may note here that the 2004 Act providing for increases in pensions was the subject of a challenge brought by beneficiaries on the grounds that it set a cap on their increases, while setting no such cap on increases for working persons. The case was heard by the Supreme Constitutional Court, which ruled (case No. 20, year 27, rulings of the SCC, session of 8 June 2008) that the provision in the Act for a cap on increases in pensioners' benefits in 2008 was unconstitutional. The ruling relied on the principle of equality with the increase awarded for working persons in that year, on which the Act did not set a cap (published on the date of No. 24, 11 June 2008).

Major theme III: more opportunities for encouraging the private sector to participate in development plans, domestic and foreign investment opportunities, and support for small business enterprises

223. Egypt's socio-economic development plans (five-year plans), the evolving implementation of those plans, and investment sectors and private-sector participation rates for those sectors have been discussed in Part I above. Those plans have realized some significant successes: economic growth has been 7 per cent in this year, and is expected to be higher still in the next few years. As a result, the unemployment rate has remained largely stable; this represents an achievement in view of the constant expansion of the workforce resulting from population growth. Furthermore, growth rates of this order will lead to greater employment opportunities, and hence a gradual decline in the unemployment rate.

224. Concurrently, the Government is acting to support small business enterprises. Act No. 141 of 2004, concerning the development of small business enterprises, was designed to enable such enterprises to contribute to community development by creating jobs, absorbing unemployment and improving service and production levels in places where those were problems. The Government plans were also designed to upgrade individual occupational and practical skills through qualification and training programmes designed to respond to job market requirements. Capacity-building and skills development initiatives are available to individuals from the neediest families with a view to enhancing their capabilities and enabling them to earn more income. These skills development programmes have succeeded in attracting significant numbers of school dropouts, training them in productive skills suited to their abilities, helping them attain higher standards of living, and improving their literacy level.

225. The Productive Families project is an ambitious, pioneering initiative in this area. Its aim is to reach out to as many families as possible in an effort to instil a fuller understanding of the concepts of work and acceptance. Numbers of productive families

have increased significantly over time: there are currently 1,876,529 projects working in all trades and serving the local environment. These projects are distributed as shown in the table below.

<i>Category</i>	<i>No. of projects</i>
Families funded from capital belonging to associations	539 172
Families funded by Social Fund loans	66 900
Families funded from other sources	732 759
Families participating in training programmes	459 638
Families participating in marketing	7 806
Total	1 876 529

226. Local community development associations are the mechanism by means of which plans and programmes for the economic, social and cultural advancement of local communities are implemented. The State provides technical and financial support for these associations, of which, as of 30 June 2005, there were 5,916 engaged in some 70 activities with a bearing on economic development. Between 1999 and 2005, a total of LE 20,595,427 was paid out to 807 associations to support projects, including loans for young people, women heads of families, and poor and low-income families (productive projects and skills development projects), aimed at creating jobs for persons in those groups.

227. A more detailed account of the efforts and accomplishments of the Social Fund for Development (SFD), which is a pioneering initiative in the area of human development in Egypt, will be found in Part III of this report.

Improved food production, preservation and distribution methods

228. Egypt's efforts to raise agricultural and food productivity have necessitated continual improvement in production methods. They have also necessitated not only abundant production but also the development of new scientific methods of preserving and storing food products on a scientific basis in order to ensure their quality and continued suitability for human consumption. Accordingly, the governmental agencies operating in the areas of food production, storage and distribution are committed, as they are required to be by the law of the land, to the application of appropriate criteria and scientific principles.

229. Under the relevant statutory instruments, the adulteration of food products and the sale of food products that are not fit for human consumption or do not conform to the applicable standards for quality and wholesomeness are criminal offences. The Child Act contains provisions regulating food products intended for consumption by children, with a view to ensuring that they do not contain any harmful substances.

230. In this connection, Act No. 67 of 2006, the Consumer Protection Act, provides that consumers have certain rights, including the right to safety. Under the Act, civil society organizations have the right to lodge complaints and demand that the rights of victims are upheld, while persons contravening the provisions of the Act are held accountable. Act No. 3 of 2005, the Prevention of Monopoly and Monopolistic Practices Act, is designed to ensure that markets are not at risk of shortages and price manipulation and to support competition and transparency.

Article 12

Right to health care

231. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above on the constitutional amendments enacted in May 1980, May 2005 and March 2007. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

Right to health care

232. The right to health care for all citizens at all levels and in all social categories is based on the provisions of articles 16 and 17 of the Constitution of Egypt. In the framework of this right, guaranteed and protected as it is on a constitutional basis, various statutory instruments, both Acts and decrees, relating to health care coverage and insurance for all citizens have been enacted. The provisions of law include compulsory immunization against epidemic and endemic diseases and occupational disorders.

233. The health care delivery system in Egypt comprises a number of boards, agencies and other institutions that provide citizens with health care services. First and foremost among the components of the system is the Ministry of Health, with its impressive material and human resources. The Ministry delivers its services through a far-flung network of hospitals and primary care units and centres serving local communities in both rural and urban areas. It delivers public health care services and specialized services through large hospitals in the capital cities of the country's governorates and through small hospitals within consolidated centres containing a number of units specializing in primary care.

234. Health care services are also delivered by social insurance boards, treatment institutions, and some civil society organizations (such as community associations and institutions), to say nothing of an extensive network of private clinics and hospitals. The health care services delivered through social insurance boards cover workers, pensioners and widows, in addition to students, who were added to the list in 1993. These services are delivered in return for nominal contributions paid by the beneficiary, employers, or the boards themselves.

235. Treatment institutions are governmental institutions that include a large number of hospitals in the Governorate of Cairo and a number of other governorates in Lower Egypt. They serve all students or workers under contracts and individuals for a small fee, and accident victims free of charge. Services delivered by the free division to low-income persons are funded by the Ministry of Health.

236. Civil society organizations and private clinics and hospitals form an extensive network providing services to all at all levels in return for a graduated scale of fees that are lowest in the case of charitable associations and highest in the case of for-profit hospitals.

237. The State, as part of its obligation to provide all citizens with health care, will cover the cost of travel abroad for medical treatment in specific cases, where the necessary treatment is not available in Egypt. In other cases, the State will pay for treatment even within Egypt where the costs involved are exceptionally heavy.

238. The statistical indicators presented below show how health care delivery services have evolved over time.

- Spending on health care increased from LE 3,709,700,000 in 2000/01 to LE 6,211,500,000 in 2006/07 and to LE 13.5 billion by 2008/09. These figures do not include spending on military hospitals, police hospitals, private hospitals or company hospitals;

- The health care sector accounted for close to LE 28 billion in spending under the sixth five-year plan, as noted in Part I above;
- The number of hospital beds (Government and private sector combined) increased from 135,666 in 2000 to 152,134 in 2006;
- The private sector delivered 17.2 per cent of all health care services in 2006, up from 15.5 per cent in 2000;
- The number of health care units with beds increased from 2,319 in 2000 (46.4 per cent of them private) to 2,683 in 2006 (49.5 per cent of them private);
- Cost per patient, for treatment within Egypt, was LE 1,775 in 2006, up from LE 790 in 2000;
- A total of 1,420,000 patients were treated in 2006, up from 491,000 in 2000;
- Spending for treatment outside Egypt was LE 21,3 million in 2006, down from LE 33 million in 2000;
- A total of 214 patients were sent abroad for treatment in 2006, compared to 461 in 2000. This decrease shows that modern, state-of-the-art care is now more readily available in Egypt than was formerly the case.

Practical results of implementing the right of all citizens to health care

239. Implementation of the right to health care is one of the Millennium Development Goals, one that the Government has pursued through a package of plans, policies and programmes designed to improve health care, scoring some noteworthy successes. The Government's efforts in this connection will be discussed in the framework of the four main themes summarized below.

Reducing newborn and infant mortality rates and promoting child health development

240. The Government has endeavoured to achieve this goal, working in cooperation with relevant domestic and international organizations and civil society to develop plans aimed at the effective implementation of a number of basic programmes, which are outlined in the following pages.

Newborn care programme

241. This is a major lifesaving programme for children. Its aim is to reduce foetal death rates during the final months of pregnancy, perinatal mortality, and mortality rates among children in neonatal care units. A number of centralized neonatal care units have been opened in hospitals. In 1995 there were 84 hospitals with these units; by 2005, the total had grown to 242.

242. In addition, 120 ambulances have been equipped with portable incubators to provide infants with first aid and transport them to the nearest hospital. A daily report on empty incubators in hospitals is available through the centralized emergency room.

Early thyroid hormone deficiency detection programme

243. The aim of this programme is to detect this type of hormone deficiency in newborns and treat cases immediately to prevent the mental and physical disabilities that might otherwise result. Another aim is to acquire information about the incidence of certain disorders causing mental disabilities. The programme is operational in 22 governorates, and

1,500,000 newborns benefited from the service in 2005. In addition, the social insurance system runs 10 treatment centres.

244. Furthermore, nine genetic counselling clinics have been opened in a number of governorates, and more are being added gradually. The purpose of these clinics is to eliminate inherited disorders that can cause disabilities.

Sick children's integrated care programme

245. Integrated care for sick children is a strategy designed to provide children under five years of age with preventive and therapeutic care under a detailed protocol targeting the main diseases causing mortality among children in that age group. Field implementation of this programme began in September 1997, and the strategy is being progressively broadened to cover all governorates. The purpose of the programme is to integrate the various services available for sick children. The Ministry regards it as an emblematic illustration of exemplary, high-quality service delivery.

Extended immunization programme

246. The object of this programme is compulsory immunization of children, free of charge, against serious, life-threatening childhood diseases: tuberculosis, diphtheria, polio, neonatal tetanus, whooping cough, measles, hepatitis, mumps and rubella. Thanks to the Government's efforts, some of these diseases have been eradicated. The World Health Organization recently announced that since Egypt had not had a case of polio since 2003, the disease had been eradicated there.

Breastfeeding support and encouragement programme

247. The object of this programme is to improve the health of mothers and infants by offering support and encouragement for optimal infant feeding practices. Another object of the programme is to increase the incidence of natural breastfeeding during the first six months of life, and to encourage natural breastfeeding during the first hour after birth. To this end, the Mother-Friendly Hospitals Initiative has been introduced, and the Government has issued a national proclamation against the use of synthetic milk and in favour of natural breastfeeding.

Infant nutritional status support programme

248. The object of this programme is to provide micronutrients by providing vitamin A capsules free of charge at the ages of 9 months and 18 months (6 million capsules per year). In addition, since 1996 table salt has been fortified by the addition of iodine, a lack of which causes mental retardation in infants and goitre in adults. Another measure is that all intermediate- and secondary-level pupils in the schools of Upper Egypt receive, free of charge, iron tablets with folic acid to prevent anaemia; this measure is implemented in cooperation with the insurance board (1,800,000 tablets per year). In 2005, over 95 per cent of all children received the vitamin A supplements.

Growth and development monitoring programme

249. The object of this programme is early detection and treatment of malnutrition, early detection and elimination of disability, and prevention and control of infectious diseases.

Diarrhoea and dehydration control programme

250. This pioneering programme is a health education project. Each year, over one million children with diarrhoea are treated. In Egypt, diarrhoea and dehydration have receded as a cause of mortality among children under 5 years of age, thanks to this

programme. The object of the programme is to reduce under-5 mortality rates and eliminate the overuse of antibiotics and diarrhoea medications.

Acute respiratory disease control programme for children under 5 years of age

251. This programme has been in effect since 1989. Its object is early detection and treatment of bronchitis, which is the leading cause of mortality among children in the under-5 age group. Another aim of the programme is to avoid the complications that may result from acute respiratory tract infections and to eliminate the overuse of antibiotics.

252. Thanks to the Government's unremitting efforts to implement programmes designed to upgrade and enhance health care services for children, its national plans in that area resulted in steadily improving health status indicators during the period 2000-2005. Those indicators are summarized in the table below.

<i>Item</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>
Child mortality rate	84	62.7
Average number of prenatal consultations	3 clinic visits	3.7 clinic visits
Mortality rate at centres for children detected under the programme	8.8 %	5.3%
Number of centralized neonatal care units	170	242
Infant mortality rate	33.8 per 1000	25.5 per 1000
Under-5 mortality rate	33.8 per 1000	26.2 per 1000
Mortality rate among preschool-age children	19%	11%
Compulsory child immunization coverage	96%	Over 98%
Incidence of low birth weight infants	12%	Under 10%

Improvement in various environmental and industrial aspects

Environmental aspects

253. An Environmental Health Directorate has been created within the organizational structure of the Ministry of Health and Population, with branch offices in all governorates. The mission of the Directorate is to observe and monitor the environment to make sure it is free of pollutants, to intervene on behalf of environmental remediation, and to address changes in natural characteristics:

- Physical characteristics such as temperature, humidity, insolation, soils, and electromagnetic radiation;
- Chemical characteristics such as concentrations of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and other gases, and the presence of lead and other metals;
- Microbiological characteristics, i.e. the presence of bacteria, fungi and viruses.

254. Environmental monitoring centres have been established in all governorates for the purpose of continuous observation of the environmental milieu (water, air and soil) to identify any changes that may be occurring and trends in the incidence of pollution.

255. Various actions have been taken in the context of environmental remediation programmes. Some of these are summarized below.

- Devices that use ionizing radiation (alpha and beta) and non-ionizing radiation (gamma and Roentgen) for therapeutic purposes or as a means of sterilization are

shielded with lead to protect individuals from the hazards of exposure, and the devices in question are inspected periodically to make sure that the shielding is effective. The quantity of radiation to which personnel are exposed during their working hours is tracked, and when the level becomes excessive they are transferred to other tasks until the radiation has fallen off to an acceptable level;

- The nitrate ion level in the air is measured. In the human body, nitrate ions are converted to nitrite ions, and these combine with the haemoglobin in the blood to cause anaemia;
- Drinking water is sampled periodically to make sure that it conforms to the prescribed standards;
- Water wells, both surface and deep, are tested periodically to make sure the water is wholesome;
- Pools and marshes are sprayed to eliminate mosquitoes, which carry diseases;
- Water cisterns on house roofs are inspected to make sure the water is not contaminated;
- Waste materials and trash are buried in sanitary landfill sites or converted to organic compost, while hospital waste is burned in special incinerators. As part of their licensing procedure, clinics and hospitals are required to agree to have their hazardous medical waste incinerated;
- New buildings must conform to health-related conditions, such as a requirement that one sixth of the building space must consist of openings for ventilation and that clean drinking water and sewage disposal facilities are provided;
- Swimming pools must include a foot bath containing disinfectants in which all bathers immerse their feet before entering the pool as a precaution against the possible spread of infection. Chlorine concentration is measured every two hours;
- Club members are inspected periodically to ensure that they are not suffering from any diseases that could be transmitted via swimming pool water. Persons suffering from skin disorders are not permitted to enter the pool.

Industrial aspects

256. The term “occupational disease” means a disease that occurs because of exposure to a variety of environmental hazards that have a harmful impact on the health of workers in a particular occupation. The function of the Occupational Health Directorate is to upgrade the work environment and ensure that it is safe for workers. In that connection, the Directorate provides both medical and therapeutic services.

- Medical services include an initial examination of every worker, periodic examinations to detect any disease at an early stage, a medical examination at the end of his service, and a medical examination after his return from leave;
- Therapeutic services include treatment of infectious occupational diseases of workers and their families, first aid in the workplace, and action to heighten workers’ awareness of occupational hazards and the importance of a healthy work environment. A medical file on every worker is kept, containing the results of the initial and periodic examinations.

Prevention of infectious, contagious and occupational diseases

Endemic diseases

257. Endemic diseases are one of the main objects of health care plans in Egypt. Under those plans, a comprehensive network of endemic disease treatment units has been created. There has been a multidimensional effort in this area, of which perhaps the most important aspect has been the use of national monitoring networks to track the status of the air and the water of the Nile and inspect locally produced and imported food items. In addition, nationwide preventive immunization campaigns have been organized, over and above the compulsory immunization programme referred to above. These efforts have yielded significant results, which are summarized below.

- Incidence of acute flaccid paralysis reduced to 0.8 per cent per 100,000 children under 15 years of age;
- Incidence of neonatal tetanus reduced to 0.8 per cent per 1,000 births;
- Incidence of diphtheria reduced to 0.5 per cent per 1,000 population;
- Incidence of measles reduced to 4.9 per cent per 100,000 children under 15 years of age;

258. Prevention includes quarantine measures designed to prevent the spread of epidemics and diseases in general, including HIV/AIDS, and monitoring of the health of all persons travelling abroad and returning from foreign countries, depending on the intended destination or place of origin.

