



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child

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Consideration of reports of States parties

## Replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports\*, \*\*

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



## I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt hereby submits its replies to the list of issues in relation to its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in accordance with its commitment to the implementation of its treaty obligations and its continuous and constructive cooperation with the treaty bodies. Following the submission of its last report, Egypt continued to fortify its institutional human rights framework through the operationalization of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights, beginning in early 2020. The Committee's tasks consist in monitoring the country's implementation of its international obligations under relevant international agreements and protocols, and proposing the necessary legislative measures and procedures. Egypt launched its first five-year national human rights strategy in September 2021, which reflects its firm conviction of the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly the principles of citizenship, equality, democracy and rule of law.

2. The national human rights strategy has a section dedicated to children's rights which focuses on strengths, opportunities and challenges. The strategy aims to achieve a number of outcomes, including raising awareness about children's rights; encouraging initiatives and activities related to those rights; consolidating the principle of the best interests of the child among all stakeholders who work with children; protecting children from abuse, exploitation, neglect and all forms of violence; supporting the work of child protection committees; strengthening the mechanisms whereby children have access to full health care; reducing the persistence of practices that constitute the worst forms of child labour; reinforcing the enforcement of laws regulating the employment of children; and rolling out oversight mechanisms for social welfare institutions for children who are deprived of family care.

3. The replies to the list of issues provide the necessary information and clarifications within the requisite word limit and supplement information provided in previous national reports and replies to lists of issues submitted to various treaty bodies, which will be referred to in certain paragraphs. Egypt will provide additional information and clarifications concerning legislation or judicial practices during the review of its report before the Committee.

## II. Replies to the list of issues

### A. Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues

4. The State has taken measures to implement those provisions of the 2014 Constitution that have an impact on the rights of children, notably by meeting the constitutional quotas for government spending on health and education, and taking steps towards establishing a comprehensive health insurance system for all citizens. Furthermore, Act No. 28 of 2023 was enacted, which amends certain provisions of the Egyptian Nationality Act in order to achieve equality between men and women in the transmission of their nationality to their minor children. For its part, Act No. 186 of 2023 amends the Children's Code by increasing the penalties envisaged for persons who fail to register a birth or who provide false information at the moment of registration. The amendments also envisage more severe penalties for anyone who neglects or endangers a child. Under the Act, courts can order that offenders undergo rehabilitation and training programmes for a period of up to 6 months, in lieu of a custodial penalty. The Act also grants mothers who are fostering a child under the age of 6 months the same rights as those envisaged for the birth mother in terms of reduced working hours and leave without pay for two years, for the purposes of childcare.

5. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood<sup>1</sup> is cooperating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood 2018–2030 and to bring it into line with changes on the ground, while ensuring that it continues to cover all categories of children. In that

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<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter referred to as the Council.

connection, a plan has been drafted for the implementation of the Framework 2024–2030. In cooperation with stakeholders, the Council has also drafted a national strategy for early childhood development, using a framework that is based on interaction and mutual reinforcement in the areas of health care, nutrition, early education, child protection, social protection and the provision of care responsive to the needs of children. The aim is to ensure that all children at this stage of their development and their families, from all socioeconomic groups, are able to enjoy sustainable care via high-quality interventions beginning in pre-pregnancy and lasting up to age 6, thereby enabling them to survive, flourish and overcome intergenerational poverty. The national strategy for early childhood development has six main pillars: a supportive political environment; good governance; the use of culture and media to foment positive behavioural change among parents and caregivers; multisectoral services; strengthening information management, evidence-based data systems, monitoring and evaluation; and developing and sustaining funding sources and ensuring the availability of human resources.

6. Act No. 182 of 2023 was issued with a view to consolidating the Council's independence and restructuring it in line with the Constitution. Under the Act, the Council is to become an independent body that is answerable to the President of Republic and that enjoys technical, financial and administrative independence. One of the functions of the Council is to formulate an integral view of childhood and motherhood with a view to achieving social justice, equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities. Furthermore, the Council is to act as the national mechanism for children and mothers, and as the body with overarching responsibility for proposing public policies, drafting comprehensive national plans for childhood and motherhood, following up on and evaluating the implementation of those policies and plans, collecting information and statistics, and conducting studies into issues of relevance to childhood. It also contributes to reports on the implementation of international human rights treaties, proposes legislation and regulations, and expresses its views on bills and relevant treaties. Moreover, the Council has the right to receive complaints, publish reports and provide legal assistance to victims of violations. The Council has a special fund – the Childhood and Motherhood Welfare Fund – which is independent and has its own budget.

7. As concerns promoting children's rights and increasing budgetary allocations, the Ministry of Finance is working with UNICEF to issue a series of budget transparency documents. These give a simplified overview of the general State budget and aim to throw light on the allocations earmarked for the welfare of children, the improvement of their standard of living and initiatives that benefit them, directly or indirectly. This includes allocations for families and programmes intended to provide health, education and social support for children.

8. Budgetary allocations for social protection increased from 229 billion Egyptian pounds (LE) in the financial year 2019/20 to LE 351 billion in 2022/23. Also in the financial year 2022/23, allocations from the general State budget that directly benefited children amounted to LE 22.217 billion; this includes allocations for the "Solidarity and Dignity" social assistance programmes, social security allowances, child allowances and the community education programme. Allocations to the health sector increased from LE 87 billion in the budget for the 2019/20 financial year to LE 128 billion in 2022/23. Allocations for pre-university education reached LE 317 billion in 2022/23, an increase of LE 61 billion compared to 2021/22. Allocations in the 2022/23 budget directed at subsidizing foodstuffs (including school meals) went up to LE 12.2 billion, an increase of 96.8 per cent over the LE 6.2 billion allocated in the 2021/22 budget. Information on allocations for children from the general budget for the financial years 2020/21–2022/23 is to be found in annexes 1–3.

9. The State has a number of policies and programmes intended to uphold the right to housing. Among these is a social housing programme to provide persons on low incomes with housing units in residential areas that have integrated services and facilities. In addition, financial tools are being developed to provide cash support as well as support for interest payments on mortgages for periods of up to 20 years. Around 920,000 citizens have benefited from social housing units, while the number of units themselves stands at 1 million. Since 2015, the Government has supplied 333,000 new housing units for persons on low incomes

in return for a down payment and a symbolic monthly rent. Around 3 million citizens have benefited from this initiative.