Occupational diseases

259. The prevention of occupational diseases is addressed in the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2003), which contains the full range of conditions applicable to safety, health and a secure environment in the workplace, in accordance with prescribed standards. The provisions of the Code are consistent with those of the ILO convention on occupational safety and health, to which Egypt is a party, and all workplaces, including those of governmental departments and agencies, are required to comply with them. Moreover, under the Code, all establishments are subject to periodic inspections to make sure that the requisite conditions are being observed, and training courses are organized by the competent authorities to enhance worker performance in the field of occupational health and safety. Failure to observe the prescribed conditions entails criminal liability.

260. The labour services sections of Egyptian health insurance systems are responsible for treating occupational diseases. In addition, workers suffering from chronic disorders are entitled to exceptional benefits, including special leave with full pay until such time as the disorder is cured or has become stable (Act No. 112 of 1963 and Minister of Health Order No. 259 of 1995, containing a list of chronic disorders that give rise to entitlement to special leave with full pay).

261. In addition, the National Centre for Industrial Safety Studies investigates and analyses serious accidents with a view to future prevention, conducts applied engineering and physical research in that field, and organizes training courses designed to heighten workers' awareness of prevention in the workplace environment. The Centre has special laboratories in which samples are analysed and the necessary investigations conducted.

Contagious and infectious diseases

262. The Government's plans for the control of contagious and infectious diseases feature observation and quarantine, besides the compulsory immunization of children.

Quarantine

263. This measure is applied at Egypt's sea, air and land borders. Its purpose is to prevent the entry of epidemics by isolating persons arriving from abroad in cases where the presence of an infectious disease is suspected. It also entails the non-admittance and destruction of goods and merchandise originating from foreign countries in such cases. Cargo vessels are not allowed to transit Egypt unless they are certified as being free of rodents and mosquitoes. In addition, persons returning from disease-stricken countries or pilgrims returning from Mecca are given preventive doses of antibiotics.

Immunization

264. Children are required to be immunized, free of charge, against potentially deadly childhood diseases, and a parent or guardian who neglects to have his children immunized incurs criminal liability under the Child Act. The immunization programme has been strikingly successful, with some diseases eradicated altogether and the incidence of others reduced.

<i>Disease</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>
Polio	4	0
Neonatal tetanus	321	58
Measles	4 597	77
Whooping cough	3	0

265. In addition, pregnant women are routinely vaccinated for neonatal tetanus, and persons planning to travel to disease-stricken countries are vaccinated against yellow fever, malaria and cholera, while pilgrims bound for Mecca are vaccinated against cholera, meningitis and influenza.

Infectious disease monitoring system

266. Cases of infectious disease are reported when they appear, thanks to the system of health offices, which provide a rapid response to prevent the spread of infection. Diseases that must be reported immediately, on the same day, are cholera, plague, typhoid fever, anthrax, relapsing fever, yellow fever, cerebrospinal meningitis, diphtheria and psittacosis.

Insurance coverage of medical services and medical care in cases of disease

267. Consistent with the State's commitment to provide all citizens with health care, which is their constitutional right, treatment of disease is included in governmental plans in this area, which feature three main guiding principles:

- A domestic pharmaceutical industry and products that are available to citizens at reasonable prices, together with an open-door policy for imported pharmaceuticals that are not yet manufactured in Egypt;
- Treatment and medication costs are borne by the health insurance system, which covers family members and parents;
- The cost of treatment is borne by the State, regardless of whether the patient is treated within the country, at a public hospital, or abroad where necessary.

268. A key component of health care services in Egypt is the family medicine strategy, which is one of the objectives of the State's health care reform programme. That strategy is based on the family physician as the provider of basic health care services to individuals.

269. The strategy has now been applied in 1,200 units to which individuals and families are assigned. Their homes are numbered, family dossiers are established for all of them, and they undergo comprehensive examinations. The programme is currently being expanded to cover all the governorates of the country.

Health insurance

270. The health insurance system, which has been referred to earlier in this report, is an important part of the health care system. Under the sixth five-year plan (2006/07-2011/12), the health insurance plan is to be expanded gradually to cover new population groups and ultimately, by the end of the plan, to provide comprehensive coverage pursuant to a prospective Unified Health Insurance Act. At present, the system includes health insurance for workers in the State, in accordance with Act No. 32 of 1975, and health insurance for school children, in accordance with Act No. 99 of 1992. This insurance coverage provides full medical care in return for a nominal fee paid by workers and students. At the present time, the system covers 56 per cent of the population, including 17.5 million male and female students and 7.5 million Government workers, besides widows, pensioners and infants. Under the Act that is currently being drafted, all citizens will enjoy health insurance coverage.

271. In 2005, the health insurance budget amounted to approximately LE 2.2 billion. Of this total, LE 5 million went for transplant operations, LE 22 million for 112,000 heart catheterizations and heart surgery, LE 5 million for tumours, and approximately LE 600 million for therapy and medications.

Change over time in numbers of health insurance beneficiaries, 2000-2004 (thousands)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Workforce</i>	<i>Pensioners and widows</i>	<i>School children</i>	<i>Infants</i>	<i>Total</i>
2000	6 306	1 259	16 345	2 924	26 834
2004	7 235	1 875	16 975	9 336	35 421

Change over time in numbers of hospital beds available under health insurance, 2000-2004

<i>Year</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
No. of hospitals	37	41	41
Hospital bed capacity	7 789	9 003	9 701

272. The national project for the construction, fitting-out and renovation of 2,500 basic care units throughout Egypt is due to be completed by June 2010. As of June 2009, 1,318 health care units had been built in 24 governorates, in addition to 48 Government-run hospitals (out of a total of 390 hospitals in the country) providing citizens with free services. Moreover, medical caravans have continued to be sent to remote areas, where they provide diagnostic and therapeutic services free of charge and also dispense medications. Between June 2006 and June 2009, a total of 3,467 of these caravans were sent out, providing services for approximately 10 million people.

273. The State took intensive measures in response to outbreaks of bird flu (H5N1) and H1N1 flu. All sufferers were treated free of charge at Government hospitals, and the appropriate vaccines were provided.

Pharmaceuticals

274. In order to ensure that pharmaceuticals are available to citizens at affordable prices, Egypt has refused to respond to pressure from certain developed States, which attempted to impose standards for the protection of intellectual property that exceeded those to which Egypt was committed in the framework of the TRIPS Agreement. Under Act No. 82 of 2002, compulsory licensing (subject to the prior payment of monetary rights, as defined in the Act, to the patent owner) is permitted in all cases where supplies of pharmaceuticals with patent protection are inadequate to meet the country's needs, or where quality is unsatisfactory, prices are excessively high, or where the proprietary product is for use only with critical cases, chronic disease, incurable disease or endemic disease, or where the products in question are used for prophylactic purposes. Egypt's national AIDS control programme will be discussed in Part III below.

Article 13 Right to education

275. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the Annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Additional material will be found in the paragraphs below.

276. For our response to paragraph 1 of this article, we refer the Committee to the detailed discussion on information about human rights principles and the diffusion, awareness and teaching of those principles in Part I (E) above, which outlines Egypt's efforts to propagate a culture of human rights. In the first place, international human rights concepts and standards have been incorporated into the education system at the basic and intermediate levels and into university programmes with a view to reinforcing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in the second place, there has been a sustained effort to disseminate that culture among all individuals and thereby enhance their effective participation in the management of the affairs of society. At the same time, this has served to strengthen the values of understanding, tolerance and friendship among individuals and groups and to eliminate fanaticism, racism, hatred and discrimination.

The right to education in practice

277. Efforts to reform the education system in Egypt have proceeded uninterrupted with a view to ensuring that all are able to enjoy the right to education, which is enshrined in the Constitution. To that end, the State has striven consistently to expand coverage so that education is available to all children who have reached primary-school age, to cope with the issue of population growth, and to develop curricula that keep pace with advances in scientific knowledge and are responsive to job market demand.

278. Accordingly, a number of plans and programmes have been implemented during the period covered in this report. Egypt's achievements in this connection are summarized below.

General education

279. Policies and plans and their implementing programmes in the domain of general education are aimed at ongoing reform in the system with a view to ensuring full enjoyment of the right to education in accordance with international standards and overcoming national obstacles and difficulties. In the light of Egypt's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals with a bearing on education and gender, particular emphasis has been placed on the aspects outlined in the following paragraphs.

- Quantitative and qualitative upgrading of school physical plant;
- Enhancement of the skills and performance of teachers and other personnel working within the educational process at all levels, and development of management systems within schools and education directorates;
- A return to the full school day system, and a longer school year, in accordance with international standards;
- Application of a system of instruction designed to provide personal and social counselling and guidance;
- Attention to the element of quality in the educational process, inasmuch as it is the key to all reform and development efforts;
- Continued expansion of the school building programme, including one-room schools, community schools and small schools, in order to bring educational services closer to the people, eliminate the dropout phenomenon and encourage the education of girls;
- Accommodation of all pupils in order to provide equal educational opportunities for all and upgrade capacity rates in primary education;
- Elimination of the gender gap through increased attention to the education of girls and providing educational opportunities in underprivileged areas that are lacking in educational services, working in partnership with local communities and international organizations;
- Elimination of the gap between rural and urban areas by building more schools in rural areas;
- Development of programmes for pupils with special needs by upgrading existing schools, instituting a peer mentoring system at fifty regular schools, and building thirty classrooms for students with special needs at special education schools;
- Attention to gifted children: action to prepare special tests designed to identify them, design a monitoring system to track children in kindergarten and during the first three grades of primary school for the purpose of detecting talents, provide significant incentives for teachers who identify particularly gifted children and give them appropriate attention, particularly as regards distinction in mathematics, and establish a forum where gifted children can meet with a view to benefiting from each others' opinions and forging links among them;
- Expansion of the use of technology and electronic learning: the electronic teaching system represents a great qualitative shift, thanks to the way it provides access to outstanding educational Internet sites, thereby contributing to the task of training leaders, in accordance with global educational management standards, and the task of training teachers and enabling them to acquire basic skills and professional skills, thus enhancing their performance in the classroom. Electronic learning also provides training in the use of advanced technology and its various applications. The "personal computer for every teacher" project will be useful in this connection.
- Development of assessment systems: introduction of in-school assessment and training units, which are recently developed, state-of-the-art training formulas, and training through the national distance training network. Delegations of teachers will continue to be sent abroad with a view to enabling them to familiarize themselves with the experience of advanced States in the field of education; 10,084 teachers have participated in such delegations to date.

280. Observation has revealed that the education system is unsatisfactory in some respects. Theory rather than practice tends to predominate. Competence levels among personnel in charge of monitoring and assessment are low. There is no integrated assessment system based on clearly defined criteria for the evaluation of teaching outcomes. Learner assessment methods and tools are inadequate, the institutional working environment is unsatisfactory, and administrative performance at the school level is weak. Furthermore, there is little community involvement in the sphere of education. A variety of measures have been adopted in an effort to address these deficiencies at the various levels of the school system.

281. At the basic education level, a comprehensive assessment system has been adopted for all classes, while modern teaching methods (“active teaching”) are now in use. The various curricula, including the textbooks used, have been overhauled in an effort to help pupils acquire the necessary skills and awareness to enable them to adapt to an age of change and deal with its problems. Training courses are organized for teaching and guidance personnel, covering all cultural and professional aspects in various fields of specialization. In addition, the principle of decentralization, comprehensive quality standards and future-oriented planning have been introduced.

282. The right to education is supported by the audio-visual media, which broadcast educational programming. There are seven dedicated educational channels for all levels, besides literacy programmes.

283. At the present time, the general secondary system is being overhauled in order to enable it to keep pace with an age of change. A comprehensive assessment system for each student throughout his time in school is being applied. Concurrently, the State is encouraging community participation with a view to establishing private schools in order to ease the burden on State-run schools. Curricula are being revised to taken scientific and technological progress into account, and particular attention is being devoted to foreign language learning.

284. In 2008, Egypt won the UNESCO prize for the use of information and communication technology in educational development, while Egypt was ranked one of the five leading States in business processing outsourcing services in the World Economic Forum’s Networked Readiness Index (NRI) for 2008/09.

Technical and vocational education (commercial/industrial/agricultural)

285. The Government has continued to pursue its efforts in this domain through the programmes outlined below.

- Quantitative and qualitative development in the light of continuing growth in the numbers of students enrolling in technical education: qualified teaching personnel and school plant and equipment, including new or modernized workshops, equipment and facilities;
- Establishment of state-of-the-art specialized technical schools;
- Twin-track education and training: conclusion of a number of agreements with organizations in which technical education graduates in various fields are serving with a view to enlisting the participation of production units in providing practical training for students, based on job market needs;
- Expansion of the number of schools participating in the Mubarak-Kohl Project in the light of the success achieved by that system and the outstanding results in terms of its graduates, and extension of the project into a variety of fields of specialization;

- Meals for students: school meals are deemed to be of crucial importance owing to the positive impact of good nutrition on students' knowledge acquisition.

Statistical indicators on technical education, 2006/07 school year

	<i>Commercial secondary education</i>	<i>Industrial secondary education</i>	<i>Agricultural secondary education</i>
No. of schools	753	874	174
No. of classrooms	17 560	25 773	5 006
No. of students	697 727	910 383	185 499

General statistical indicators on pre-university education

- Increase in public spending on education from LE 112,614.3 million in 2000/01 to LE 214, 672.6 million in 2005/06;
- Increase in public spending on pre-university education from LE 11,925.9 million in 2000/01 to LE 19,268.3 million in 2005/06;
- Ratio of public spending on pre-university education to public spending on education: 71.9 per cent.

Change over time in numbers of schools (public and al-Azhar)

	<i>2000/01 school year</i>	<i>2006/07 school year</i>
No. of schools, pre-primary level	4 312	6 688
No. of schools, pre-primary level	18 203	19 755
No. of schools, pre-intermediate level	9 718	11 702
No. of schools, pre-secondary level	2 819	4 034

Change over time in numbers of pupils (public and al-Azhar schools)

	<i>2000/01 school year</i>	<i>2006/07 school year</i>
No. of pupils, pre-primary level	413 725	579 889
No. of pupils, pre-primary level	7 841 043	9 982 823
No. of pupils, pre-intermediate level	4 750 276	3 217 488
No. of pupils, pre-secondary level	1 386 989	1 456 303
No. of pupils, pre-secondary technical level	2 051 460	1 793 609
Total	16 443 493	17 030 112

Higher education

286. In keeping with the principle of equality before the law, admission to Egyptian universities and higher institutes is contingent on possession of a general secondary-school certificate or the equivalent. The admission process is subject to oversight and administration by the Admissions Coordination Office, which ensures that students are distributed among the several faculties in accordance with a precise system that takes into account the student's secondary-school marks and his or her level of knowledge in the subjects that qualify him or her for admission to a particular faculty as well as his or her

preferences in the matter. Geographic distribution is also a factor governing admission to the various universities, depending on the applicant's place of residence.

287. In recent years, new Government-run universities have been established in the various governorates in order to bring university education closer to the people and exert a braking effect on emigration. In addition, the establishment of a number of private Egyptian universities has been authorized (some of them in cooperation with foreign universities); these institutions have contributed significantly to the task of accommodating large numbers of graduates.

The open education system

288. As a means of accommodating persons who have been unable to enrol in the formal system of higher education but desire to pursue their education, an "open education" system has been created. At the present time, the system is in operation at many Egyptian universities. It serves over 40,000 male and female students, distributed among many faculties, including faculties of law, commerce and humanities. These students follow the same curricula as their counterparts in the formal system, and at the end of their years of study they are qualified to receive a baccalaureate or undergraduate degree.

Adult education centres

289. In response to the wishes of many citizens who possess a university degree but wish to go further and develop their practical capacities, a system of adult education centres has been established. Persons who possess a university degree can enrol at one of the adult education research centres which are found within many of Egypt's Government-run universities and continue their education until they earn a diploma of advanced studies. At these centres, they have the benefit of a mechanism that enables them to select programmes of study that are relevant to the practical requirements of their jobs and meets the needs of the work environment. Another possible benefit of the centres is to qualify this category of graduates for admission to Master's or doctoral-level programmes.

Student services

290. It is the aim of the State to provide students with health, cultural, social, technical and sports-related services, together with social care for students with special needs, who are guaranteed various forms of financial support through the Social Care Fund managed by the Supreme Council of Universities. Universities and higher institutes provide their students with integrated preventive and therapeutic services free of charge. In addition, external clinics at all these university faculties and institutes provide their students with health care services, including pharmaceuticals, medical examinations, analyses and diagnostic radiography. Every university has a hospital providing a full range of state-of-the-art clinical specialties where students can receive medical care free of charge. Sports programmes, for their part, are aimed at encouraging students to practise physical activities. The Ministry of Higher Education provides high-quality facilities such as playing fields, swimming pools and gymnasiums, and faculties and universities compete with one another in various sports.

291. The State also provides support and assistance for cultural and artistic activities for students. Financial and technical backing is available for the purpose of bringing cultural and artistic families to universities for cultural events throughout the country, and policy-makers are often invited to give talks on those occasions.