10. Efforts have also been made to collect and analyse data on the implementation of children's rights. In that connection, the status of the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child has been defined and institutionalized in law, under article 13 of the Act restructuring the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. The Observatory is responsible for gathering child-related information and data, conducting studies and research and compiling statistics, in coordination with the State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics. The Council is currently working to develop the Observatory and its database so as to ensure that high-quality data is available for future studies and surveys. One of the areas covered by the Observatory's database concerns children at risk, where information is classified by age, sex, geographical location and social background, and efforts are currently being made to create a unified digital map of services for children at risk and link it to child protection committees in all governorates. The Prosecutor General's circular No. 7 of 2018 has also helped to consolidate the database of children at risk. According to the circular, if prosecutors come across an instance of children at risk – be they accused of an offence, victims or witnesses – they must use the child helpline to contact the Council for it to take urgent measures to protect the child concerned. Situations of "children at risk" include children in street situations, working children and children in conflict with the law. The child helpline database is being linked to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry Justice, in line with evaluations of the helpline and the child protection committees conducted in 2023.

11. The State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics has a database that includes more than 800 indicators to gauge conditions for Egyptian children in various fields. Alongside information relating to the protection and well-being of children – disaggregated by factors such as wealth and level of education – the database also includes information to monitor progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as they affect children. There is also a plan to roll out a platform under the name "Egyptian Indicators on Sustainable Development and Children", which will serve to monitor the impact that sustainable development has on children's rights.

12. As concerns Act No. 149 of 2019 regulating the activity of civil society associations, and its implementing regulations, reference is made to paragraphs 85–87 of the second periodic report of Egypt to the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW/C/EGY/2-4). In all, 19,518 civil society groups and associations active in the field of childhood and motherhood have regulated their status under the Act.

## **B. Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues**

13. As concerns measures to repeal all legislation that discriminates against girls and women, steps have been taken to construct a legal framework to protect against discrimination, in which regard the Government wishes to make reference to paragraphs 12 and 116 of the fifth periodic report of Egypt to under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR/C/EGY/5). A broad understanding of the different forms discrimination can take underpins the State's legislative and executive plans to tackle it, which consider discrimination to consist in any distinction, restriction, preference or exclusion that arbitrarily detracts from the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution and the law. Article 161 bis of the Criminal Code criminalizes any discriminatory act or omission and prescribes penalties of imprisonment and/or a fine. The State Prosecution Office investigates such offences and institutes criminal proceedings.

14. Act No. 219 of 2017, which concerns inheritance, envisages severe penalties of up to 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of up to LE 100,000 for anyone who deliberately fails to give heirs their legitimate portion of the inheritance. This is a way of guaranteeing women's right to inherit.

15. With reference to the request to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law aimed at eradicating discrimination against, inter alia, children, the legal system already has a comprehensive framework for the protection of human rights, equality and

non-discrimination, just as it ensures the availability and effectiveness of remedies in the event of any violation. Institutional infrastructure includes multiple mechanisms to promote respect and protection for human rights. These include judicial mechanisms, the National Council for Human Rights, other specialized national councils and the various human rights departments and sections in ministries and other national bodies. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act includes provision for such persons to enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, on an equal footing with others and without discrimination on any grounds. As concerns children in particular, article 3 (b) of Act No. 126 of 2008 envisages protection against any form of discrimination among children on grounds of place of birth, parentage, sex, religion, origin, disability or other status, and guarantees equal and effective enjoyment of all rights.

16. The jurisprudence of the courts aims to apply the provisions enshrined in the Constitution and the Children's Code that uphold the best interests of the child. One example of this is case No. 6 of year 34 of the Supreme Constitutional Court concerning the alleged unconstitutionality of the following passage from the Children's Code: "The duty of education lies with the mother who detains custody of the child. If any dispute arises in that connection, the matter is to be submitted to the family courts which are to issue an interim ruling, taking due account of the child's best interests and right to education." The Supreme Constitutional Court ruled to reject the case, on the grounds that protecting best interests means ensuring the child's future education, in the event of a dispute between the guardians, and particularly if the spouses divorce. The Administrative Court has ruled to overturn a decree in which the Minister of Justice stipulated locations and dates for visiting a minor; the Court thus granted judges the discretion to determine the location where a child visit may be conducted and the length of such a visit, as necessary in the best interests of the child.

17. The Ministry of Justice and the State Prosecution Office work to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is duly reflected in the training of judges and prosecutors on custody, visiting and alimony arrangements. The State Prosecution Office also takes account of that principle when issuing interim rulings regarding child custody disputes. At the same time, the best interests of the child are also foremost in court proceedings on human trafficking cases, particularly as concerns unaccompanied children or children separated from their families. This includes family tracing and family reintegration services and the provision of appropriate alternative care and durable solutions. Judges and prosecutors who work in children's courts, police officers, experts, social workers in care homes and penal institutions for children and members of child protection committees all follow training courses on restorative justice, independent monitoring mechanisms for social welfare institutions, transfers, community alternatives to deprivation of liberty and alternative penalties.

18. With a view to upholding the principle of the best interests of the child, the children's courts have handed down non-custodial sentences for children in conflict with the law. The proportion of such sentences has, in fact, been growing continuously, while presidents of children's courts have conducted 99 visits to observation centres and social welfare institutions to ensure that they are duly fulfilling their obligations. Beginning in the judicial year 2022, a day on "child friendly justice" has been included as part of the basic training courses offered to all new judges. Within the framework of its cooperation with UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice has issued three procedural handbooks on the legal foundations underpinning the use of non-custodial sentences for children in conflict with the law and on the procedural rights of child victims and witnesses.

19. As concerns the implementation of article 111 of the Children's Code, the Government wishes to make it very clear that the law prohibits the death penalty for any person who was under the age of 18 at the time an offence was committed. This is consistent with article 111 of the Children's Code, according to which the significant factor is the age of an accused person at the time the crime was perpetrated and not at the time the penalty is carried out. Article 133 of the Code stipulates: "If a sentence is handed down against an accused person on the grounds that that person is over the age of 15, after which official documents come to light showing that, in fact, the person is under 15, the Prosecutor General is to bring the matter back before the court that issued the original sentence for that sentence to be reconsidered in accordance with the law. If a sentence is handed down against an

accused person on the grounds that that person is over the age of 18, after which official documents come to light showing that, in fact, the person is under 18, the Prosecutor General is to bring the matter back before the court that issued the original sentence for that sentence to be reconsidered in accordance with the law. The sentence is to be annulled and the case file referred for action to the State Prosecution Office.” In both instances, the enforcement of the sentence is suspended. In any case, the enforcement of a death sentence is surrounded by many legal safeguards. The Court of Cassation has established that the issue of a child’s age is of critical importance, and it has ruled to overturn death sentences on the grounds that the courts have failed to establish the age of the accused person.

20. With reference to the recommendation to consult children and allow them to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, the Council launched a national programme called the “Egyptian Children’s Forum” to help children become involved and express their views. The authorities in each governorate nominate children from different backgrounds and geographical areas, a number of whom are then elected by their peers and participate in community events, official functions, meetings with officials, discussions and seminars on national policies and plans affecting children. Programmes are run to build children’s capacities and debating skills to help them express their needs and to ensure that those needs are duly incorporated into policies and plans affecting them. Twelve sub- and local-level-forums have been instituted involving around 415 children in each governorate, for an overall total of 5,000 boys and girls who have taken part in 220 events aimed at disseminating a culture of children’s rights. These events – initiatives, campaigns, competitions, the production of magazines and in-person or online interviews – have reached almost 15,000 child beneficiaries and have included a forum on green issues, activities to promote identity, follow-up on the national strategy for childhood and the selection of Egyptian children for membership of the Arab Children’s Parliament in 2023. Children have also participated in mock parliaments intended to canvass their views on health and environmental issues. The Council has also rolled out an initiative under the name “Our environment is our responsibility” which it runs within the framework of the Egyptian child empowerment initiative. Children participating in the initiative have submitted their climate change-related recommendations to parliament and have proposed the establishment of a children’s parliament.

### **C. Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues**

21. The births of all children, whether Egyptian or foreign, are registered in an automated system in health-care centres, as per laws and regulations. The registration takes place irrespective of whether the children concerned are the offspring of couples married in official, customary or tribal marriages, whether there is an acknowledgment of paternity or whether the children are foundlings. Unregistered children under the age of 1 are registered in health-care centres, those over the age of 1 in the civil status register. The Civil Status Act stipulates that children are to be registered within 15 days from the date of their birth, it identifies who is to be responsible for registration and sets forth the procedures for registering foundlings and illegitimate children. The implementing regulations of the Act define how to register children who were not registered at birth, depending upon whether they are under or over the age of 1. The registration process for children with no caregiver has been automated, thanks to coordination between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

22. The Council works to ensure universal birth registration for all the aforementioned categories of children. In this connection, the Council has, at its own expense, retrieved birth certificates for 3,184 children from those categories. All reports made to the Council during the period 2020–2023 indicated a 100 per cent birth registration rate.

23. As concerns efforts to eliminate the obstacles or delays faced by Egyptian women married to foreign husbands in transmitting their nationality to their children and registering their children’s births, it should be noted that Act No. 154 of 2004 amending Nationality Act No. 26 of 1975 grants an Egyptian mother married to a foreign man the right to transmit her nationality to her children born after the date of entry into force of the Act (15 July 2004). Thus, the children of Egyptian women married to foreigners become Egyptians under the law and can obtain documentation from the civil status bureau at the Ministry of the Interior.

Children of Egyptian mothers married to foreign men, born before the date of entry into force of the Act must make an application for nationality to the Ministry of the Interior. They are entitled to acquire nationality one year after the date of their application or under a ministerial decree granting them nationality. In April 2019, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that article 6 of the Nationality Act was unconstitutional as it limited the right of minors to acquire Egyptian nationality by making it dependent on the acquisition of that nationality by their foreign father while taking no account of the acquisition of Egyptian nationality on the part of the foreign mother. Following that ruling, the 1975 Nationality Act was amended by Act No. 28 of 2023, under which Egyptian nationality is granted to anyone born in Egypt to a father or mother holding Egyptian nationality, thus ending all forms of discrimination between men and women in the transmission of nationality to their children.

24. On the subject of the enforcement of article 3 of the Children's Code, reference is made to the information already given in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the present document. In addition, the State has opened a number of model courts for children, in order to enable them to make their voices heard and to express their views during judicial proceedings, and efforts are currently being made to extend this template to other children's courts. In outfitting and furnishing these courts, use was made of the most up-to-date equipment to accommodate the nature and psychology of children. This includes special seating arrangements for the children and videoconferencing between the room where proceedings are being held and a child-friendly space for the children themselves. Video testimonies can also be pre-recorded in order to avoid repeated appearances. The child-friendly spaces envisage the use of live video streaming so that the children do not have to enter the courtroom, and they are fitted with one-way mirrors connecting them to courtrooms and judges' chambers.

25. A draft national strategy for the protection of children from the risks of the Internet and online sexual exploitation has been developed. Also, an integrated body of campaigns and programmes has been launched which, targeting families and schools, aim to raise awareness about the safe use of technology and the protection of children from the perils of the Internet. Cooperation with Internet service providers has been reinforced as a way of helping children search for and access information online while, at the same time, controls have been tightened by strengthening and ensuring the effective enforcement of laws and regulations on online child protection. In addition, thanks to cooperation with the private sector, civil society and technology companies, increasingly effective tools and solutions for the protection of children online are being developed.

26. The Council organized direct awareness-raising activities for 30,000 children and parents who visited the Cairo International Book Fair in 2023 and 2024. These activities included seminars to familiarize children and their families with mechanisms to address violence against children, protection mechanisms, the empowerment of girls and ways to combat harmful practices. In 2022, the Ministry of Social Solidarity launched campaigns to educate girls about issues of harassment and online extortion, including prevention and response methods, means for obtaining information, legal reporting mechanisms and ways to protect personal information on mobile devices and social media.

#### **D. Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues**

27. In order to uphold the principle of equality before the law without discrimination, the Constitution of Egypt and the Criminal Code (including its various amendments) prohibit all forms of physical violence or corporal punishment. Criminal laws contain no provisions that envisage corporal punishment or punishments that denigrate individual dignity, physically or morally. Any act that undermines the physical safety of a citizen is punishable by law. The Children's Code envisages increased protection for children against violence and abuse, as well as more severe penalties for offences committed by an adult against a child, particularly a parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver or a person with authority over a child.

28. On the subject of measures taken to prevent torture or ill-treatment against children in custody, reference is made to paragraph 24 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Committee against Torture ([CAT/C/EGY/RQ/5](#)).

29. On the subject of the criminalization of enforced disappearance under national legislation, reference is made to paragraph 45 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/EGY/RQ/5). With regard to the investigation into allegations of enforced disappearance, reference is made to paragraphs 27 and 28 of the fifth periodic report of Egypt to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/EGY/5). Moreover, all detainees in correctional and rehabilitation centres (prisons) are subject to the law and no person is detained in such places without a judicial order or ruling. Prison officials may only accept detainees pursuant to an order signed by the competent authority, and they may not hold them beyond the period specified in the order. Violation of that obligation results in criminal and disciplinary liability, and centres are subject to judicial oversight.

30. As concerns corporal punishment against children, the Ministry of Education issues instructions at the beginning of each school year to remind school principals and teachers about the absolute prohibition against beating or harming pupils, and to inform them that only positive pedagogical methods should be used to guide students. In this connection, reference is made to paragraph 96 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/EGY/RQ/5).