292. Egyptian universities also provide their foreign students with suitable housing on campus for a nominal rent. The Ministry of Higher Education wishes to ensure that these students can enjoy leisure and stability in an appropriate environment that will enable them

to concentrate on their studies and facilitate their learning acquisition. Furthermore, universities provide meals free of charge for students who live on campus. Universities do aim to develop various student activities during the academic year, but in practice the bulk of those activities take place during the summer holiday, for the universities believe that their mission continues all year round, and consequently students use that season to engage in athletics, travel, and cultural, artistic, social and other activities.

293. A further concern of the State is to make university textbooks available to students at subsidized prices. It also seeks to encourage outstanding students (those who have a minimum overall grade of “very good”) by providing cash awards as incentives.

The delegations system

294. In addition, the State is concerned to send academic delegations abroad with a view to keeping abreast of scientific advances and their practical applications. Academic delegations that are sent abroad usually consist mainly of teaching assistants at universities and scientific research centres who are working toward their doctorates. Delegations of this kind fall into two categories, namely foreign and domestic, but they share a single oversight and academic leave structure.

295. Besides these academic delegations for the benefit of teaching assistants, there are other delegations abroad for university faculty members who hold doctorates. These delegations are of two kinds, academic delegations and working delegations.

Scientific awards at universities

296. The State is concerned to apply a system of academic promotions at Egyptian universities with a view to stimulating continued research activities on the part of faculty members. It has adopted two main approaches to that end:

(a) Faculty members at universities must have original research publications to present to the specialized academic committees when the time comes for their promotion to be considered, within five years of obtaining their last degree;

(b) Prizes for outstanding research are awarded every year in all faculties. Faculty members submit applications, and the winners are determined by the specialized academic committees. The State has sought to promote esteem for the achievements of eminent Egyptians who have contributed to the advancement of knowledge by making numerous prizes and awards available in recognition of their contributions.

Statistical indicators on higher education in Egypt during the period covered in this report

- Spending on university education increased from LE 4,598 million in 2000/01 to LE 7,538.6 million in 2005/06;

(Spending on university education accounted for 28.1 per cent of all spending on education.)

Change over time in numbers of students enrolled at Egyptian universities (State and private) and numbers of graduates, 2000/01 and 2005/06

	2000/01	2005/06
Students enrolled at universities	1 391 203 (758 239 men, 632 964 women)	1 880 460 (981 302 men, 311 668 women)
Students graduating from universities	249 597 (132 133 men, 117 464 women)	311 668 (149 017 men, 162 651 women)
Students enrolled at technical institutes	106 284 (56 100 men, 50 184 women)	130 486 (69 309 men, 61 177 women)
Students graduating from technical institutes	42 380 (18 818 men, 23 562 women)	67 296 (32 982 men, 34 314 women)

**Faculty members and assistants at State universities in the 2006/07 academic year
(source: Ministry of Higher Education)**

Professors/Assistant Professors	23 497
Instructor/Assistant Instructors	31 962
Lecturers	12 609
Total (women accounted for 31% of all faculty in the 2003/04 academic year)	68 068

Open education system: numbers of new applicants, enrolled students and graduates, 2004/05 academic year

University	New applicants			Enrolled students			Graduates		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Cairo	4 432	2 361	6 793	27 227	16 990	44 217	3 839	2 269	6 108
Alexandria	732	405	1 137	2 532	2 119	4 651	250	158	408
'Ayn Shams	1 581	823	2 404	7 669	5 132	12 801	735	681	1 416
Asyut	197	65	262	692	303	995	91	34	125
Total	6 942	3 654	10 596	38 120	24 544	62 664	4 915	3 142	8 057

Change over time in numbers of students earning B.A. degrees, State universities

Academic year	No. of women students	No. of male students	Total	%
2000/01	17 730	16 497	34 227	52
2001/02	18 035	18 547	36 582	49
2002/03	18 935	19 473	38 408	49

Numbers of students earning Master's degrees, State universities

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>No. of women students</i>	<i>No. of male students</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
2000/01	2 269	3 361	5 630	40
2001/02	3 227	4 884	8 111	40
2002/03	3 390	5 106	8 496	40

Numbers of students earning doctoral degrees, State universities

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>No. of women students</i>	<i>No. of male students</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
2000/01	1 197	1 833	3 030	40
2001/02	1 303	1 970	3 273	39
2002/03	1 370	2 152	3 522	40

Literacy plans and programmes

297. The statistical data indicate that in 2006, Egypt's illiteracy rate was 29.3 per cent. The Government has striven consistently to eradicate illiteracy. Its efforts in that connection are summarized below.

- Expansion of literacy classes: in 2002/03, a total of 565,578 persons (324,074 men and 241,504 women) were enrolled in literacy classes;
- Development of educational methods and formulas expressly designed for adults:
 - Educational programmes on television;
 - Creation of a dedicated education channel with specialized programming;
 - Training of qualified senior personnel in the field of literacy and adult education;
 - Attention to the post-literacy stage: enabling newly literate persons to pursue their education by raising the age limit for enrolment in intermediate-level classes to 18 years and the age limit for enrolment in secondary-level classes to 20 years.

298. In the context of its continuing efforts to address this problem, Egypt has implemented a number of projects, beginning with the establishment of the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE). In 2003, a national literacy project was adopted, featuring the hiring of 100,000 young university graduates to work as literacy teachers. Numerous programmes have been launched in this connection, most notably the "one class" project to help girls who have dropped out of school and enable them to complete their education, and the "girl-friendly schools" project, which is designed to narrow the gender gap in basic education. Thanks to these efforts, the illiteracy rate has declined to 28.6 per cent, according to a UNESCO report. During the period 2006-2008, a total of 1,498,946 Egyptians, of whom 927,104 were men and the remainder women, learned to read and write. Most of these newly literate persons were inhabitants of rural areas.

299. The Government's literacy efforts and the outcomes of those efforts will be discussed in greater detail in Part III of this report.

The Government's efforts to address the dropout phenomenon

300. The results of the most recent census, conducted in 2006 (in Egypt, a census is conducted every ten years), indicate that:

- 10.4 per cent of children in the 6-18 age group were not enrolled in school;
- 85.4 per cent of children in that age group had enrolled and had not dropped out;
- 4.2 per cent of those children had enrolled and had dropped out.

301. Programmes designed to address the dropout phenomenon have revolved around the establishment of a number of non-traditional schools for persons who have not enrolled in primary education or have not completed that stage.

302. Information about the numbers and types of these schools and the agencies participating in them is presented in the table below.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>No. of pupils</i>	<i>No. of schools</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	One-class school	69 170 (including 66 623 girls)	3 147	Ministerial Order No. 255 issued on 17 October 1993
2	Community school		339	Began in 1992 in the governorates of Assiut, Sohag and Qena, in cooperation with UNICEF
3	Small school		46	Rely on community participation
4	Girl-friendly school		Applied in governorates of Beni Suef, Minya, Assiut, Sohag, Giza and Beheira	Being implemented under a partnership arrangement among the Ministry, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, ILO, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, and civil society.
5	Community association school		20 multilevel associations	Ministerial Order No. 30 issued on 10 February 2000

303. In addition, a dedicated directorate dealing exclusively with the dropout phenomenon has been created within the Ministry of Education. This directorate is tasked with developing a data base on pupils who drop out of school and identifying methods of preventing the phenomenon and returning dropouts to school without delay. The directorate's terms of reference also include pupils who do not attend school during the compulsory education years.

The Government's efforts in the domain of special education

304. In keeping with the principle of equal opportunity in education, and with a view to narrowing the education gap between normal children and children with special needs, a number of initiatives have been undertaken. These are summarized below.

- Larger numbers of special education schools and classes in all governorates;
- All special education schools are equipped with multi-media rooms and computer workrooms;

- There has been a great leap in the training and qualifications of special education teachers as a result of delegations within Egypt and abroad;
- With a view to taking humanitarian, educational and psychological considerations into account, general secondary examination commissions for the blind have been formed in all governorates where there are secondary schools for blind pupils. Formerly, there were only four such commissions for the entire country;
- Assessment guides for students are being printed in Braille and distributed free of charge to all pupils as a means of placing blind pupils on a footing of equality with other pupils in public education.

Facilities for pupils with special needs

- Expenditure: there is no charge for services to special education pupils, and they are exempt from health insurance contributions, which are defrayed by Social Education. All aspects of care, including food, clothing and in-school residence are paid for;
- Age and conditions of acceptance: exempted from the age-limit or one of the conditions of acceptance, depending on the circumstances of each case. Exemptions are also granted for the acceptance in certain cases of pupils with more than one disability at special education schools. In addition, educational facilities for some pupils who suffer from isolation in primary-school classes may be authorized;
- Examinations: blind pupils are not required to take drawing, engineering, Arabic writing, or maintenance and repair at the intermediate level.

Numbers of special education schools, classrooms, pupils and teachers, 2006/07 school year

<i>Schools</i>	<i>Classrooms</i>	<i>Pupils</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
808	4 022	37 070	8203

Professional development of education sector personnel

- Increase in numbers of teachers: as of the end of the 2004/05 school year, there were 826,278 teachers (including 742,709 men and 404,567 women), compared to 795,195 in 2000/01.

Professional development of teachers

305. A professional academy for teachers was established under the Education Act (Act No. 139 of 1981) for the purpose of providing professional development for teaching staff and enabling them to upgrade their capacities and skills, with a view to bringing the educational process up to a higher level. The regulations governing the Academy were set forth in Presidential Decree No. 129 of 2008, which also specified its functions: to develop plans, policies and quality standards relating to teacher training programmes and to set professional development goals. In the course of the past few years, training centres have been developed and their capacity expanded: Egypt now has training centres of various kinds which can accommodate 18,500 teacher trainees simultaneously.

Material and moral care for teachers

306. One objective that the State seeks to attain through its support for the education system is better conditions and a higher standard of living for teachers. Budget allocations

have been made for the purpose of creating a special regime for teachers, featuring pay increases linked to their technical and professional levels.

Quality as an element of the education process

307. In view of the fact that quality is a fundamental component of all reform and development initiatives, a National Agency for Education Quality Assurance has recently been established with the aim of developing standardized specifications for curricula at the various levels, consistent with comprehensive development requirements, the job market, and future-oriented scientific development requirements. The Agency is also tasked with developing standard specifications for graduates at all levels of pre-university education.

308. For our response to paragraph 3 of this article, particularly with reference to the freedom of parents and legal guardians to choose private schools for their children, we refer the Committee to the previous report of Egypt.

Freedom to establish private educational institutions

309. Under the Education Act (Act No. 139 of 1981), private schools may be established, provided they teach the basic curricula in accordance with the education system in Egypt. Under Act No. 101 of 1992, private universities may be established, and under Act No. 52 of 1970, private higher institutes may be established as well.

310. In the 2006/07 school year:

- There were 4,859 private schools (all levels), including 223 commercial secondary schools and 18 special education schools;
- There were 39,090 classrooms with 1,241,246 pupils enrolled.

Private universities

<i>No.</i>	<i>Type of university</i>	<i>Name of university</i>	<i>Year founded</i>	<i>Act</i>
1	Private university with no Egyptian capital participation	University of Alexandria	1919	No. 46 of 1976
2	Private university with majority Egyptian capital participation	October 6 University	1996	
		Misr University for Science and Technology	1996	
		October University for Modern Sciences and Arts	1996	No. 101 of 1982
		Misr International University	1996	
		Université française d'Égypte		
		German University in Cairo		
		A total of 19 private universities founded under the Act	2003	

<i>No.</i>	<i>Type of university</i>	<i>Name of university</i>	<i>Year founded</i>	<i>Act</i>
3	Private university founded under the auspices of an international organization	Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport (Alexandria)	1972	League of Arab States
		Université Senghor d'Alexandrie	1990	Organisation internationale de la francophonie

Article 14

Ensuring the right to education

311. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to our remarks on article 13 above, which outline the Egyptian Government's efforts to implement the right to compulsory education, free of charge, for all citizens. We may add here that those efforts extend to every region of the country.

312. Ensuring the right to education, and achieving comprehensive coverage, is one of the Millennium Development Goals, which is to be attained within the specified time frame, namely by 2015. Statistical data indicate that Egypt has made significant progress toward achieving that goal, as will be seen from the table below.

Indicator: Enrolment of all children in primary and intermediate schools

	2000	2005
Net enrolment rate, primary level	91%	93%
Children completing primary education	87%	92%
Dropout rate	0.8%	0.2%

313. As we have seen, Egypt is implementing various plans and programmes aimed at achieving this Millennium Development Goal within the specified time frame.

Article 15

Right to take part in cultural life

314. For comment on this article, we refer the Committee to Egypt's previous report and the annex containing its replies to the Committee's questions. Please see also Part I above.

315. We may add here that the Government of Egypt is concerned with culture on a broad front, inevitably so in view of the range and variety of the strands—Ancient Egyptian, Coptic, Islamic, Arabian and Nubian—that have contributed to Egyptian culture and constitute its basic components. Moreover, for the past 7,000 years Egypt has been, and continues to be, the scene of interaction with other peoples and civilizations. The Constitution and laws of the country guarantee the right to take part in cultural life, enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, and benefit from the protection of artistic production, intellectual property and patented inventions. These rights are enshrined in legislation and have been reaffirmed by numerous court judgements, as we have seen.

Right to take part in cultural life and protection of intellectual production

316. For comment on this matter, we refer the Committee to the discussion in the previous report of Egypt on the provisions of the Constitution and domestic law relating to protection of the right to take part in cultural life, enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, and benefit from the protection of artistic production, intellectual property and patented inventions. The above-mentioned court rulings are also relevant.

Development and diffusion of science and culture

317. Creativity and originality and the provision of a suitable environment for them are the foundation-stone of cultural action. Accordingly, the State seeks to encourage gifted, creative individuals in all fields of artistic and cultural endeavour by providing specialized centres for the arts equipped with modern facilities, sponsors the translation of Arabic literature into various languages and vice versa, publishes cultural journals, and participates in national and international exhibitions and competitions.

318. The State reaffirms its concern and support for the right of all citizens to culture, as is apparent from the backing it provides for many culture and information programmes through a variety of national and private agencies and other bodies, all of which share the goal of creating a propitious climate for the exercise of that right. There are two basic cultural structures for that purpose, and these are outlined below.

Cultural structure

319. The cultural structure of Egypt is made up of a variety of national mechanisms covering all cultural activities. Support and guidance are vested in a specialized ministry, the Ministry of Culture, which comprises the units listed in the paragraphs below.

Supreme Council for Culture

320. The Supreme Council for Culture is an independent agency with members representing the various relevant Government bodies and also a number of leading writers and experts. The aims of the Council are summarized below:

- To remunerate and honour pioneering and leading thinkers, artists and writers with awards expressing the esteem in which they are held;
- To organize international and national seminars and conferences;
- To take an interest in the literary composition and translation movement;
- To hold competitions designed to identify new and promising talent;
- To propagate cultural awareness by giving away books and other publications.

321. The structure of the Council includes a Visual Arts Sector, the National Centre for Children's Culture, the Central Directorate for the Supervision of Works of Art, and the Cultural Production Sector, which in turn comprises the National Centre for Cinema, Drama and Music, the Centre for Popular Arts, and the Drama Centre.

Academy of Arts

322. This institution contributes to the enhancement of thought, art, and human values, and strives to give a national orientation to the arts having regard to the country's national heritage: preservation of its origins along with contemporaneity and documentation of cultural and artistic links with the various bodies concerned with the arts, in the national context, the broader surrounding Arab context, and the world context. The Academy also seeks to promote suitable circumstances for the propagation of a compendium of artistic

creation at all levels, domestic and foreign. The mission of the Academy was originally restricted to the teaching of the arts, has now evolved, extending to much broader horizons, supported by an integrated knowledge-based view of the Academy's objectives. The Academy is now an umbrella organization comprising the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, the Higher Institute of Arabic Music, the Higher Institute of Artistic Criticism, the Higher Institute of Ballet, the Higher Institute of Folk Arts, the Conservatory of Music, and the Higher Institute of Cinema.

Supreme Council of Antiquities

323. The Supreme Council of Antiquities is mandated to protect and preserve the nation's most extraordinary historical, artistic and archaeological resource and to present it to the States of the world using carefully planned scientific methods. The Council's activities are summarized below.

- To discover and excavate the archaeological heritage of Egyptian civilization;
- To preserve archaeological remains by means of restoration and conservation;
- To establish archaeological museums in order to propagate cultural and archaeological awareness;
- Scientific and archaeological publications and assistance to investigators and students in the field of archaeology;
- Scientific and archaeological recording of the heritage of the civilization of antiquity;
- Use of self-generated resources to launch archaeological publications, museums, and archaeological culture.

General Egyptian Book Organization (GEBO)

324. This organization is mandated to propagate a mission of enlightenment through an integrated authorship and publication institution. The work of GEBO is structured around authorship, translation, publication, and the production, printing and marketing of magazines. GEBO also undertakes the publication of encyclopaedias, dictionaries, children's books, and books on art and archaeology.

325. Between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2001, GEBO published a total of 458 books, including both original and translated works.

326. GEBO organizes international book fairs and the Cairo International Children's Book Fair.

General Authority for National Books and Documents House

327. The aim of this organization is to participate in the work of national guidance and discharge the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture in the domain of national public libraries, heritage, manuscripts, national documents, authorship, translation and publication. In pursuit of these aims, it facilitates knowledge of intellectual production and collects, keeps, verifies and prepares manuscripts, photocopies and journals with a view to ensuring that anyone who wishes may benefit from them. The General Authority for National Books and Documents House oversees 25 branch libraries and a number of travelling libraries. Another of its components is a global press, which cooperates in the domain of development, cultural cooperation, future-oriented publications and marketing (sales outlets).

General Organization of Culture Palaces

328. This organization is mandated to foster and impel the cultural movement with a view to the objectives summarized below.

- Activation of the literary movement in the various governorates and kindling a spirit of investigation and creativity;
- Upgrade library services in culture centres and branch libraries, provide them with books, and facilitate accessibility for the general population;
- Promotion of the visual arts movement through events and fairs and discovery and nurturing of gifted artists;
- Study of folk art and environmental crafts, and oversight of the folk arts troupes in the various governorates;
- Propagation of dramatic culture among the general population and artistic oversight of dramatic activity in the various governorates;
- Participation in the organization of meetings, seminars and conferences aimed at cultural, artistic and literary enhancement;
- Provision of financial and literary support in the framework of the Organization's assigned functions in that area;

329. The Organization operates numerous specialized culture palaces and organizes cultural festivals in the various governorates throughout the country.

330. There are a total of 393 cultural centres distributed throughout all governorates, staffed by 6,905 employees, 44.6 per cent of them women.

General Authority for the National Cultural Centre (Opera House)

331. This organization is mandated to present high-level artistic works locally, regionally and internationally, to provide elements with world-class competence and experience to follow evolving technical and administrative operating methods and technical teams, and to attain its assigned objectives of producing high-quality artistic works, preserving the artistic heritage, and instilling an appreciation for those works in generations of all ages. The National Cultural Centre is also mandated to take the necessary action to persuade outstanding artists in the fields of music, opera, ballet and singing to remain in the country and not emigrate. It also runs a Talent Development Centre through which it seeks to develop the talents of young people and amateurs who are not students of music or the opera.

332. The National Cultural Centre has a number of achievements to its credit in the field of cultural and artistic activities: hosting world-class artistic troupes to perform on the stage of the Opera House, producing a series of outstanding artistic works from the Egyptian heritage, organizing weekly concerts for children free of charge or for a nominal fee.

333. The Centre's achievements in the field of training include sending delegations abroad, developing the talents of young people and children in the domain of the arts of ballet, piano and choral singing, and evaluating opera companies in accordance with international standards.

334. In the domain of international cultural exchanges, competitions and festivals, the Centre organizes the Arab Music Festivals.

Cultural Development Fund

335. The Fund plays an effective role in founding libraries, including the Mubarak Public Library, which seeks to encourage individuals of all ages and from all social groups to develop the habit of reading, and to make available all books, reference materials, periodicals and audio-visual documents intended for the general public as a means of assisting self-education.

Al-Qahira

336. *Al-Qahira* is a weekly cultural newspaper that comes out every Wednesday.

Artists and Writers Fund

337. This fund was established in 1964 for the purpose of providing health and social insurance for writers, artists and thinkers in recognition of their efforts.

Unions and associations for persons who work in the domain of culture

338. These organizations are concerned with the welfare of artists engaging in cultural activities. There are a number of them, including the Music Trade Union, the Drama Trade Union, the Cinema Trade Union, and the Union of Performing Artists. These unions are subject to the provisions of Act No. 35 of 1978 and amendments thereto. Another organization is the Arab Writers Union, which is subject to the provisions of Act No. 14 of 1975 as amended by Act No. 19 of 1978.

The media

339. The State, concerned as it is to fulfil its commitments in respect of the propagation of culture and knowledge, provides audio-visual media services. It strives to keep abreast of scientific progress and technological advances in media practice, considering as it does that the media system embodies the right to knowledge and the right to culture. Egypt's information system comprises a number of agencies and mechanisms, listed below.

Radio and Television Union

Radio

340. All the leading Egyptian radio networks play the role assigned to them in attaining the objectives of the media information plan in a framework of authentic religious, ethical and social values. Radio broadcasting goes on 24 hours a day, totalling, on average, 476 hours daily from 115 studios, for a grand total of 173,725 broadcasting hours in the course of a year.

341. The subjects of radio broadcasts are distributed in accordance with a programming plan comprising 22.2 per cent culture, 21.3 per cent political issues and information, 18.4 per cent religious topics, 16.2 per cent entertainment, 9.6 per cent radio drama, 6.4 per cent religious minority programmes, 5.7 per cent services and awareness, and 0.2 per cent educational programmes.

Television

342. Egyptian direct visual media are Channel 1 and Channel 2. Channel 1 covers the entire country, including remote regions, while Channel 2 does not have quite such extensive coverage. There are, on average, 142 hours of television broadcasting daily from 39 studios, for a total of 51,837 hours in the course of a year.

343. Television programming is broken down as follows: 34.85 per cent political issues and information, 39.31 per cent entertainment, 9.39 per cent culture, 9.14 per cent religious minority programmes, 8.88 per cent religious topics, 3.33 per cent educational programmes, 2.65 per cent commercials, and 2.45 per cent service and awareness programming.

The space sector

344. Egyptian visual media via satellite are the Egyptian Space Channel, the international Nile Channel, and the Egyptian Space Channel directed at the United States of America. The aim of this sector is to provide Egyptians who have emigrated, Egyptian embassies, Egyptian citizens abroad and Egyptian culture and information centres in Arab, African and European countries with Egyptian information.

Specialized channels

345. These include the Nile News Channel, the Nile Information Channel, the Nile Drama Channel, the Nile Culture Channel, the Nile Sports Channel, the Nile Family and Child Channel, the Nile education channels, the Higher Education Channel, the Al-Manara Channel for scientific programming, and the Nile Ideas Channel. Besides these, there are Channels 1 and 2 and the six regional channels, which are also transmitted via satellite.

346. There were an average of 19 hours of television broadcasting daily in 2005/06, up from 18.2 hours a day in 2002/03.

Training and professional development institutes

347. These are institutes for the training of media personnel in Egypt and Africa. They include the Radio and Television Training Institute and the Training Institute for African Media Communicators. Some 177 training courses are planned for 2003/04 in a number of domains, including languages, information technology, radio and television broadcasting practice, Arabic language and presentation, as well as various administrative areas, such as financial, organizational, legal and security matters, and English and French language courses.

International Academy for Engineering and Media Science

348. The Academy was founded in 2002 as a specialized scientific educational institution, having regard to the fundamental role played by core media personnel. It is a component of the Egyptian Media Production City complex. The Academy offers a four-year programme of study leading to a baccalaureate, Master's or doctoral degree in media science, besides specialized vocational diploma courses and training courses leading to a certificate. It has a radio and television production division, a cinema division, an advertising and marketing division, and a multimedia, Internet and audio-visual broadcasting engineering division. In 2002/03 and 2003/04, the Academy had 520 Egyptian students and 17 students from other countries.

General Authority for Information

349. The Authority plays an informational role through 64 complexes and centres, 27 Nile Centres, 44 children's clubs, 44 listening and viewing clubs, 36 literacy classrooms, 38 public libraries, and 30 Friends of the Media clubs. In addition, it performs the useful function of distributing informational and cultural publications.

Civil society

350. Civil society is a major, intensive participant in Egypt's media structure. Six private space-based channels have been adopted for the first time, operated by companies with

their headquarters in the Media Free Zone in 6 October City. To date, these channels are carried by 10 stations.

351. These various components of Egypt's cultural and media structures illustrate the extent to which the Government is concerned to implement the right to take part in cultural life and to disseminate and develop that right. The above-mentioned statistical data clearly show the results that Egypt's efforts in this domain have achieved.

Freedom of scientific research

352. For this subject, Egypt refers the Committee to its initial report, which discussed the relevant legislation and the various agencies active in the domain of scientific research. See also the information presented in the table below.

Statistical data relating to research centres, institutes and agencies, 2005

<i>Centre or institute</i>	<i>No. of research personnel and assistants</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>No. of scientific publications</i>	<i>No. of research projects (domestic, foreign, internal)</i>
National Research Centre	2 698	118 892 000	322	545
National Institute for Standards	178	18 827 000	36	8
Petroleum Research Institute	305	19 621 000	38	11
National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics	206	239 112 000	65	8
National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries	383	20 300 000	41	9
Theodor Bilharz Research Institute	339	19 073 000	20	29
Central Metallurgical Research and Development Institute	200	21 866 000	8	40
Electronics Research and Development Centre	159	10 306 000	19	7
Research Institute of Ophthalmology	246	18 392 000	22	3
Academy of Scientific Research and Technology	-	54 858 000	-	162
Mubarak City for Scientific Research	119	15 345 000	47	36
National Authority for Remote Sensing	59	61 316 000	27	28
Supreme Council for Research Centres and Institutes	-	1 286 529	-	-
Ministry of Scientific Research	-	10 945 000	-	-
Total	4 892 (43.17% women)	414 939 529	645	886

353. The statistical data indicate the various aspects and fields of scientific research undertaken by Egypt's research institutes and centres. They also reveal that scientific research has attracted a great deal of interest on the part of the Government. In addition, the data show that the volume of activity carried on by these various institutions has been substantial, both in terms of numbers of scientific papers presented and in terms of the scientific projects being conducted either domestically or in a context of international cooperation.

State awards for the encouragement of intellectual production, science, the arts and literature

354. The State seeks to encourage and honour production and creativity by offering awards in the various fields of science, the arts and literature as a way of rewarding achievement and providing incentives. The enabling legislation is Act No. 38 of 1958,

which was discussed in the previous report of Egypt. Since that time, there have been a series of amendments to the Act with the aim of expanding the range of rewards and incentives or providing larger monetary prizes. Act No. 2 of 2005, provided for the awards listed below.

- LE 200,000 and a gold medal (the six Mubarak Prizes: one each for literature, the arts, sociology and science, and two for achievement in advanced technology);
- LE 100,000 and a gold medal (20 State prizes for intellectual production);
- LE 50,000 and a silver medal (14 State prizes for outstanding achievement);
- LE 20,000 (72 State incentive awards);
- These prizes were doubled in value pursuant to Act No. 117 of 2008.

International scientific and cultural cooperation

355. As we have seen, Egypt possesses a great stock of cultural capital and an extraordinary archaeological heritage from Ancient Egyptian times and from subsequent civilizations, to say nothing of the religious archaeological heritage from the monotheistic religions that have flourished here in the course of Egypt's history. Accordingly, it has enjoyed strong cultural relations with other States throughout the world and with the international community, and this has been useful throughout history, thanks to the fact that Egypt enjoys a distinctive national personality characterized by a culture of tolerance, respect for others, and the ability to accommodate other cultural innovations and interact with them without sustaining damage to its own fundamental social values.

356. The Government of Egypt has pursued its efforts in this connection throughout the period covered in this report, as will be seen below.

International cultural agreements

357. Egypt has acceded to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris on 20 October 2005.

Bilateral international agreements

358. Egypt has entered into 11 bilateral international agreements in the domain of cultural cooperation. Pursuant to those agreements, there are a large number of foreign cultural centres, and, conversely, there are Egyptian cultural centres in many States in various regions of the world.

International festivals and exhibitions

359. Cultural activity in Egypt includes many diverse international and regional festivals in various fields of culture and the arts. Egypt, for its part, participates in similar cultural activities organized in other countries.

360. In this context, Egypt has continued to strive to increase mutual communication with the global cultural movement by installing more asymmetric digital subscriber lines (ADSL) for the country's growing numbers of Internet users. Between 2005 and 2009, numbers of Internet users increased to approximately 15 million individuals, while there are now approximately 53 million telephone service subscribers. This situation reflects the extent to which cultural awareness is widespread in Egypt, the interest that its people take in it, and the availability of Internet facilities.

III. Replies to the previous recommendations of the Committee on the outcomes of discussion of the initial report

361. Parts I and II of this report contain an account of how Egypt has created a number of national mechanisms for monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards in the light of the provisions of the international instruments to which Egypt is a party. Foremost among these mechanisms is the National Council for Human Rights, established in accordance with the Paris Principles (1990). Exercising the functions attributed to it by law, the Council publishes reports that are accessible to all, receives complaints from individuals and endeavours to resolve them, prepares the National Plan for the Advancement of Human Rights, and confronts practices and forms of behaviour that violate or infringe protected rights and freedoms. And, of course, the Council is only one of the mechanisms discussed in Part I above.

362. In the course of the period covered in this report, Egypt has reviewed and amended much of its domestic legislation with a bearing on the effective implementation of rights enunciated in the Covenant, as we have seen in detail in Part I. That legislation includes provisions of Acts and other statutory instruments aimed at reinforcing gender equality, notably the recognition in law of a woman's right to terminate her marriage (by the *khul'* procedure), the right of an Egyptian woman married to an alien to transmit Egyptian nationality to her children, and the repeal of provisions stipulating that certain posts could be held only by men.

363. Under amendments to the Child Act, female genital mutilation, child labour, domestic violence and all the acts set forth in the two Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are now criminal offences. A new Labour Code has been enacted, under which workers have the right to strike and it is lawful to establish trade unions and associations. Other new legislation has addressed economic and financial reforms and the income tax and customs regulations. In addition, the independence of the judiciary has been strengthened, and the administration of justice has been expedited by the establishment of dedicated courts dealing with family matters and economic disputes.

364. Egypt reiterates its determination to meet in full its international commitments in the matter of bringing its domestic legislation into conformity with the international human rights instruments to which it is a party, including the Covenant that is the subject of this report, which has the force of law in Egypt. Another reason why Egypt is bent on the effective implementation of the rights enunciated in the Covenant is that those rights are also enshrined in its Constitution.

365. In response to, and in support of, international requirements and new developments, Egypt's efforts in this connection have included a consistent focus on completing and developing the construction and formulation of models and statistical data with a view to obtaining detailed information on those aspects that feature in its international commitments and ensuring that they include a qualitative dimension. Hence the importance of an integrated data base, which has proved invaluable in the preparation of plans and programmes designed to address the outcomes revealed by the statistical information.

366. By way of response to the questions, concerns and recommendations of the Committee, we propose to discuss in some detail Egypt's efforts to address the practical difficulties and obstacles that have impeded its implementation of some of the rights enunciated in the Covenant. Those difficulties and obstacles have arisen as a result of the repercussions and residual impact of the country's cultural heritage and misguided practices. Egypt is endeavouring to confront them through an array of general strategies and policies aimed at fostering comprehensive development in all areas, which are being implemented in the form of concrete plans and programmes, having regard to spatial

priorities and appropriate time frames. The end in view here is to break the grip of these practices and foster awareness of their harmful effects, and ultimately to eradicate them altogether. This has become a major issue and an important national challenge that is the object of a national initiative at all levels on the part of both the Government and non-governmental bodies.

367. Egypt is characterized by a relatively high population growth rate, and its economic reform programmes have had a substantial impact. In view of these factors, the Government's efforts to realize comprehensive growth and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the target dates have had to take into account the problems of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. These are among the leading national challenges confronting the nation's efforts to ensure the full implementation and enjoyment of the rights enunciated in the Covenant with which this report is concerned.

368. Egypt's attempts to address these various issues will be discussed in some detail in this section of the report, followed by an account of some of the country's ambitious national programmes aimed at dealing with the concerns of the Committee as expressed in its recommendations, including in particular the national housing project, the national AIDS control programme, the programmes and activities of the SFD, programmes designed to combat child labour, and disability elimination.

A. Action to address poverty in Egypt

369. Poverty is one of the most serious problems confronting a majority of the world's States, and the eradication of poverty is one of the Millennium Development Goals. As part of its effort to address this issue, Egypt has adopted a number of ambitious plans and programmes, having regard to the fact that:

- Egypt, like most developing countries, does not have enough jobs for its workforce, and
- Population growth swallows up growth in national income rates, with the result that the country's high birth rates are a direct burden on public spending in all areas, owing to the constantly growing numbers of individuals for whom the State must provide basic services.

370. The national anti-poverty campaign is structured around two main lines of emphasis:

- Continued implementation of economic development programmes in order to create adequately paid jobs, thereby raising people's standard of living and driving down the poverty rate;
- Continued pursuit of more and better opportunities for low-income individuals to obtain education, health care and other social services, poverty being essentially a social issue. This will call for strengthening of the situation of low-income people as a force in the economic environment by providing incentives to upgrade their productive capacities.