31. The Council has cooperated with other national bodies on the implementation of the strategy to address and prevent all forms of violence against children and on strengthening the child protection infrastructure. The Council is currently evaluating its principal interventions within the framework of the strategy, information about which is to be found in annex 4 alongside information of the work of child protection committees to uphold children's rights and protect them from violence.

32. On the subject of the criminalization of all forms of violence against women and girls, reference is made to paragraphs 36–40 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/EGY/RQ/5), and to paragraphs 33–36 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/EGY/RQ/5).

33. On the subject of female genital mutilation, reference is made to paragraph 32 of the replies of Egypt to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/EGY/RQ/5). Thanks to efforts exerted in the period 2019–2023 by the national committee for the elimination of female genital mutilation, the following results were obtained: 108,633,748 persons benefited from campaigns to raise awareness about available services; 29,103,508 persons were reached by door-to-door campaigns; 67,400 persons benefited from training courses; complaints and inquiries were received from 6,334 persons; the child helpline received 2,214 calls; 102,848 persons were involved in various other activities; 18,608 persons used the services of mobile units dispensing medical information and services; and media and social media received 78,787,975 contacts. In addition to this, a study published by the Council has highlighted activities under the “Dawwie” national initiative for the empowerment of girls and the impact those activities have in combating this phenomenon, also through interaction with the online platform dawwie.net. Information about the initiative is to be found in annexes 5 and 6.

34. As concerns child marriages, the Civil Status Act prohibits the registration of any marriage contract involving persons under the age of 18 (art. 31 bis). The Criminal Code envisages a term of imprisonment or a fine for anyone who provides false information or bogus documents for the purpose of legitimizing the marriage of a child who is under the legal age (art. 227 of the Code). For its part, Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010, as amended, criminalizes child marriage when it is the consequence of the abuse of parental authority or of a promise to give or receive a sum of money or benefits in exchange for marriage with a girl over whom the offender has authority.

35. As concerns measures to address the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the cyberbullying of children, article 116 bis (a) of the Children's Code, as amended, envisages penalties for anyone who exploits or engages children in pornographic or sexually exploitative acts or who uses computers and the Internet to disseminate pornography involving the exploitation of children in prostitution. The Cybercrime Act No. 175 of 2018 includes provisions intended to protect children, uphold their rights and combat child sexual



exploitation, while the Anti-Human Trafficking Act also envisages protection for children against different forms of exploitation. In addition to this, legislators have come up with a definition of bullying as a display of power or control by the offender to exploit victims' weakness or a condition the offender believes is harmful to victims – such as sex, race, religion, physical characteristics, state of physical or mental health or social class – with the intention of intimidating, ridiculing or degrading victims or excluding them from their social environment. Severe penalties are envisaged for such acts (art. 309 bis (b) of the Code). As part of efforts to protect against and penalize discrimination, in June 2019 the State Prosecution Office referred two accused persons to the criminal courts on charges of bullying a child from South Sudan. The two were charged with having insulted the victim and denigrated his honour, thereby practising discrimination on the basis of origin, and with violating the victim's private life without his consent by posting a video of him being assaulted. The court ruled to sentence the defendants to 2 years' imprisonment and to payment of a fine of LE 100,000. The incident aroused widespread condemnation across social media and came to the attention of the President of the Republic, who insisted on hosting and honouring the child victim at the Sharm el-Sheikh World Youth Forum to draw attention to the seriousness of acts of discrimination, hatred and bullying, all of which are penalized under Egyptian law.

## **E. Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues**

36. With regard to the amendment of personal status laws, a committee has been formed to draft a personal status bill that upholds the rights of all family members while safeguarding the best interests of children. The personal status bill aims to be an integrated and exhaustive piece of legislation that also envisages the abrogation of six existing laws in that field. The new bill reflects the concerns of Egyptian families, to which end it takes account of official State statistics, case studies and the recurring problems that have been a common denominator over past decades. It also draws upon the social sciences, medicine and psychology to tackle, *inter alia*, issues associated with visiting rights, location of custody arrangements, hosting and the provisions surrounding betrothal. In addition to this, the bill envisages granting judges new powers to handle urgent cases to support families; the creation of a new system whereby all family disputes would be heard before a single court; the establishment of a family welfare fund; and the creation of an insurance policy to provide families with financial support to meet expenses and challenges related to personal status matters.

37. As concerns helping parents to provide guidance for their children, the Council has run several positive education programmes, including 3 capacity-building training courses for 75 specialists, 625 educational seminars for 30,323 students as well as a further 637 educational seminars for 16,000 participants. The Council also provides counselling services for families to help them guide their children and ensure they grow and develop healthily. Between 2020 and 2023, the Council provided a total of 10,163 psychological and family counselling sessions.

38. In relation to the needs and best interests of children, the national alternative care strategy 2021–2030 has embraced the principle that the natural or extended family is the primary natural environment for the upbringing and protection of children. Therefore, efforts need to be focused on keeping children in the care of their families and on returning them there or to their immediate relatives, whenever possible. The strategy contemplates a series of measures to achieve this aim, including support for families at risk, counselling and support services for families with children at risk and consolidating the role of civil society institutions in the protection of children and the provision of alternative care.

39. The Ministry of Social Solidarity has finished drafting a bill intended to develop the alternative care system, create a single legislative reference for the application of that system, reduce instances where children are separated from their biological or extended families and achieve the best interests of the child. The bill also envisages certain benefits for children and caregivers such as housing, education, health care, regular monthly financial assistance and employment opportunities.

**F. Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues**

40. As concerns the implementation of the Children's Code and the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 10 of 2018, Act No. 200 of 2020 envisages the creation of the "Fund for the Differently Abled" to support persons with disabilities. Amendments were introduced in August 2023 to improve the Fund's capacity to ensure care and support for persons with disabilities, and it was augmented with a sum of LE 1 billion.

41. Egypt has several mechanisms in place to ensure the availability of health-care services for children with disabilities. The Ministry of Health runs a programme for the early detection of thyroid hormone deficiency as well as other tests for diseases that cause intellectual disability. For its part, the Ministry of Social Solidarity provides medical and psychological care services for children with disabilities in nurseries. These include the provision of free assistive devices and treatment for muscular dystrophy.

42. Locations are made available free of charge in which children with disabilities can undergo medical tests and examinations. Hospitals are currently designing a programme to identify the accessibility tools that persons with disabilities require, such as movement and mobility devices, cochlear implants and hearing aids. In addition, medication, food, assistive devices, aids and medical services are made available to persons with disabilities with a view to avoiding any complications arising from their condition.

43. With regard to inclusive education for children with disabilities, the State undertakes to include students with mild disabilities and with hearing disabilities in ordinary schools and technical schools once they have completed basic education. It also enrolls students with intellectual disabilities in "conceptual" schools and classes. In the financial year 2023/24, public investments amounting to LE 38 million were allocated to furnish a number of State-run schools and convert them into inclusive schools able to accommodate children with mild disabilities. In addition, inclusive education for children with disabilities has been included as a key element in the national strategy for pre-university education 2014–2030, and the Ministry of Education provides educational opportunities for such children thanks to the use of advanced technologies. The "Thousand Schools" initiative provides support to 472 schools for persons with disabilities, while more than 146,000 students have been integrated into ordinary State-run and special education schools, as compared to around 17,000 in 2016/17. In all, there are 108,200 integrated students distributed across 19,000 schools. Forty thousand books have been provided for deaf and hard of hearing persons as well as 100,200 books in Braille and 249,600 books on "conceptual" education.

44. As concerns the adoption of a specific national strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities, with a special focus on children, the objectives of the strategy and plan for childhood include health care, education and protection for children with disabilities. For its part, the Council runs a permanent capacity-building programme for personnel who work with children with disabilities, particularly those most at risk.

45. With reference to the collection, storage and analysis of statistical data on the situation of children with disabilities, the State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics carried out its first national survey of persons with disabilities in Egypt, in 2022. The survey sample consisted of 112,000 households (about 450,000 individuals), and the purpose of the exercise was to examine the characteristics distinguishing persons with disabilities, including children, while monitoring the social services available to them and assessing their needs, in the light of the Persons with Disabilities Act. The survey produced a body of indicators concerning children with disabilities, including the type, degree and cause of their disability. It also served to produce data on the most important services such children receive, or which they need. The helpline is also used to collect and analyse statistical data on children with disabilities who are at risk. Their cases are taken in hand and action is taken to remove the risk.

**G. Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues**

46. Action has been taken to improve and expand preventive interventions in primary health care. The Ministry of Health has run early detection initiatives based on assessments

of the growth and development of children up to the age of 5, which also serve to detect cases of malnutrition. In addition, there are counselling services that aim to stimulate development in children under the age of 5 and reduce developmental delays in children at risk, in comparison with their peers; a total of 286,084 users availed themselves of counselling services during the course of 2023. The “health-promoting schools” initiative aims to provide an educational environment that promotes the physical, mental and social health of students and teachers alike

47. As concerns action to reduce the neonatal mortality rate, pregnant women receive the necessary care, breastfeeding is being promoted, the use of formula milk is being rationalized and children between the ages of 6 and 54 months are being provided with vitamin A supplements. A number of presidential programmes have been launched, including one for the early detection of genetic diseases in premature babies in intensive care units and another for the early detection of hearing disabilities. All newborns attending primary care units undergo screening – basic vital functions, growth measurements and a comprehensive evaluation of vital organs – with a view to the early detection of birth defects.

48. Another recently launched initiative aims to screen marriage candidates for certain genetic diseases and to provide treatment for any foreseeable health problems. In that connection, medical tests have been carried out on 1.332 million young persons of both sexes – Egyptians and non-Egyptians – and 197,000 health certificates have been issued. Another initiative targets pregnant women and their unborn infant via the early detection of certain sexually transmitted diseases with a view to preventing transmission from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. Counselling is also provided, alongside medical and psychological support. Under yet another programme, 2,500 youth- and adolescent-friendly clinics have opened, which have delivered a total of 19,148,401 to 7,813,493 users.

49. As concerns the improvement of mental health services, a national online platform for mental health and addiction treatment services has been launched for the purpose of providing such services free of charge to persons of all age groups. The online platform has attracted 74,660 visitors and has 20,057 registered users, while 4,871 persons have undergone therapy sessions via the platform. In addition to this, a mental health support initiative has been launched with the aim of disseminating a culture of mental health and expanding available mental health facilities. Currently there are 179 State-run and private mental health facilities with around 10,000 beds.

50. With reference to assessing the impact of the Fund to Combat and Treat Addiction, the Fund has adopted an action plan for front-line prevention, early detection, treatment and rehabilitation. Messages intended to prevent addiction have been incorporated into school curricula in five different subject areas, at the level of basic education. At the same time, a children’s guide to prevention has been drafted and is presented each year in 5,000 schools and 1,000 youth centres. Innovative educational methods using visual content have been used in 4,464 schools and prevention programmes targeting 10,000 children each year have been rolled out in 7 slum-upgrading developments. Lastly, a series of media campaigns to protect children and young persons have been produced and broadcast, and have had an average of 22 million views per year on social media.

51. As concerns early detection, treatment and rehabilitation, the Fund’s hotline receives around 2,500 calls each year concerning counselling and treatment for children. A special section has been set up for the treatment of adolescents and the provision of screening and treatment services for children, free of charge and in complete confidentiality. Over the past year, treatment has been provided to 425 persons between the ages of 11 and 17 years.

## **H. Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues**

52. As regards measures taken to guarantee an adequate and sustainable standard of living for all children on national territory, the social safety net has been redesigned to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families. This includes the “Takaful and Karama” programme, which envisages a monthly cash transfer to families on the condition that they keep their children in school and maintain regular access to basic levels of health care. Support for the

programme has been increased from LE 3.7 billion for 6.5 million beneficiaries in 2014 to LE 41 billion for 22 million beneficiaries in the financial year 2023/24. In addition to this, support is also being provided to 1.2 million persons with disabilities, at an annual cost of LE 8 billion. There are also other initiatives, such as the “first-thousand-days-of-life” programme. The child beneficiaries of the “Takaful and Karama” programme receive health insurance, while 5 million students have been exempted from school fees on the grounds that they were unable to pay.

53. A database of poor families in Egypt has been developed which contains information on 8.5 million families comprising 31 million citizens. Irregular cash assistance averaging LE 400 per month has been provided to 1.5 million families facing difficulties. In addition, 79,870 beneficiaries across all the governorates have benefited from in-kind assistance.

54. With a view to mitigating the socioeconomic impact on children and their families of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and related measures, the Government adopted a multidimensional approach that integrated both tools and interventions. It engaged flexibly with the changing situation and worked to achieve a balance between preserving human health and continuing economic activity. It began by allocating LE 100 billion from the State budget for stimulus packages, which included monetary support for health and social protection alongside a set of regulatory measures to limit the spread of pandemic. The Government was careful to direct support to the neediest groups and to workers in irregular employment.