371. Accordingly, poverty reduction is a major objective in the development plans that are being prepared at all levels, since all such plans are aimed first and foremost at raising people's socio-economic standard of living. A range of mechanisms, programmes and specific services are thus being put in place with a view to addressing the causes of poverty in general and, in the short term, alleviating poverty by protecting low-income population groups from the side effects of economic reform and economic restructuring. These mechanisms and programmes are discussed below.

The charitable *waqf* system

372. The *waqf* system, or system of religious endowments, is one of the most important means of alleviating poverty. It is the practical application of the principle of social solidarity in Islam. The Ministry of Religious Endowments administers property that has been donated as an endowment for charitable, humanitarian, religious or investment purposes, managing it in accordance with sound economic principles to ensure that the income it generates is used for the humanitarian social purposes specified by the donor in the deed of endowment.

Improving standards of living as a means of addressing and alleviating poverty

373. Plans aimed at attaining this objective are based on a number of fundamental orientations, some of them economic in nature, and include programmes aimed at developing the country's resources and making optimal use of them with a view to achieving a progressive real increase in the national income. They also include programmes aimed at fair distribution in order to increase individuals' shares in such increased income, and social spending on education, health care and social care. Other development programmes are designed to increase the periodicity of the income received by insured Government employees and to extend insurance coverage to all groups in society, so that people will have a minimum income that will help them cope with the cost of living or the obligations incumbent on those who have families to support. Lastly, these plans include rural development programmes aimed at the 1,000 villages which social surveys have shown are characterized by the greatest poverty.

374. Indicators showing how much has been achieved by these economic progress and the Government's ongoing action to alleviate poverty will be found in the paragraphs below.

Economic progress indicators

375. The results that Egypt has achieved as a result of its vigorous implementation of economic development plans are outlined below.

- Steady year-over-year growth in GDP, from 3.2 per cent in 2001/02 to 7.1 per cent in 2006/07;
- GDP at market prices was LE 617.6 billion in 2005/06, up from LE 378.9 billion in 2001/02;
- External debt per capita declined from 422.2 USD in 2001/02 to 401.7 USD in 2005/06;
- Total national income was LE 649.3 billion in 2005/06, up from LE 393.1 billion in 2001/02;
- Total employment was 20,444,000 in 2006, up from 17,203,000 in 2000;
- The general State budget deficit has been stable at 1 per cent of GDP;
- External debt declined from 34.7 per cent of GDP in 2000/01 to 27.6 per cent in 2005/06;
- 6.5 million new jobs have been created during the three five-year plans, and the total is expected to rise to 7 million by the beginning of the coming year;
- The construction of economic and monitoring institutions based on market economics —one of the foundation-stones of a modern society— has been completed,

- Egypt has entered the age of large-scale projects with the aim of creating a great qualitative leap in the national economy that will enable it to develop radical solutions to the country's basic problems
- Focus on the development of rural areas through the "Sunrise" programme, which is a national development programme covering all fields of development in rural Egypt.

Measures and plans designed to reinforce national poverty alleviation efforts

- (a) Raising the investment rate to over 25 per cent of GDP and achieving economic growth of approximately 7-8 per cent, thereby creating over 500,000 jobs a year;
- (b) Encouragement and support for small and mid-size business ventures because of the effective role they play in supporting the national economy and creating new jobs;
- (c) A significant increase in the national savings rate (currently over 18 per cent of GDP);
- (d) Pursuit of rational financial policies to keep the general State budget deficit to a minimum (it is currently less than 1 per cent of GDP) while increasing spending on social services for low-income groups;
- (e) Broadening the tax base in a framework of taxation system reform;
- (f) Reducing the population growth rate, preferably to under 1.5 per cent.

376. The above-mentioned economic indicators and outcomes reflect the success of Egypt's development plans in realizing noteworthy economic improvement, which in turn has resulted in higher average per capita income and a reduced incidence of poverty. Egypt is preparing to join the ranks of middle-income countries, a status which, generally speaking, directly impacts poverty and is a major factor in the human development process, offering a broader range of individual life choices and greater human interaction with that process itself. As a result, society is propelled forward, with equal individuals leading their lives and making their choices in ways that are beneficial not only for the individuals themselves but, ultimately, for society as a whole.

Support targeting and neediest families data base construction project

377. The aims of this project are summarized below.

- Identification of the neediest families (6 million families) in an effort to stem the ongoing increase in poverty despite higher levels of social spending;
- Action to make the various components of the social safety net more effective in reaching low-income people with a view to providing adequate benefits and thus creating a significant impact;
- Action to make the present food aid system more effective, more efficient and less costly;
- Action to enable the neediest families to receive food aid and adequate cash benefits.

378. For the execution of this project, a high-level oversight committee chaired by the Minister of Social Solidarity has been established. The committee meets periodically, at least once per month, to monitor the progress of work carried out under the project on the basis of reports submitted by committee members, each of whom has responsibility for a particular area of activity. The committee is then in a position to take appropriate decisions. Regional committees have been established in every administrative district.

379. The main achievements to date in the execution of this project are summarized below.

- Signing of a protocol of cooperation between the Ministry of State for Administrative Development and the Ministry of Social Solidarity for the creation of a data base on families entitled to support, with a view to enhancing the efficiency with which information and communication technology is used within ministries and other Government bodies. The data base is used to identify groups targeted for support, in the framework of IT infrastructure projects. The electronic portal will be used to present services available to persons entitled to support, and will make the data available to users and decision-makers through family support and empowerment policies and guidelines;
- Signing in June 2006 of a protocol of cooperation among the Ministry of State for Administrative Development, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The nine-point protocol concerns the development of social solidarity units and is valid for a term of two years. Under its terms, the three parties will fulfil their respective functions as defined therein with a view to the preparation and implementation of a joint plan for the development and modernization of solidarity units within the Ministry of Social Solidarity;
- Signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Rotary International organization for Egyptian village development and the preparation of a plan for stimulating the local economy, creating jobs, conserving resources, addressing environmental issues, and realizing development of the human element. Under the MOU, the development needs of target villages will be estimated and desirable projects identified through community associations that will be established in the villages, or existing community associations that are already active there. The function of these associations will be to foster acceptance and cooperation on the part of the village people with a view to achieving local development, human development and sustainable job creation;
- Signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the American University under which the Ministry has agreed to participate in a demonstration model of local community service delivery in poor urban districts, working in cooperation with the “Alashanek Ya Balady” association. One proposed poor district (Ain el-Sira) will be selected. The optional model will target low-income families as being the social unit typically at risk of poverty;
- Establishment of a working group to conduct a feasibility study on allocating a number of rent-subsidized housing units in the “Popular housing” new cities to low-income families with a view to raising their standard of living and encouraging them to live in the new cities. The working group will also develop criteria and rules for the identification of qualifying families;
- A high-level committee and a number of subsidiary committees have been established to determine criteria and bases that can be used to select families in serious need of housing, to develop a social investigation application form, recommend appropriate families, and carry out all measures relating to this service.

Assistance to neediest groups project

380. The objectives of this project are summarized below.

- (a) To assist persons with special needs by providing a variety of care and rehabilitation services for special groups, including social services, health care,

psychological care, educational and vocational services, sports and occupational therapy, and compensatory devices. A total of 53,214 individuals have benefited from these services. Sixteen projects of this kind have been executed under the 2005/06 investment plan, at an aggregate cost of LE 1,921,000. In addition, LE 2,500,000 has been spent from a supplementary allocation included in the Ministry's 2005/06 budget for support for rehabilitation organizations. At the present time, work on a vocational rehabilitation centre in Red Sea Governorate and an intellectual training institution in Beheira Governorate is nearing completion;

(b) To combat the phenomenon of street children and the use of children to perform hazardous work;

(c) To create a data system within penal institutions through an agreement with the regional field office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), working with an expert on data systems;

(d) To develop an effective audit system in order to determine the actual volume of spending on children's issues in all social support projects throughout the country;

(e) To create a data base on children in partnership with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and UNODC;

(f) To initiate the preparation of a plan to limit child labour;

(g) To add a new activity to the Classification and Orientation Centre in the form of service to street children with a view to returning them to their families;

(h) To initiate work on a social diagnosis centre to shelter and care for children at risk and potentially delinquent children;

(i) To conclude an agreement between the Ministry and UNODC for the installation and renovation of training and production workshops within penal institutions, with Swiss funding;

(j) To sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the United Nations Children's fund in Egypt, setting forth the bases of cooperation in matters relating to the protection of children and early childhood development, in accordance with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Ministry of Social Solidarity's development plan.

Development projects for rural women

381. Anti-poverty projects include one designed to encourage rural women to engage in economic activities. The main features of this project are summarized below.

- Presentation of income-generating projects in various areas of production and under the circumstances of rural society. Loans on easy terms are made available for this purpose;
- Literacy for rural women and action to help them understand the necessity of enrolling their children in school;
- Action to enhance awareness of practices that are harmful to women and the rights guaranteed to them by law;
- Propagation of awareness of the harm caused by overcrowding in homes and the importance of family planning;
- In the context of this project, the necessary budget allocations have been made available for projects aimed at benefiting rural and village women in 2005/06, as shown in the table below.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Budget allocation (LE)</i>
1	Rural women development centres	1 562 800
2	Progressive development of rural women	91 800
3	Service centres for women workers	800 500
4	Development and housing centres for rural women	1 247 000
5	Training for rural women in income-generating skills	1 005 000
6	Development and family planning training for rural women	204 000
7	Centres for the protection of women	160 000
Total		Over LE 5 000 000

382. It will be apparent from the foregoing that the Government has pursued its efforts in support of families and has continued to help them fulfil their responsibilities.

Statistical indicators

383. The results contained in the latest report, published in 2008, on the Millennium Development Goals indicate that Egypt has successfully achieved the first of those goals, as will be seen from the paragraphs below.

- The incidence of poverty in Egypt has declined from 24.3 per cent in 1990 to 19.6 per cent in 2005;
- The poverty gap narrowed from 7.1 in 1990/91 to 3 in 1999/2000;
- The proportion of the population with income of less than one dollar declined from 8.2 per cent in 1990 to 3.4 per cent in 2004/05;
- The proportion of the population with income of less than two dollars increased from 34.9 per cent in 1990/91 to 42.8 per cent in 2004/05;
- The incidence of food poverty decreased from 8.9 per cent in 1990/91 to 2.9 per cent in 1999/2000.

B. Promotion of literacy in Egypt

384. The issue of adult literacy is one with which the Government of Egypt has been greatly concerned. As an integral part of the issue of education, the effort to combat illiteracy calls for an integrated effort on the part of Government entities, with greater scope for participation by the population at large and civil society. The SFD plays a vital role in this connection by funding adult education programmes and combining education classrooms and income-generating activities in order to overcome one of the main difficulties confronting adult education programmes in Egypt. The President of the Republic declared the 1990-1999 decade the Literacy Decade, and this was followed by the adoption of Act No. 8 of 1996, the National Mobilization for Literacy Act.

385. Striving to achieve the greatest possible measure of progress in this endeavour, Egypt established the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (GALEA) to provide direct funding for programmes designed to train specialists in adult education. GALEA provides grants aimed at enabling the various governorates to train and mobilize them. The target of the programme is to produce 9,500 specialists who will teach half a million people in rural areas.

386. Egypt is working in cooperation with UNICEF to promote women's literacy in three governorates in Upper Egypt through a local community schools programme, primary school reform, and a "Reading for All" project. Approximately 25 per cent of the women in the regions covered by the project are expected to become literate.

387. The SFD is also contributing to the literacy effort through a social development programme that it is executing in cooperation with GALEA. In addition, there are a number of community associations that are engaged in literacy and adult education projects.

Results in practice and statistical indicators

388. Thanks to these intensive plans and programmes, the illiteracy rate among the working-age population (10 years of age and older) declined from 64.6 per cent in 1960 to 45.6 per cent in 1986, 38.6 per cent in 1996, 29.33 per cent in 2006 and finally to 28.6 per cent, according to a UNESCO report covering the period 2006-2008.

This trend shows clearly that the Government's efforts to promote literacy have been successful, taking into account the rapid population growth rates observed during the same period.

Egypt's literacy plans and programmes

- Continuing implementation of intensive literacy plans, with particular concentration in subsequent stages on rural areas and women;
- Preparation of the training programmes required to produce specialists in the field of adult education;
- Creation of appropriate circumstances for beneficiaries of literacy programmes with a view to fostering their continued progress by providing a system in which education classes are combined with income-generating activities;
- Development of the programmes required to address the issue of dropping out during the compulsory education stage in an effort to prevent relapsing into illiteracy. There can be no doubt that Egypt's energetic efforts to promote education reflect the Government's genuine determination to prepare generations that are equipped with the weapons of knowledge and the ability to face the challenges of the future. However, the continued success of those efforts in attaining their objectives will be contingent on availability of the necessary funding for further development plans, which are too costly for the budgetary resources of developing countries. As a result, international support has become indispensable if cooperation and partnership as set forth in international instruments (such as the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) is to be fully satisfactory. An illustration of this is the need for mutually advantageous exchanges of experience, in accordance with article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on Social Progress and Development;
- A dedicated television channel on literacy is currently in preparation.

389. Egypt is pursuing its efforts and continuing to execute projects aimed at addressing this problem through GALEA. In 2003, a national literacy project was adopted under which 100,000 young university graduates were hired as literacy teachers. In addition, a number of new programmes have been launched, the most noteworthy of them being the "One classroom" project, which is designed to help girl dropouts to complete their education, and the "Girl-friendly schools" project, which is aimed at reducing the gender gap in basic education.

C. Action to address unemployment in Egypt

390. The problem of employment in Egypt expresses the country's economic situation as a developing State. Moreover, the adverse social fallout from that problem represents a heavy burden on both society and the State. In view of the seriousness of the problem, its socio-economic implications and its impact on social stability and security, the Government has adopted a multi-track approach in attempting to deal with it. Its efforts in this connection are summarized below.

- Cutbacks in overstaffing in the civil service and the public sector generally, earlier studies having revealed an accumulation of employees for whom there was no real need;
- Action to encourage those employees and other components of the workforce who were superfluous as one result of population growth or as a direct result of the free education policy to seek other jobs that had opened up in response to national resource development plans and domestic and foreign investment policies;
- Strengthening of the role of local communities and the private sector in job creation, making loans for productive activity available on easy terms, and organizing emigration to enable workers to seek jobs abroad;
- Creation of the Social Fund for Development, which helps fund small business start-ups for young university graduates by making long-term loans at nominal interest rates available; the Fund also provides these new businesses with technical and technological support;
- Distribution of desert land to young university graduates in an effort to reclaim it, providing all the services and facilities required for the purpose;
- Large-scale projects such as the Toshka project, the Sharq al-Tafri` project and the Gulf of Suez project, and encouragement for domestic and foreign investment to establish productive businesses, thereby creating job opportunities at all levels.

391. A number of unemployment indicators and some of the major successes achieved, obstacles encountered and efforts to overcome them are presented in the following pages.

Change over time in labour force (15-64 age group) and employment, 2001-2006

(Statistics for 2006 show a labour force of 22,878,200, representing 35.4 per cent of the total population)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Labour force (000) Unemployment rate</i>	<i>No. of persons employed (000)</i>	<i>Unemployment rate</i>
2001	19 340 9.22%	17 556	
2002	19 877 10.17%	17 856	
2003	20 360 11.01%	18 119	
2004	20 872 10.3%	18 718	
2005	21 972 11.1%	19 342	
2006	22 878 10.6%	20 444	

392. A report by Egypt on the status of its achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as of 2008 indicates that 22 million Egyptians were employed in 2007, and that as a result the unemployment rate had declined to 9.3 per cent of the total workforce over the two previous years. In the second quarter of 2009, 9.42 per cent of the workforce was unemployed, compared to 8.37 per cent during the same period in 2008. This is attributable in large measure to the impact of the financial crisis and the state of the global economy.

Main successes

393. This trend over time and the steady increase in numbers of persons employed reflect a number of developments:

(a) Accommodation of more new workforce entrants and reduction of the existing unemployment balance, and hence a regular decline in the rate of unemployment. The figures also confirm the Government's determination to continue creating new jobs every year (the sixth five-year plan, for 2007-2012, contemplates 750,000 new jobs) through the launching of further projects in the goods and services sectors and small and mid-sized business ventures, thereby covering new workforce entrants and drawing down the remaining unemployment balance in an orderly fashion;

(b) Completion of data systems to record data on graduates and linkage of these systems with those of the private sector, employment, unions and vocational training centres. This will make it feasible to develop a comprehensive policy to meet employment needs both within Egypt and abroad;

(c) The enactment of legislation regulating the work of Egyptians holding jobs outside the country, providing for some of the benefits enjoyed by persons employed in the civil service and the public sector, such as the right to return to work during the year following resignation, has encouraged emigration and working abroad. Egyptians working outside the country accounted for 5.1 per cent of all Egyptians with jobs in 2006, compared to 3.6 per cent in 1996;

(d) The SFD has created many job openings, both permanent and temporary:

Permanent jobs

- The Fund makes small loans available to young entrepreneurs of both sexes to help them launch new business ventures in all economic fields, and also to established business owners wishing to expand; it also supports income-generating projects and provides microfinancing.