55. In the field of social protection, 100,000 families affected by the pandemic were newly added to the “Takaful and Karama” programme, and a monthly stipend of LE 500 was disbursed to the around 1.5 million workers in irregular employment registered on the Ministry of Labour database. In a number of governorates, moreover, nutritional and health-care health support was provided thanks to medical and food convoys.

56. With a view to tackling environmental degradation, Egypt acceded to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. The National Council for Climate Change, which is the competent authority in that regard, was restructured in 2020. In November 2022, Egypt hosted the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27) one of the outcomes of which was the creation of a loss and damage fund, to compensate developing countries for the damage they incur as a result of climate change caused by developed countries.

57. Under the Egypt Vision 2030, the environment is seen as fundamental to all development and economic sectors. The aim is to ensure that natural resources are secure, that they are utilized fairly and optimally and that appropriate investments are made so as to guarantee the rights of future generations, eradicate poverty and attain social justice, while providing a clean, healthy and safe environment.

58. A national climate change strategy 2050 has been launched that aims to reduce pollution, manage waste sustainably, preserve natural resources and meet global environmental challenges. The strategy seeks to create supportive conditions through legislation, policies and institutional reform with a view to promoting green transformation processes and achieving sustainable development. In 2021, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development issued the first edition of the “Environmental Sustainability Standards Manual: A Strategic Framework for Green Recovery”, which aims to draw attention to areas and interventions that have a direct positive impact on the environment and that should attract public sector investments. The Ministry of the Environment has run training programmes and developed guidelines for government agencies involved in the application of environmental sustainability standards.

## **I. Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues**

59. A series of steps has been taken to increase the enrolment of children in secondary education, including enhanced teaching via the use of interactive screens in schools. At the same time educational channels (*Our School 1, 2 and 3*) have been used to enrich educational processes; 27,439 advanced classrooms have been set up in 3,260 schools; technological

infrastructure has been supplied to 2,474 new State-run secondary schools; and electronic equipment has been fitted in 2,530 schools. In addition to this, 1,131 projects have been completed for the improvement of 15,334 classrooms, as part of the “Dignified life” presidential initiative, while 1,301 schools have been involved in development and efficiency enhancement projects.

60. The number of students of both sexes enrolled in ordinary secondary education increased from 1,819,497 in 2019/20 to 2,124,450 in 2022/23, while the number enrolled in technical secondary education increased from 2,026,368 in 2019/20 to 2,250,281 in 2022/23.

61. A comprehensive and integrated strategic vision has been adopted with a view to increasing the availability of technical education, using the latest internationally recognized systems and programmes. By 2030, the strategy aims to increase enrolment rates in technical education to 20 per cent for high achievers who have an overall score of 85 per cent or above in middle school. Also by 2030, the strategy aims to increase the percentage of technical-school graduates who are working in the field of their specialization to 80 per cent and to increase the percentage of technical and vocational education institutions based on community partnerships to 20 per cent. There were 3,114 technical education schools in 2022/23, as compared to 1,995 in 2013/14.

62. As concerns improvements to school infrastructure, spending on pre-university education reached LE 188 billion during the year 2022/23. At the same time, \$500 million were allocated to support the implantation of the national strategy for pre-university education in Egypt. Action has also been taken to improve the material conditions, raise the standard of living and enhance the effectiveness of teachers, who have received training in the latest teaching methodologies with a view to helping improve their performance. Allocations amounting annually to LE 1.8 billion are paid out to 1.4 million teachers, while 80,000 teachers in ordinary and technical education have been trained in the latest approaches to education. In 2020/21, 325 ordinary schools were applying an aptitude-based system while 13.5 million students had registered on the virtual education platform where they were being taught by 1.3 million teachers.

63. On the subject of addressing disparities in education, a total of 85,141 migrant students are enrolled in Egyptian schools, 47,239 in public schools, and 37,902 in private schools. Students registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who are enrolled in State-run schools are exempted from payment of the tuition fees prescribed for migrant students. Syrian, Yemeni and Sudanese students are treated on an equal footing with Egyptian students.

64. Efforts have also been made to increase the availability of kindergarten places, in which regard the national programme for early childhood development envisages the creation of an infrastructure of nursery facilities that provide a positive and child-friendly environment. In all, 1,200 nurseries have been established and furnished across the country. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of kindergartens increased from 16,505 to 25,200 and the number of children enrolled from 821,898 to 1.5 million. At the same time, public investments amounting to an estimated LE 520 million have been allocated for the building and extension of 3,000 kindergartens and other schools.

## **J. Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues**

65. With regard to measures taken to end the detention of all asylum-seeking or migrant children, the Government wishes to make it clear that, in line with the Anti-Migrant Smuggling Act, migrants who have been smuggled incur no criminal or civil liability. Therefore, asylum-seekers or migrants – be they adults or children under the age of 18 – are neither charged nor detained. The Council acts as the legal representative for children who are unaccompanied or who have no identified families or legal representatives. The child protection bureau in the Judicial Inspection Department of the Office of the Prosecutor General oversees child prosecution offices and reviews cases in which children are involved. The bureau also inspects observation centres as well as other institutions and facilities where children are detained, and it coordinates with the child helpline and with national child protection agencies on measures to promote and support child protection.

66. In order to uphold the principle of non-refoulement, if the law enforcement authorities arrest a refugee or asylum-seeker – be they adults or children – in relation to any case, they coordinate with the UNHCR office following the release of the person concerned, in order to expedite their resettlement in another country. The Ministry of the Interior undertakes to enforce any court rulings issued in this regard, all of which envisage the application of the principle of non-refoulement, as enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Supreme Administrative Court has ruled that legislative protection in Egypt is not limited to political refugees, but extends to humanitarian refugees, and that refugees who are in the territory of the State illegally may not be expelled. In fact, State agencies are required to provide them with services, to enable them to reside in the country, to access education and health care and to benefit from the same basic goods and services that the Government provides to its own citizens. The Ministry of the Interior provides refugees and asylum-seekers with six-month residency on the basis of UNHCR-issued identity cards and, to lighten the burden they are carrying, exempts them from issuance and renewal fees.

67. As concerns action to provide all asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children with access to education and health care, the State provides services to asylum-seeking and refugee children and enables them to reside in the country, to access education and health care and to benefit from the same basic goods and services that the Government provides to its own citizens. The Government also provides refugees and asylum-seekers with six-month residency permits. As regards access to education for asylum-seeking and refugee children, please see paragraph 63 above.

## **K. Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues**

68. A request was made for information about action to prevent schools in North Sinai from being used as military bases and uphold the rights of children there, including their rights to education, health and protection from violence. Within the framework of a security plan to protect civilians in certain areas in the governorate of North Sinai, law enforcement contingents have been deployed within populated localities in those areas. Their tasks include securing the perimeter of government buildings, hospitals and schools but do not entail using those buildings as administrative or logistical headquarters for law enforcement officers themselves. The presence of law enforcement personnel in the vicinity of schools in North Sinai is limited to securing the school perimeter and to ensuring the security and safety of students and teachers alike, so that education can take place regularly and to protect the right to education, health and non-violence.

69. As concerns the implementation of amendments to the Labour Code, the Constitution and the law prohibit the employment of children under 15 or the training of children under 13. It is likewise prohibited to employ children in jobs that may endanger their health, safety or morals or to engage them in employment for more than six hours a day, including hours of rest. The Ministry of Labour has amended its decree containing the list of hazardous jobs and professions in which it is prohibited either to employ or to train children under the age of 18. A comprehensive review of the Labour Code is currently under way, and the Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the Council, has issued a national plan to combat the worst forms of child labour 2018–2025, which aims to eliminate child labour by 2025. The Ministry also carries out unannounced inspections on establishments where children are employed: 44,388 establishments have been visited of which 31,850 were found to be compliant and 11,339 received a warning; in all, 997 reports were filed. Thanks to the inspections, 50,549 children were protected. In addition to this, a unified procedural manual to combat child labour has been developed, and training on the manual has been dispensed to Council staff and representatives of protection units in a number of governorates. Between 2019 and 2023, the Council's child helpline received 973 reports of child labour, including 278 serious cases and 695 ordinary cases. There has been a fall in the percentage of children aged 5–17 who are involved in economic activities or domestic labour: from 7 per cent in 2014 to 4.9 per cent in 2021.

70. With a view to enforcing and operationalizing the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons, and to protecting children, in 2020, the Council issued the Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection and Assistance of Child Asylum-Seekers,

Refugees and Victims of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons. It also rolled out a more systematic national working methodology that has unified operating mechanisms to promote cooperation and coordination at the national level, to protect children and to intervene promptly to address the risks facing them. All stakeholders have received training on the Standard Operating Procedures, which lay down an effective course of action to be pursued at the national level to facilitate communication between all parties involved in combating such crimes, with a view to strengthening law enforcement and the victim referral process. That process is divided into four stages: (a) efforts by authorities dealing with the public to identify potential trafficking victims; (b) monitoring and referral; i.e., having identified the victim, the competent authorities report the matter to the State Prosecution Office then provide assistance to the victims on the basis of informed consent; (c) investigation and follow-up procedures; i.e., the launch of proceedings having first provided victims with information about legal and administrative procedures to enable them to make informed decisions; also, the provision of legal aid; (d) provision of shelter, rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes for victims by means of accommodation, medical and psychological care and social and legal counselling. The Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection and Assistance of Child Asylum-Seekers, Refugees and Victims of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons is to be found in annex 7.

71. The Ministry of Social Solidarity intervenes in support of trafficking victims, also by providing training to social workers on how to interact with such persons. The Ministry has opened the first shelter for victims of human trafficking in the governorate of Al-Qalyubiyah, which provides them with all the services and care they require, and it is seeking to open other similar facilities.

## **L. Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues**

72. There are 33 specialized child courts throughout the country, including four model child-friendly courts in the governorates of Cairo, Giza, Al-Qalyubiyah and Asyut, as explained in paragraph 24 of the present report.

73. As concerns the use of non-custodial measures, an assessment of training courses on the use of alternative measures and an analysis of statistics received from children's courts across the country both show that the percentage of non-custodial sentences as compared to custodial penalties went from 53.5 per cent in 2020 to 58 per cent in 2023.

74. With regard to the monitoring of child detention facilities, in the course of 2023 judges from children's courts throughout the country conducted 99 visits to observation centres, training and rehabilitation centres, social welfare institutions and penal institutions to ensure that they were fulfilling their duty to rehabilitate children and reintegrate them into society. The visits also served to ensure that staff were duly applying the laws and regulations governing institutions for the social welfare of children at risk. During the course of the visits, the judges examined facilities such as sleeping quarters, canteens and activity rooms, and they were able to interview the children and ask them about their living conditions and treatment. The visitors also asked supervisors about the rehabilitation programmes for the children and they examined the inmate's files and the administrative registers to ensure that the children were being detained legally. The visits led to observations and recommendations, such as to develop, upgrade and maintain certain buildings and equipment; to pay more attention to children's activities; to allocate more resources to several centres; to hold training workshops in certain areas; and to supply vehicles to transport children and take them on trips and leisure activities.

75. In relation to providing children with fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of their detention, article 124 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that, in a case involving a major or serious offence which carries a mandatory prison sentence, the State Prosecution Office may not interrogate an accused person or confront him or her with other accused persons or witnesses unless a defence lawyer has been summoned to attend, save in cases of flagrante delicto or where urgency is imperative in order to avoid evidence being lost, as the investigator shall explain in the record. For its part, article 125 of the Children's Code explicitly envisages children's right to legal assistance and states that, in cases

involving a major or serious offence which carries a mandatory prison sentence, they must be attended by a lawyer during the investigation and the trial. If they do not choose a lawyer for themselves, either the prosecutors or the court are to appoint one on their behalf, as envisaged in the Code of Criminal Procedure.

76. On the subject of reviewing legislation to ensure that no child is prosecuted as part of a mass trial or in a military court, article 94 of the Children's Code states that children who are under the age of 12 at the time an offence was committed incur no criminal liability. The children's court is to have exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving a major or serious offence committed by a child between the ages of 7 and 12.

77. Military courts are to comply with all constitutional and legal rules set forth in the Children's Code (Act No. 12 of 1996), as amended, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, and are to calibrate any penalty imposed in accordance with those provisions. National criminal and procedural legislation, as well as administrative instructions issued by the Ministry of Defence in compliance with national legislation, prohibit the detention of civilians – adults or children – in any military facility, however denominated.

## **M. Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues**

78. Concerted and coordinated steps are taken to prevent the crimes envisaged in the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, and the national coordination committee for preventing and combating human trafficking engages with competent ministries and national agencies to protect trafficking victims. Victims can ask the committee to demand that those authorities provide them with protection, as per article 9 of the implementing regulations of Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 64 of 2010. The child protection bureau in the Judicial Inspection Department of the Office of the Prosecutor General – which was created in 2020 – protects children in the context of criminal justice and oversees the enforcement of sentences handed down by the children's courts. It also acts to protect the best interests of children, in accordance with the Act and the Prosecutor General's circular No. 7 of 2018 regarding child protection committees and the system of criminal justice for children.