Temporary jobs

- The Fund executes labour-intensive infrastructure projects such as paving roads, installing drainage and water supply systems and public buildings in disadvantaged rural areas and remote areas. It also employs young university graduates of both sexes to work in literacy programmes for adults and school dropouts in all parts of the country.

Main obstacles

394. The problems and obstacles confronting Egypt's efforts to deal with the root causes of unemployment can almost be summed up in a single word: financing for the investment needed to increase the absorption capacity of the job market and upgrade productive capabilities in order to develop the country's resources to their maximum potential.

Measures adopted

395. Future-oriented development plans aimed at addressing these obstacles, having regard to Egypt's national population strategy, have relied on the measures outlined below.

- Increasing production efficiency through the use of modern production methods, development of maintenance, installation and modernization programmes and programmes designed to enhance training and qualification effectiveness;
- Continued effort to reduce workforce illiteracy through the development of literacy programmes for civil servants and public sector employees, tradesmen, farm workers and workers in the private sector, with appropriate programmes for each type of activity;
- Action to reduce the numbers of children under 15 years of age in the workforce by enforcing legislation prohibiting the employment of children and raising the compulsory education age;
- Action to increase participation by women in the workforce through more effective training and literacy programmes, especially in rural areas, and opening workplace day care facilities;
- Action to hold unemployment rate growth to 0.5 per cent per year by providing support for infrastructure projects and using the SFD to encourage the private and community sectors to launch small and mid-sized business ventures;
- Reduction of economic support rates through economic growth, by encouraging foreign and domestic investment and encouraging the private sector to participate extensively in productive activities;
- Issuing a national employment bulletin to advertise job vacancies inside Egypt and abroad as a service to job seekers.

396. It is noteworthy that under Egypt's privatization programme, compulsory early retirement is not permitted. The early retirement programme is voluntary in nature, and it is characterized by concern for the social aspect. A worker chooses early retirement of his own free will, without any pressure from any source. Furthermore, the programme stipulates that every contract for the sale of a factory or firm must include a provision to the effect that in the transfer of ownership, the employees there shall retain their jobs and their entitlements, and may not be arbitrarily dismissed.

397. Under the Labour Code (Act No. 12 of 2002), an employee's service may not be terminated for economic reasons, or as a result of the cessation of production, in whole or in part, or by reason of a reduction in the size or activity of the establishment, except where permission to do so has been obtained in accordance with the procedures set forth in articles 196-201. Under those articles, an order of the Prime Minister shall be issued establishing a committee to rule on applications from establishments to cease production in whole or in part or to alter their size or activity, thereby affecting the number of workers employed therein. A second committee is also established to investigate complaints. An employer may cease production in whole or in part or alter the size or activity of his establishment only after complying with these procedures.

398. Furthermore, under article 255 of the Labour Code, every person who infringes the provisions of the above-mentioned articles is liable to a fine of not less than LE 500 and not more than LE 1,000.

399. As noted in the 2008 report of Egypt on its achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the country's economic growth plans and efforts to attract more investment have been successful, and this has had a beneficial impact on employment rates,

with year-over-year increases averaging 2.71 percentage points during the period 2002/03 to 2007/08 and has subsequently risen to 3.1 percentage points, outstripping year-over-year growth in the workforce, which is estimated at 2.3 per cent. This means that the unemployment rate has declined; by 2007/08 it was under 9 per cent.

D. Action to combat child labour in Egypt

400. The Government of Egypt has pursued its efforts to eliminate child labour by means of a specialized national mechanism, namely the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, which has been discussed in Part I above. In addition, the Child Act has been amended to cover all acts contemplated in ILO conventions and in the provisions of the two protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that deal with the issue of child labour.

401. In the context of the effective attainment of this objective, a National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour has been established with a view to coordinating with social partners and Government agencies in Egypt. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Manpower and Migration, and its membership includes representatives from all bodies concerned with the issue: the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, the National Council for Youth, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, community organizations active in that domain, employers' organizations and workers' organizations. The Committee is mandated to perform the functions summarized below.

- Coordination of the work of all organizations concerned with the issue of child labour, both Egyptian and international, with a view to developing short-term and long-term integrated plans and programmes aimed at combating the phenomenon of child labour;
- Approval of programmes, projects and activities for the elimination of child labour that are implemented by the Ministry, other Ministries or Government bodies, employers' organizations, workers' organizations or community associations, and oversight of the implementation of such programmes, projects and activities;
- Reviewing existing domestic legislation with a bearing on the protection of children and young persons, and providing all relevant agencies with advice and guidance concerning its conformity with international instruments and recommendations relating to child labour in the light of changing international and domestic conditions.

402. In addition, child labour inspection units have been established within Manpower Directorates. They are mandated to perform the functions summarized below.

- Development of child labour inspection policies, plans and programmes;
- Investigation of complaints relating to child labour, in cases that fall within the unit's terms of reference, from official agencies working jointly with the units;
- Creation of a data base on child labour in Egypt as a means of determining the scale and nature of the problem;
- Reviewing existing legislation in the domain of child labour protection in the light of changing conditions;
- Working jointly with other relevant bodies to develop implementation directives on the provisions of Acts and other statutory instruments relating to child labour;

- Cooperation and coordination with all relevant bodies and organizations to implement the national plan for the elimination of child labour;
- Conducting research and studies on child labour and supervising research on that issue in Manpower Directorates;
- Investigation of work accidents and injuries and occupational diseases among child workers, action to prevent them, and preparation of a report on the subject;
- Presentation of a technical advisory to units on inspection in the domain of child labour, and responding to communications and questions in that connection;
- Organization of awareness and information programmes on combating child labour;
- Participation in seminars, conferences, panel discussions and training courses in the domain of child labour.

403. In the context of cooperation with international organizations concerned with this issue,

- A project on “Institutional Development and Elaboration of Policies on the Elimination of Child Labour” has been executed in cooperation with the ILO;
- A programme for the elimination of child labour (IPEC) has been approved. Achievements to date are summarized below.
 - Organization of two specialized training courses for 50 child labour and occupational health and safety inspectors in the employ of the Ministry and the child labour inspection units, resulting in a significant change in trainees’ grasp of the concepts involved;
 - A workshop for decision-makers in the employ of the Ministry and child labour inspection units, attended by 45 participants; the purpose of the workshop was to heighten participants’ awareness of the scope and seriousness of the child labour problem;
 - Participation in a facilitation and education training course for labour inspectors and child labour and occupational health and safety inspectors with a view to enabling them to educate and train others and heighten their awareness.

404. In the context of combating child labour in hazardous occupations, a number of initiatives have been undertaken. These are summarized in the paragraphs below.

- Inspection campaigns at workplaces and establishments where child workers may be found for the purpose of determining to what extent the law is being obeyed and to make sure that children are not being employed in hazardous industries and occupations;
- Awareness encounters with employers and, in particular, workshops on the legal prohibition on employing underage children and employing children in hazardous occupations, in accordance with the Labour Code and the relevant international instruments;
- Use of local media outlets (local radio, regional press, awareness centres) in all governorates;
- Study of the situation of child workers in the Duweiqia district, in cooperation with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, to ensure a work environment and occupational safety and health in terms of the tools, shop, and personal tasks performed by the children.

Committees on combating child labour

405. These are regional committees at governorate level. They have been established in 22 governorates, and their mandate is to eliminate child labour. Their membership includes representatives from all relevant executive bodies and community associations concerned with child labour. They are instrumental in the task of implementing the national plan for the limitation of child labour and elimination of its worst forms. These committees function under the auspices of the Governors, and the results of their efforts are constantly tracked. Their work is structured around a number of major themes, and these are listed below.

- Monitoring children who drop out of school before completing the compulsory education stage in order to identify child workers, investigate their situations and their reasons for dropping out of school, and returning them to school to continue their education;
- Conducting inspection campaigns at workplaces in order to identify child workers, conducting social research and determining measures that will result in their returning to school;
- Providing child workers with health care free of charge;
- Providing the family with financial support on condition the child returns to school;
- Providing children with membership cards that will enable them to engage in sports activities at youth centres;
- Making one-class schools available.

These committees have achieved some noteworthy results, including those listed below.

- Eight hundred child workers have returned to school;
- Five thousand child workers have received health cards authorizing them to receive health care free of charge;
- Eight youth centres have been opened for the benefit of 500 child workers, who can use the facilities to develop their technical and athletic skills.

406. There have also been some positive achievements in the area of awareness and information:

- An open-line radio programme lasting two hours was broadcast on New Valley Radio; in the course of the programme, listeners who called in with questions were given information about child labour and its adverse effects;
- The recorded programmes were broadcast over local radio stations in Faiyum, northern Upper Egypt, Alexandria (Alexandria local radio) and southern Sinai (Southern Sinai radio);
- The recorded programmes were part of a campaign to heighten awareness of the issue of child labour.

407. The efforts of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood have led to some significant achievements, as will be seen from the paragraphs below.

- Operating under its terms of reference, the Council has established a committee with members representing all Government agencies and community organizations concerned with this issue, and assigned it the task of investigating the underlying socio-economic causes of child labour as an initial step in the attempt to develop solutions;

- It has conducted, in cooperation with CAPMAS, a comprehensive social survey consisting of a nation-wide investigation into child labour with a view to determining the actual numbers of working children, the areas where they are concentrated, the nature of the work they do, and how their early entry into employment is reflected in other problems, such as the school dropout phenomenon, and how their work affects their health and psychological status, especially where the work in question is deemed to be among the worst forms of child labour. A summary of the nation-wide investigation into child labour has been prepared and will be distributed on the occasion of the announcement of the national strategy on child labour;
- It has signed an agreement with ILO on a campaign to heighten awareness of the problem of child labour and the importance of addressing it by explaining its serious aspects and how they affect childhood and society;
- It has conducted a national campaign in all governorates in which child workers are increasing in numbers compared to their peers in the same age-group. The campaign featured a number of workshops, attended by all stakeholders, to identify the reasons for the increase in those regions and the children's motives for taking employment, to identify the worst forms of child labour and the regions where they are prevalent, and to determine what efforts were being made to mitigate the phenomenon or reduce its impact and what programmes were available in that connection, with a view to developing them further, providing them with the necessary support and assistance, and instituting oversight by the Council in preparation for their integration into more effective projects and programmes. The Council's ultimate aim here is to develop a comprehensive strategy under which all such programmes and other initiatives will be delivered;
- It has supported national policies on child labour (including in particular the worst forms of child labour and work performed by underage children).

408. The Ministry of Justice, for its part, has also been active in this area. Under Ministerial Order No. 2235 of 1997, a General Administration for the Legal Protection of Children was established to work in coordination with all services responsible for matters relating to children to implement the national strategy for the protection of children in general, and to ensure that children enjoy legal protection in the light of the provisions of Egyptian domestic law and international instruments having the force of law in Egypt.

409. The measures discussed above clearly show how seriously Egypt takes the Committee's concerns in the matter of child labour. Moreover, the statistical data presented above indicate how much has been achieved in practical terms, thanks to a data base that strengthens the scientific statistical tools needed to take appropriate practical decisions to address the problem, and thus to augment the probability that those measures will be successful.

E. The National Housing Project

410. Egypt's housing problem is regarded as a high-priority issue, one to which the Government devotes a significant proportion of its efforts. Many organizations, including Government departments and agencies, civil society associations and cooperative and private-sector groups, are working to address it, as we have seen in some detail in Part II above.

411. Here, we shall present a detailed account of one particular major project, namely the National Housing Project. The aim of the NHP is to provide housing units for low-income young people at a rate of 85,000 units per year, making a total of 500,000 units over a six-

year period, at an estimated cost of LE 25 billion. The project was launched in October 2005, and will be completed by 30 September 2011.

412. The NHP ranks among the most important projects currently under way to address the problem of making decent housing available to young people with little income. Progress to date in pursuit of this goal, having regard to the political, social and national importance of the project, is summarized below.

- The governorates and local communities have made the necessary land available for the construction of housing units under the project;
- The State is currently building housing units for young people in addition to other units for low-income people;
- The Housing and Building National Research Centre (HBNRC) has developed model residential buildings that are now under construction. These model buildings are characterized by an architectural form that fits in harmoniously with the nature of the district where the building will stand, with attention to the visual attractiveness aspect and distinctive façades. At the same time, the layout of the apartments inside the building is designed as a contemporary living space that meets all the needs of an Egyptian family;
- Eminent consultant firms that are known for their high level of competence and extensive experience have been enlisted to oversee the execution of all phases of the project, working in coordination with HBNRC, to ensure that all work done under the project will be of the requisite quality;
- Announcements were published in national newspapers on 9 December 2005, 23 March 2006, 10 August 2006 and 26 January 2007 concerning down payments on 63-square-metre housing units under the NHP;
- An announcement concerning the opening of down payments on 150-square-metre building lots under the “Build your own home” project was published on 25 December 2006. Down payments could be made between 15 January 2007 and 15 February 2007.

413. Under the project, housing units are made available to citizens with a non-repayable grant from the State of up to LE 15,000 for any one individual, who is required to make a down payment in the amount of LE 5,000 to reserve the unit and pay monthly instalments of LE 160 initially, increasing by 7.5 per cent annually, over a term of 20 years. In order to make the purchase easier for citizens, there are various possible alternative ways of making the initial payment in a series of monthly instalments, depending on the preference of the individual purchaser.

414. The State has taken a number of measures to implement this project:

- Land is made available, as explained above;
- LE 1 billion was allocated for the first year as non-repayable support for the realization of housing units, with a non-repayable grant in the amount of LE 15,000 for each purchaser;
- A protocol has been signed with a view to making bank loans available to purchasers of housing units, in the amount of LE 30,000, repayable in monthly instalments over a term of 20 years, with the instalments in the first year being LE 160 monthly and increasing thereafter by 7.5 per cent yearly;
- An agreement for the allocation of approximately 4,054 feddans for investors in eight cities, who will supply approximately 132,848 housing units for the NHP.

Main lines of implementation of the programme

415. Planning for the implementation of the programme has been structured around seven main components. These are summarized below.

- Occupant-owned housing units (governorates/new cities);
- Allocation of land in the new cities to investors for the provision of 63-square-metre housing units;
- Allocation of small lots in new cities to individuals under the “Build your own home” project;
- Construction of small (30 to 40 m²) housing units for rental occupancy in the new industrial cities and governorates for the benefit of the most deserving cases;
- Construction of 63-square-metre housing units for rental occupancy in the governorates and new cities, and on *waqf* land owned by the Ministry of Religious Endowments in the governorates;
- Occupant-owned family homes in 6 October City;
- Occupant-owned rural homes in the governorates and the desert hinterland.

Implementation plan for the various components of the National Housing Project

<i>No. Theme</i>	<i>Total planned to 12 August 2007</i>
1 Occupant-owned housing units (governorates/new cities)	187 881
2 Allocation of lands in the new cities to investors for the construction of 63-square-metre housing units	132 848
3 Allocation of small lots in new cities to individuals under the “Build your own home” project	91 736
4 Construction of small (30 to 40 m ²) housing units for rental occupancy in the new industrial cities for the benefit of the most deserving cases	69 128
5 Construction of 63-square-metre housing units for rental occupancy in the governorates, the new cities, and on <i>waqf</i> land owned by the Ministry of Religious Endowments in the governorates	139 910
6 Occupant-owned family homes in 6 October City	3 000
7 Occupant-owned rural homes in the governorates and the desert hinterland	4 975
Total planned for implementation to 12 August 2007	629 478

- *Total support made available under the project: LE 18 billion*
- *Direct support (LE 15,000 per housing unit): LE 1 billion annually*
- *Total direct support during the implementation period (6 years): LE 6 billion*
- *Grand total of all support to 2011: LE 24 billion*

Components of the National Housing Project

Occupant-owned housing units in new cities and the governorates

416. This component features owner-occupied housing units with a maximum of 63 m² of floor space, purchasable with a down payment of LE 5,000 and monthly instalments of LE 160, increasing by 7.5 per cent yearly, over a term of 20 years.

Allocation of lands in the new cities to investors for the construction of 63-square-metre housing units

417. The allocation of 4054.24 feddans of land in new cities to 52 firms has been approved. These firms will supply approximately 132,848 housing units under the NHP.

No.	City	Approved land area (feddans)			No. of housing units that can be supplied under the NHP	
		State-owned	Free market	Total	State-owned	Free market
1	6 October	2 704.15	807	3 511.15	100 699	28 245
2	10 Ramadan	111.904	0	111.904	8 737	0
3	El Sherouk	36.25	0	36.25	2 404	0
4	Sheikh Zayed	215.29	85.62	300.91	15 501	2 997
5	Al-Ubur	33.505	1.165	34.67	2 412	41
6	Badr	28.19	10.15	38.34	2 029	355
7	New El Minya	12.82	4.2	17.02	922	147
8	Sohag	2	2	4	144	70
Total		3 144.1	910.14	4 054.2	132 848	31 855

Allocation of small lots in the new cities to individuals under the "Build your own home" project

418. Under this component, 150-square-metre lots will be made available in the new cities to young persons at a modest price (LE 70 per m²). Three-storey houses may be built, occupying not more than 50 per cent of the lot. The State will provide support in the amount of LE 15,000 for construction of the ground floor, payable in accordance with the schedule described below.

- Excavation, foundations and ground-floor structural members: LE 5,000 three months after the beginning of work;
- Completion of pouring roof for ground floor: LE 5,000 three months after completion of phase 1;
- Completion of ground floor exterior work: LE 5,000 three months after completion of phase 2.

419. An individual may build two other units (first and second floors) any time he wishes during subsequent periods. To date, nearly 105,000 applicants have made a down payment, and nearly 8,000 feddans of land have been made available to accommodate them.

- General and detailed plans for these lots have been prepared. Work on service infrastructure for them has begun and is expected to be completed by the end of 2008;
- Support to date: 8,000 feddans x 4,200 m² x LE 145 per m² = approximately LE 4.9 billion.

Total registered investments for the “Build your own home” project, by city

<i>No.</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Total registered investments</i>	<i>Investors conforming to conditions</i>	<i>Investors not conforming to conditions</i>
1	6 October	43 586	41 526	2 060
2	10 Ramadan	16 287	15 880	407
3	Badr	2 438	2 306	132
4	New El Saleha	657	630	27
5	Sadat	3 883	3 790	93
6	New El Noubaria	1 921	1 832	89
7	New Burg El Arab	1 692	1 555	137
8	New El Faiyum	2 484	2 352	132
9	New Beni Souef	6 144	6 020	124
10	New El Minya	6 242	6 111	131
11	New Assiut	5 613	5 457	156
12	New Sohag	2 724	2 631	93
13	New Aswan	1 747	1 646	101
Total		95 418	91 736	3 682

Construction of small (30 to 40 m2) housing units for rental occupancy in the new industrial cities for the benefit of the most deserving cases

420. The aim of this project is to make 30-40-m2 housing units available for occupancy by families all of the members of which are currently living in one room, and perhaps sharing it with another family, with a single lavatory for everyone. Another aim is to provide accommodation for persons living in illegal dwellings, hovels, or rooms made of corrugated metal in inhuman conditions, with a view to making the illegal dwellings available for redevelopment.

421. Another aim of the project is to provide the neediest people, widows, cases of administrative release in the governorates and other cases with services. The housing units are made available on a rental basis for a limited period of time (five years).

422. Accordingly, the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development, working in coordination with the Ministry of Local Development, is providing suitable lots for the erection of these housing units, taking care to select sites within the governorates from a socio-economic perspective that will ensure that the units can be successfully marketed.

423. In this context, people are provided with low-rental housing suited to the nature of each case, for a rental set by the governorate, having regard to the circumstances and income of the occupant, as revealed by the findings of a social investigation conducted by the governorate. in coordination with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, on persons applying for units.

Action by the governorates to implement the project

- To date, protocols of implementation have been signed with 18 governorates for 31,676 housing units
- Construction is currently under way on 7,433 units and plans for 4,405 more have been submitted in the several governorates;

- Four governorates (Cairo, Suez, Daqhalia and Red Sea) have indicated that they do not wish to build units of this kind.

Action by the new cities to implement the project

- Protocols of implementation for 40,000 housing units have been signed with the New Urban Communities Authority, and the necessary land has been made available in six new cities (6 October, 10 Ramadan, Badr, 15 May, Sadat and Burg al-Arab);
- The administrations of the new cities have been mandated to carry out the work of siting and surveying.

Construction of 63-square-metre housing units for rental occupancy in the governorates, the new cities, and on *waqf* land owned by the Ministry of Religious Endowments in the governorates

- Plans have been prepared for a total of 139,910 housing units in accordance with protocols approved to date, as follows:
 - Four protocols have been signed for the construction of low-rental housing units in the governorates of Cairo (10,000 units), Suez (2,510 units) and Red Sea (6,000 units), for a total of 18,510 units to date;
 - 340 units are currently under construction, in addition to the initial delivery of 1,260 completed units. Furthermore, 400 units have been delivered to beneficiaries, and tenders have been invited for the construction of 11,910 more in the various governorates;
 - A protocol has been signed with the New Urban Communities Authority for the construction of 20,000 rental units in the new cities;
 - A protocol has been signed with the Ministry of Religious Endowments for the construction of 100,000 housing units on *waqf* land in the several governorates.

Occupant-owned family homes in 6 October City (3,000 family homes in all)

- Tenders will be invited for the construction of 2,500 family housing units;
- 500 family housing units are currently under construction in 6 October City.

Occupant-owned rural homes in the governorates and the desert hinterland

- Plans have been prepared for a total of 4,975 rural homes in the several governorates, as follows:
 - 1,574 rural homes are currently under construction
 - 117 rural homes have been delivered to beneficiaries;
 - Tenders have been invited for the construction of 1,108 rural homes;
 - As of 12 August 2007, plans had been prepared for the construction of a total of 629,478 housing units.

F. Development-related activities and programmes of the Social Insurance Fund

424. The Social Insurance Fund is an effective mechanism in the context of the implementation of Egypt's various development plans and programmes. The Fund provides community associations with the financing and non-financial and technical support they need in order to deliver effective, meaningful services to beneficiaries for the purpose of improving the standards of living of low-income families and mitigate unemployment among young people.

Summary of microloan financing, 1997-2006

<i>Total financing</i>		<i>Amounts actually disbursed</i>			
<i>Loans</i>	<i>Grants</i>	<i>Loans</i>	<i>Grants</i>	<i>No. of loan recipients</i>	<i>No. of jobs created</i>
475 472	18 018	568 624	8 389	320 719	384 863

Role of the Social Insurance Fund in human resource development

425. The Fund provides skills training for young people in specific fields, these being determined in coordination with Government departments and agencies and private firms that need trained manpower. After they have completed their training, they are offered employment.

426. Training for the acquisition of skills needed in the job market has been addressed by means of an agreement with specialized training centres under which they train applicants who so desire in skills that will qualify them to obtain jobs. Curricula and equipment are being developed, and, in cooperation with the French firm AFPA, 30 training centres have been developed, 203 trainers trained, and 820 individuals trained. In addition, training curricula in 20 trades have been developed, including one for training in the specialized skills of heavy equipment operation and maintenance. Six hundred and nine of the graduates of the course, i.e. approximately 70 per cent of the total number of trainees, subsequently found employment.

427. Training with a view to self-employment, for its part, is delivered through specialized workshops. The Fund exercises this part of its mandate through agreements with the workshops concerned. In the Khan al-Khalili workshops, for example, some 850 individuals have been trained in various fields in the tourism sector.

Role of the Fund in the domain of community infrastructure

428. The Fund invests the grants it receives from donor States in integrated local development projects and infrastructure projects, supplementing the State's efforts along those lines, especially in rural areas, and also some urban areas that lack services, by installing and extending clean drinking water supply systems, building cisterns, digging wells, installing drainage systems, paving rural roads and village entrances, repairing and completing public buildings such as clinics and youth centres, and also executing projects that will yield environmental returns, such as covering the water conduits that traverse housing blocks.

429. The Fund has executed projects costing a total of LE 1.65 billion, the greater part of them in the governorates of Upper Egypt.

Quantified summary of community infrastructure projects

Phase	Total financing		Amounts actually disbursed		No. of loan recipients	No. of jobs created
	Loans	Grants	Loans	Grants		
1992 to 1996	-	651 923	-	717 447	-	133 461
1997 to end of October 2006	-	1 023 520	-	1 036 173	-	200 712
	-	1 675 443	-	1 753 620	-	334 173

Role of the Fund in the domain of community health

430. The Fund creates jobs and delivers primary health care and family planning activities in the most disadvantaged regions. In these endeavours, it works in partnership at the national level with non-governmental organizations and local organizations. Its purpose is to improve the quality of life in the poorest communities that have suffered the most from the impact of poverty in terms of disease and malnutrition.

431. The Fund and the Ministry of Health and Population have joined forces to execute a series of integrated projects in Upper Egypt and villages that are most seriously disadvantaged in terms of development and health services.

432. With a view to ensuring that activities will continue under population projects, which focus basically on newly established families, women and children and which feature small loans to women, reproductive health awareness and literacy, a number of mechanisms have been established. These are summarized below.

(a) Work under the projects has continued and their administrative structures have been maintained in part by means of the profits resulting from the rotation of intra-project loans. This revenue is used to pay the salaries of some of the women guidance and support staff and women supervisors;

(b) Integration with activities carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Population in places where projects are implemented, e.g. meetings, women's clubs, medical caravans and training);

(c) Integration between GALAE and the Fund to hold open literacy classes in places where projects are implemented.

433. Other activities of the Social Fund for Development have included:

- Preparation of a guidance model for the continuation plan, which is considered to be a pioneering experiment in this domain;
- Development of a protocol of cooperation between the Fund, community associations and the Ministry of Health and Population.

Quantified summary of community health management projects (including activities aimed at the empowerment of women and support for community associations)

Phase	Total financing		Amounts actually disbursed		No. of loan recipients	No. of jobs created
	Loans	Grants	Loans	Grants		
1992 to 1996	16 957	281 148	11 752	281 148	7 275	68 509
1997 to end of October 2006	5 099	552 531	4 849	531 016	71 773	134 603
	22 056	833 679	16 601	812 164	79 048	203 112

Role of the Fund in the empowerment of women in various domains

434. Fifty-one per cent of women are targeted under projects aimed at enhancing the standard of living of families of which women are the sole support and low-income families in a number of governorates. These include productive families projects, integrated development and care projects, integrated development projects for rural women, family development projects, projects aimed at economic, environmental and health status upgrading, and income enhancement projects.

435. As regards literacy, 70 per cent of projects targeting women are financed by the Fund. In the case of the "one classroom" project, the figure is 100 per cent. In the case of community development schools targeting women, 80 per cent of the financing is provided by the Fund.

436. In the domain of development and health services, 98 per cent of population projects and 70 per cent of health-related projects are aimed at women. These include reproductive health awareness projects, micro-finance loans designed to raise the family's income level, projects aimed at heightening women's awareness of their rights in civil society, and jobs for women university graduates and village women who have recently entered the workforce.

437. Women are also targeted under 60 per cent of environmental enhancement projects. Many of these are projects executed by community associations which are concerned with preserving the environment inside and outside the home and water supply and drainage projects. These are issues for which women bear primary responsibility in rural areas in Egypt. Rural women are trained to play a pioneering role through environmental enhancement projects, projects designed to maintain public health in villages, projects aimed at heightening health and environmental awareness among village women, men and children, and projects to teach people how to maintain the outcomes of environmental projects, such as septic pit emptying systems, drainage facilities, drinking water systems, refuse collection and sorting, and others. Under other projects, accumulated solid waste from eight governorates in various parts of the country was removed, and dump sites were converted into public gardens and parks.

438. Public works projects, for their part, are aimed at raising the level of services, environmental quality and living standards of poor families in disadvantaged areas. These are projects that rely on labour-intensive methods for their execution, with a view to relieving unemployment and creating jobs for both men and women in equal proportions. Of the jobs created under these projects, 5 per cent are temporary and 23 per cent permanent.

439. As regards small business start-ups, the small business development agency is responsible for formulating projects featuring greater quantitative and qualitative representation by women, with a view to ensuring that the projects foster women's

capacities, skills and behavioural characteristics in order to enable them to launch small business enterprises, while also propagating a culture of self-employment among women, and promoting networking among business women.

Role of the Fund in cooperation with community associations

440. Community associations represent the mainstay of the popular partnership that the development process requires. These associations function as communication links between individual members of local society on the one hand and decision-makers and development planners on the other. Accordingly, the SFD cooperates with community associations in various ways to support the role of women and the family. Some of the main areas of cooperation are summarized below.

- Increasing family income and raising living standards by providing small loans, creating jobs, establishing reproductive health and literacy awareness groups, promoting awareness of the status of women in society and sharing responsibility jointly with men, developing healthy communities, and training workers and preparing qualified trainers in the domain of micro-finance. These activities are designed to create a supportive climate for the acceptance of sound social and health-related concepts and correcting misconceptions.

Role of the Fund in the domain of care for children with disabilities

441. Between 1993 and 2005, the Fund executed a number of projects aimed at assisting children with special needs. These are summarized below.

(a) A project to provide care for children with disabilities and their families in Assiut. Executed in 1993, with funding in the form of an LE 1,217,356 non-repayable grant;

(b) An integrated family development project in Qena. Executed in 1995, with funding consisting of a grant of LE 51,845 and a loan of LE 200,000;

(c) An integrated development project for children with special needs in Sohag. Executed in 1996 with funding in the form of an LE 1,287,000 non-repayable grant;

(d) A project for a comprehensive rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities in Damietta. Executed in 1997 with funding in the form of an LE 1,289,542 non-repayable grant;

(e) A pioneering project on care for children with disabilities in Assiut, managed by the Women's Development Association at Assiut University. Executed with funding in the form of an LE 85,000 non-repayable grant;

(f) A capacity-building and training project for students with disabilities at Assiut University. Executed in 2003 with funding in the form of an LE 530,000 non-repayable grant;

(g) The Hope Centre project for special-needs groups in El Gharbia, managed by the Coptic Al-Salam Association. Executed in 2003 with funding in the form of an LE 328,000 non-repayable grant.

442. An integrated development project for children with special needs is currently being executed in Assiut, with funding in the form of an LE 1,600,000 non-repayable grant. The aim of this project is to promote the integrated development of the families of children with disabilities, enhance their health and education status, and provide them with technical support through rehabilitation, study grants and the compensatory equipment they need up to 18 years of age. Under the same project, a centre for intellectually challenged persons is

being built, and a number of women trainers are being trained to work with children with mental and motor disabilities.

Modern mechanisms for the selection, follow-up and assessment of SFD projects

Low-income area targeting map

443. This is the main mechanism used to target and determine areas of poverty or extreme poverty. The use of the poverty coefficient, which can be obtained from this map, makes it possible to determine the level of poverty in various parts of Egypt. There is also an electronic data base on the living circumstances of these communities, including their infrastructure and their educational, health, social and economic situation, and this information can be used to determine the kind and scale of intervention required in order to foster community development.

Guide to community human development monitoring and evaluation

444. This guide is used in the application of an effective system for monitoring and evaluating projects at all stages of planning, selection, design and execution. It is also used to assess project outcomes over the medium and long terms.

Sustainable system of community infrastructure operation and maintenance projects

445. An experimental programme that is currently being implemented features infrastructure operation and maintenance projects in the governorates of Faiyum and Sharqia. The goal of the programme is to prepare a sustainable operation and maintenance system for all future infrastructure projects. The system and the prospective outcomes of the experiment will be applied in other governorates. Planning and execution guidelines are being prepared for use and maintenance activities under the various kinds of projects.

Quantified summary of community human development projects

Phase	Sector/administration	Total funding (LE)		Amount actually disbursed		No. of loan recipients	No. of jobs created
		Loan	Grant	Loan	Grant		
1992-1996	Microfinance	53 131	2 338	51 117	1 104	40 059	48 071
1997-Oct. 2006	Microfinance	422 341	18 303	517 507	7 285	280 660	336 792
Increase (%)		795	783	1 112	612	700	700
1992-1996	Human resource development	-	188 640	-	149 564	-	10 010
1997-Oct. 2006	Human resource development	-	305 856	-	195 511	-	14 929
Increase (%)		-	162	-	131	-	149
1992-1996	Community infrastructure	-	652 000	-	717 447	-	133 461
1997-Oct. 2006	Community infrastructure	-	1 023 520	-	1 036 173	-	200 712
Increase (%)		-	157	-	144	-	150
1992-1996	Community health and education	16 957	281 148	11 752	281 148	7 275	68 509
1997-Oct. 2006	Community health and education	5 099	552 531	4 849	531 016	64 961	134 603
Increase (%)		-30	197	-41	189	893	196
		497 528	3 024 259	585 225	2 919 248		
Total		3 469 070		3 504 473		399 767	947 087

446. Total spending for community human development on activities with which we are concerned in this report, over the period extending from the establishment of the Fund in 1992 to the end of October 2006, was approximately LE 3,522 billion.

G. The national AIDS control programme

447. Egypt has one of the world's lowest AIDS infection rates, with fewer than two cases per million population yearly. This is confirmed by World Health Organization reports and the 2002 report of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

448. The problem of HIV exposure is one that Egypt, like other countries, does face. There are HIV transmission factors in Egypt, one of them arising from the fact that there are people with blood disorders who need repeated transfusions, and another arising from high-risk behaviour among narcotics users.

The AIDS situation in Egypt at the end of June 2004

- There were a total of 1,740 HIV/AIDS cases (1,184 cases of HIV infection and 556 full-blown AIDS cases);
- A total of 878 AIDS victims had died;
- A total of 862 persons were living with AIDS;
- Persons in the 20-39 age group accounted for 63 per cent of all HIV/AIDS cases;
- Of all HIV/AIDS cases, 692 were non-Egyptians, and of these, 90 per cent were persons from African States.

The national AIDS control programme

449. The first case of AIDS in Egypt was discovered in November 1986. Since that time, the national AIDS control programme has gone into effect. A Supreme Committee to Combat AIDS has been established, chaired by the Minister of Health and with members from other relevant ministries and sectors, university professors and specialists from the Ministry of Health. A number of plans have been implemented in this connection; a list of them is given below.

- An immediate action plan that was implemented in 1986/87;
- A transitional plan for 1990/91;
- First interim plan for 1992/93;
- Second interim plan for 1994/95;
- Cooperation plan with UNAIDS, 1996-2000;
- Cooperation plan with UNAIDS, 2001-2005;
- National strategic plan to combat AIDS in Egypt, 2006-2010 (in preparation).

Objectives of the AIDS control programme

- Keeping the transmission rate low, and low infection and death rates;
- Care and support for HIV carriers and their families.

Specific objectives

- An epidemic watch for HIV/AIDS in highest-risk groups;

- Greater awareness of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) among the population in general, and young persons in particular;
- Evaluation of people's information about HIV/AIDS and means of prevention;
- Testing of all blood bags before the blood is given to patients requiring transfusions;
- Ensuring that safety and anti-infection procedures are applied in health units;
- Ensuring high-quality precision testing for HIV in laboratories and blood banks;
- Providing AIDS victims and their families with psychological counselling;
- Yearly training for all monitoring centre personnel and animation courses for members of psychological and health counselling teams in the governorates;
- Supplying hospital laboratories with all necessary testing and diagnostic equipment.

Strategies

- A health survey conducted among groups most at risk of HIV/AIDS and measuring transmission rates among these groups in order to evaluate the HIV/AIDS situation and trend;
- Health education for all groups and public awareness of how the AIDS virus is spread and means of prevention;
- Avoiding infection through tainted blood by testing all blood units before the blood is given to patients requiring transfusions;
- Avoiding infection through sexual contact by using all means of information and communication;
- Avoiding mother-to-foetus infection by means of health surveys of married women of reproductive age;
- Reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals and groups by caring for victims and providing them and their families with psychological, health-related and social counselling.

Activities under the national AIDS control programme

HIV/AIDS watch

450. An epidemic watch programme has been implemented, featuring the testing of more than two million blood samples, beginning in 1986 and continuing to the present day, taken from the highest-risk and lowest-risk groups, such as:

- Persons working in the tourism sector, who are examined periodically for HIV infection in the various regions frequented by tourists;
- Patients who frequent STD clinics;
- Tuberculosis patients who frequent chest clinics and hospitals;
- Pregnant women who frequent maternal and child care centres;
- Drug addicts who are undergoing treatment at addiction treatment centres;
- Prison inmates;
- Patients with kidney failure and blood disorders;
- Persons arrested in cases of indecent acts;

- Cases of illness where HIV/AIDS infection is suspected;
- Persons who take employment outside the country;
- Persons who come in voluntarily to be examined.

451. Data from the epidemic watch programme indicate that Egypt is still among the countries with low HIV/AIDS infection rates.

Ensuring blood safety and enhancing the competence of test personnel

452. Over 750,000 units of blood are tested every year in all Government-run and private blood banks. The working strategy used by the blood banks has been modernized, in partnership with the Government of Switzerland, by the establishment of a national reference blood bank and the opening of 30 branch blood banks in the governorates, all of them connected to a state-of-the-art communication network that provides information about patients who need blood transfusions.

453. Furthermore, imported blood components and blood derivatives may not lawfully be released until they have been found to be free of HIV and the hepatitis B and C viruses.

454. The Ministry's centralized laboratories and those of the governorates have been provided with the necessary equipment to perform initial and confirmation laboratory testing. In addition, all 240 of the country's blood banks have been supplied with testing equipment and materials.

455. All the blood banks of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, those run by community associations, private blood banks and university hospital blood banks cooperate to ensure blood safety and to train testing personnel, working in partnership with the Blood Bank Directorate within the Ministry of Health.

456. Procedures to prevent infection are being applied in renal dialysis centres and blood banks. No patient ever receives a blood transfusion until the blood in the bag has been appropriately tested and found to be free of any blood-borne transmissible diseases.

457. Transfusion safety is thus assured, and care is taken to monitor and facilitate the process of overseeing and following up the work of transfusion centres. All State-run and private blood banks are required to record all data relating to donors, and their responsibilities concerning testing and record-keeping are clearly defined. Furthermore, giving blood in return for any material consideration is prohibited.

Patient care and health-related, psychological and social counselling

458. More than 700 doctors and nurses in all the governorates have been trained to care for patients and provide them and their families with health-related, psychological and social counselling in an effort to reduce the psycho-social impact of their condition and ease the burden of the stigma that they bear as a result of their HIV infection. They are also trained to care for these patients from a social standpoint, working in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and community associations.

459. A team has been formed in every governorate to provide HIV/AIDS patients with health-related, psychological and social counselling.

460. The Ministry of Social Affairs and community associations work in cooperation to provide HIV/AIDS patients with social care.

461. In addition, voluntary testing, together with guidance and counselling, is available at the laboratories of the Ministry of Health in the various governorates and at more than 120 well-equipped private laboratories in Greater Cairo and the other governorates.

Health education and public awareness

462. Over one million leaflets, posters, brochures and wall calendars have been printed and distributed to all groups, such as school pupils, university students, trade union members, media personnel, persons employed in the tourism sector, women, health team members, and HIV/AIDS sufferers. These various publications contain basic information on the disease, methods of prevention, and working with patients.

463. Thousands of meetings, working discussions and the like have been held with sports clubs, youth associations, persons employed in the tourism sector, media personnel, the Egyptian Cinematographic Institute, university students, school pupils, social scientists, members of the legal profession, and Muslim and Christian clerics.

464. Numerous activities have been conducted for university students and school pupils in all governorates with a view to heightening students' awareness of HIV/AIDS and incorporating the effort to combat it into student activities.

465. An awareness programme aimed at intermediate- and secondary-level students was organized in all governorates, and a simply worded brochure containing information about HIV/AIDS was distributed to students.

466. Moreover, an awareness programme for university students was organized at 60 faculties and higher institutes with a view to promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and means of prevention. The programme included lectures and student competitions on the subject of HIV/AIDS-related information.

467. In a joint effort with the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Centre, the HIV/AIDS control effort has been incorporated into school curricula.

468. An awareness programme was organized for the benefit of workers in the industrial cities, including Mahalla al-Kubra, 6 October, 10 Ramadan, Kafr al-Dawar and Shubra al-Kheima. The programme featured the production of a brochure on HIV/AIDS and its distribution in workplaces, peer training, and awareness discussions for industrial workers.

469. In addition, an awareness programme was organized for the benefit of persons employed in the tourism sector in cities frequented by tourists. Twenty thousand copies of a brochure aimed at these persons were printed and distributed, along with peer training and educational discussions at tourist facilities.

470. In 10 governorates, an awareness programme was held for leaders of women's organizations, who were urged to participate in the effort to combat HIV/AIDS. The programme featured awareness and training for 3,000 leaders of city and village women's organizations.

471. Forty programmes on HIV/AIDS awareness were broadcast over national and local television channels, many of them programmes for young viewers and women and games programmes that were designed to instil HIV/AIDS awareness indirectly. Four scientific films on HIV/AIDS were shown on the "Cinema club" programme on channel 1 and a really innovative programme was shown on channel 2, with a commentary on the film and information about HIV/AIDS prevention. Ten television trailers were produced and shown, and six radio trailers were broadcast.

472. A number of billboards on HIV/AIDS control were placed on main traffic routes and in public squares and in underground stations in Greater Cairo.

473. The first conference on AIDS in Egypt was held on 29-30 April 1997, with the participation of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Ford Foundation and UNAIDS. Some 350 persons attended the conference, including representatives from all Egyptian Government ministries, departments and agencies, NGOs, a number of Muslim

and Christian clergymen, academics, various media personnel, and representatives of national newspapers and newspapers published by political parties. A number of studies and research papers on medical and social aspects of the effort to combat HIV/AIDS were discussed at the conference.

474. The second conference on AIDS in Egypt was held on 25-26 November 1999. It was attended by representatives from all ministries, departments and agencies, NGOs, academics, various media personnel, and representatives of national newspapers and newspapers published by political parties. Medical research relating to the treatment of AIDS was the main topic discussed at the conference.

475. An HIV/AIDS counselling centre and hotline were established in 1996. This facility was the first of its kind in the Arab world and the Middle East to provide people with full information about HIV/AIDS, places where individuals could go for testing, and sources of care and assistance for patients and their families. Psychological, medical and social counselling are also available, as well as advice for members of high-risk groups. In addition, a correspondence system has been established with a view to providing physicians, media personnel and other persons concerned with HIV/AIDS control issues with new information periodically. The telephone hotline, for its part, is used to provide HIV/AIDS patients with counselling and information about sources of care and assistance.

Cooperation with various sectors and local authorities

476. HIV/AIDS is regarded as a health issue, and consequently it is the health authorities who are responsible for combating it. However, it is a scourge with social and psychological aspects as well, and these call for the intervention of all sectors of society and NGOs which are in close touch with sectors that are difficult for governmental departments and agencies to reach, such as groups that engage in high-risk forms of behaviour.

477. Egypt understands the importance of cooperation and coordination between Government agencies and the private sector to carry out a variety of HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities and heighten awareness of the disease among the various sectors of society, including in particular young people in schools and universities. A number of examples of such cooperation are outlined below.

- Cooperation with health sectors, such as the tuberculosis control programme, governmental and private blood banks, the STD programme, and the family planning and maternal and child care programme, in addition to research centres and universities;
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Education through the incorporation of HIV/AIDS into curricula and the student awareness programme, featuring seminars, peer training and discussion groups;
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Endowments and the Egyptian Church. Training programmes for Muslim and Christian clergy have been organized in 10 governorates with a view to enhancing people's awareness of HIV/AIDS and means of preventing it;
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Labour on an awareness programme for industrial workers in five industrial districts and in governorates frequented by tourists. The programmes were aimed at raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Cooperation with the media sector in the form of numerous broadcast and televised HIV/AIDS awareness programmes transmitted over various nation-wide and local stations. In addition, a number of panel discussions with journalists and other media

personnel have been organized with a view to enlisting their participation in the AIDS awareness effort;

- Cooperation with non-governmental community associations: the national AIDS control programme and many non-governmental associations have worked in cooperation to educate high-risk groups about HIV/AIDS, make them aware of its dangers and teach them about prevention.

H. Action to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and mental disorders in Egypt

478. The results of the 2006 census indicated that there were 475,576 persons with disabilities in Egypt, of whom 170,360 were women. In accordance with the law, as we have seen in the preceding part of this report dealing with the several articles of the Covenant, five per cent of all jobs in units of the Government and public sector and also the private sector must be given to persons with disabilities, after the persons concerned have been rehabilitated free of charge to the point of being capable of performing the duties of their posts. Persons with disabilities enjoy special care at all stages of their lives, including compensatory equipment for those who need it. Persons with disabilities also have the benefit of an integrated care and rehabilitation system featuring diagnostic and monitoring services free of charge at health insurance centres and clinics. The Ministry of Education includes a directorate dedicated to special education. This directorate, which is part of the structure of the Directorate of Primary Education, provides education services for pupils with disabilities, providing them with training and enabling them to acquire skills within the limits of their capacities. At the present time, there are 840 schools that provide special education at all levels. These schools, some of which are State-run while others are run by community associations, are being modernized and provided with the necessary equipment and facilities to teach pupils with disabilities.

479. It is noteworthy that a number of persons with disabilities who were active in the domain of ensuring the protection of the rights of disabled persons participated in a series of meetings held to examine and formulate the United Nations draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Egypt has now acceded to the Convention pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 400 of 2007. The text of the Convention was published in the Official Gazette and thereby became part of Egypt's domestic law.

National disability elimination programme

480. In the context of its continuing effort to eliminate disability, the Government of Egypt has developed a national disability elimination programme which functions under the auspices of a number of ministries. The programme is structured around three primary axes, which are summarized below.

Health sector

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

The media

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

Social solidarity

482. Disability allowances are paid to disabled heads of households. In 2007/08, a total of 381,585 families were receiving these allowances. In addition, blind students attending Egyptian universities receive pocket money. Persons with disabilities are trained in trades that they are capable of pursuing, and at the conclusion of their training they are given certificates of qualification and issued supporting ration cards. The Ministry of Transportation grants exemptions and reductions for disabled persons, and provides special facilities for them in public transport vehicles of various kinds.

483. In the domain of sport, persons with disabilities participate in sporting life through some 40 clubs for disabled persons and 44 sports centres distributed throughout the country, under the supervision and care of the National Council on Sport for the Disabled and the Egyptian Paralympic Committee. Egyptian athletes and teams, both men and women, have won many championships and medals in international competitions, including 12 medals in Beijing in 2008.

484. With a view to ensuring better care for persons with disabilities, in line with Egypt's international commitments arising from its status as a party to the Covenant, new legislation incorporating all the relevant provisions of the Covenant is currently in preparation.

Care of the mentally ill

485. With a view to ensuring better care for the mentally ill, in the light of the Committee's recommendations, Act No. 71 of 2009 on the care of mentally ill persons has been adopted. This is an Act amending the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, and it provides that mentally ill persons shall not be liable to criminal procedures. It also provides that such persons shall receive care and full protection, and that persons contravening its provisions shall be liable to penalties, which shall be more severe in certain specified cases.

486. The main features of this Act are summarized below.

(a) Establishment of a National Council on Mental Health, made up of a large number of governmental legal experts and representatives of relevant civil society organizations, as well as experts in mental health from various agencies. The Council's main tasks include the drafting of policies aimed at ensuring respect for the rights and safety of mentally ill persons, the publication of periodic reports on its work, and oversight of regional councils on mental health;

(b) Establishment of regional councils on mental health with a membership similar to that of the National Council, but at the regional level. The main tasks of these councils are to read reports issued by mental health establishments and monitor all aspects of their work, and issue periodic reports on their own work for submission to the National Council.

(c) Verification of the process of the institutionalization of mentally ill persons, including such aspects as whether the patient's admission is voluntary or forced and the conditions of admission in either case, how such a patient will be allowed to leave, how long his or her course of treatment is and under what conditions it will be completed, and

under what conditions a non-Egyptian may be institutionalized. It is noteworthy that all these procedures are subject to judicial, social and psychological oversight by experts;

(d) Recognition of the right of patients to receive the necessary care in a safe, clean environment, that their freedom may not be restricted, that they may not be economically or sexually exploited or subjected to humiliating treatment, that personal information about them may not be divulged, that they shall be allowed to meet with their families or legal counsel, that complaints from child patients about abuse or suspected abuse shall be forwarded to the appropriate authorities, and that patients may submit complaints about any procedure in accordance with the process and rules set forth in the implementing regulations of the Act;

(e) Establishment of committees at every mental health establishment to ensure that patients' rights are respected. The committees are established upon the orders of the Director of the establishment, and are made up of psychologists and sociologists in the employ of the establishment, one patient, and one member representing community associations concerned with the rights of patients. The function of the committees is to ensure that patients' rights are respected and to organize campaigns aimed at heightening awareness of those rights among patients. They also receive complaints relating to patients' rights and endeavour to resolve them;

(f) Establishment of a mental health fund to support the patients' rights committees, training activities, awareness campaigns about mental health in the community, and to award prizes to workers in the field of mental health;

(g) The Act includes a chapter on criminal liability for offences against the rights of patients that are protected under the Act;

(h) The Act amends article 62 of the Penal Code, providing that a person who, at the time he committed the offence, was suffering from a mental or psychological disorder that had brought about the loss of his understanding or his faculty of choice does not incur criminal liability. Where such disorder had diminished the offender's understanding or faculty of choice, he does incur criminal liability, but the court must take that circumstance into account in determining his sentence;

(i) The Act also amends the Code of Criminal Procedure by replacing the term "insanity" with "mental disorder" and the term "mental diseases" with "psychological diseases".

Conclusion

487. In conclusion, in submitting this combined report to the Committee, Egypt reaffirms that it is fully prepared to pursue constructive dialogue with the Committee, and also that it is prepared to answer any questions that may be asked by the Committee's experts. Egypt wishes the Committee all success in fulfilling its invaluable mission for the benefit of all humanity.