79. Security measures are taken to combat and control all forms of crime committed against children. These include mechanisms wherewith to submit complaints and reports and the monitoring of social media sites to detect any abuse against children. Between January 2014 and October 2023, efforts by the Ministry of the Interior led to the opening of 43 cases of online sexual exploitation of children (with 48 accused persons and 43 child victims); 33 cases of bullying (with 47 accused persons and 43 child victims); and 412 cases involving the exploitation of children in child marriage, begging, immoral acts and sexual abuse (with 609 accused persons and 895 child victims). Legal action was taken in each of these cases, in coordination with the competent prosecutors.

80. On the subject of child pornography, reference is made to the information contained in paragraphs 35, 79 and 82 of the present report.

81. As concerns strengthening mechanisms for monitoring child adoption placements, Egypt does admit the placement of children under *kafalah*, in the light of the provisions of article 20 of the Convention. Reference is also made in this regard to paragraphs 38 and 39 of the present report (the national alternative care strategy and a bill intended to develop an alternative care system). The Ministry of Social Solidarity has strengthened monitoring mechanisms for children in foster families in order to guarantee their rights and protect them from any form of abuse or exploitation. To that end, it has established a national database of foster families, made field visits to the families and communicated with the children concerned. The Ministry also engages with other stakeholders to monitor any violations that children in foster care might suffer. During the course of 2023, children were withdrawn from around 30 foster families, either because they were deemed to be at risk or because it was considered to be in their own best interests.

82. Several legislative frameworks exist to prevent and criminalize child sex tourism. According to the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, "transactional" marriage and early marriage are criminalized as a form of sexual exploitation and of human trafficking. The Suppression



of Prostitution Act No. 10 of 1961 criminalizes incitement, recruitment or solicitation to travel abroad to engage in debauchery or prostitution. The penalty for such offences is more severe if the victim is under 16. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has a clear policy that hotels are required to follow when hosting guests of any age. The policy sets forth the procedures to be followed and the forms to be completed before accommodation can be provided. Moreover, guests are provided with written instructions and guidance during their stay, and those instructions are also posted at the entrances, exits and service areas of the hotel.

83. A recommendation was made to revise and bring the Criminal Code and other relevant legislation into full compliance with articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children. In that regard, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act criminalizes all forms of exploitation, including prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, child pornography, forced labour or service, slavery or practices similar to slavery, begging and the removal of human organs or tissues, or part thereof. A crime is considered to subsist if any kind of exploitation is proven to have taken place against a child, even if – in an exception to the general principle – there has been no use of force or violence, kidnapping, fraud, deception, or other means envisaged in law. In such cases, no account is taken of the consent of the child concerned or of his or her guardian. If the victim of such offences is an infant, the penalty can extend to life imprisonment.

84. With regard to the establishment and exercise of extraterritorial jurisdiction, crimes of human trafficking that involve exploitation of children, whatever form such exploitation may take, are treated equally under the law, irrespective of whether they are committed inside the country or across national borders and regardless of whether or not they are criminalized in the country in which they occurred. In specific cases, the law is also applicable to non-Egyptians who commit the offence outside the country, including if the victim is Egyptian. As concerns judicial cooperation and the extradition of offenders implicated in child exploitation as a form of human trafficking, the law envisages that Egyptian judges and police should cooperate with their foreign counterparts to combat and prosecute trafficking. This includes the exchange of information, the conduct of investigations, judicial assistance, letters rogatory and the extradition of criminals. All this is to take place within the framework of the bilateral or multilateral agreements in force in Egypt, or in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.

85. A recommendation was made to develop guidelines for the staff of child protection committees. In that regard, since 2020, all competent authorities have received training in the Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection and Assistance of Child Asylum-Seekers, Refugees and Victims of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons. There is a subcommittee for child protection, which is responsible for referrals and for coordinating with other authorities, including child prosecutors and the courts. It has the right to request the courts to order the temporary placement of children until the risk they face has been eliminated, as per the Children's Code, and to take urgent measures. In coordination with other authorities, the subcommittee is also responsible for managing the child's casefile and for delivering the services envisioned in article 22 of the Code, which stipulates that the State has an obligation to protect victims and to create conditions suitable to support them and to ensure their welfare and their physical and mental health, education, social well-being and rehabilitation.

## **N. Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues**

86. As concerns the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces, Act No. 127 of 1980 promulgating the Military and National Service Act, stipulates that the minimum age for recruitment is to be 18. The legislation and decrees regulating military colleges and institutes (the Egyptian Military Academy, the Military Technical College, the Military Medical College, the Military Technological College, the Institute of Non-Commissioned Officers, etc.) stipulate a minimum matriculation age of 16. However, matriculation in military colleges and institutes is not tantamount to recruitment, according to national and international standards. Rather, it constitutes training with a view to engaging

in military service and, during that period, candidates may not be involved in military or combat operations, either directly or indirectly.

87. Article 5 of the Military and National Service Act No. 127 of 1980 stipulates that persons who reach the age of 19 and whose military and national service card does not show that they have been conscripted are to present themselves with the card at their local recruitment and mobilization centre to determine how their conscription is to proceed.

88. No recruits or volunteers in the armed forces are aged under 20 and there are no children under the age of 15 in the armed forces or in military colleges and institutes.

89. Under article 200 of the Constitution, it is prohibited for any individual/body/entity/group to establish military or paramilitary formations/teams/organizations. The enhanced protection for children's rights envisaged in the Constitution and relevant national legislation means that any exploitation of children is prohibited and criminalized, whether this takes the form of forced recruitment or coercion into the ranks of non-State armed groups. Law enforcement authorities and the courts are authorized to deal with such practices, if they occur, in line with relevant legislation and procedural norms. It should also be noted that there have been no complaints or documented reports of the forced or compulsory recruitment of children into the ranks of non-State armed groups.

90. In response to the issue raised in paragraph 15 (g), the Weapons and Munitions Act No. 394 of 1954, as amended, is an integrated piece of legislation that regulates all matters related to the acquisition or possession of weapons and ammunition, including the trade therein or the manufacture and repair thereof, and the relevant penalties for any violations. A body of ministerial decrees has been issued to implement the Act and to define the conditions and procedures for obtaining licences for weapons and ammunition shops. The Act includes provisions for effective oversight on the acquisition of and trade in weaponry, including exportation and importation. The Act has been amended to cover pistols, starter guns, airguns and their ammunition, so as to prohibit trade, importation or manufacture without a licence. The State is working to impound unlicensed firearms and ammunition, and it is developing its capacities at the national level to mark and number all weapons, regulate their storage and reduce existing stockpiles.

## **O. Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues**

91. A request was made for information about new bills. In that regard, the Government has drafted a bill to promote children's rights, protect their welfare and further their best interests. The main thrust of the bill is to uphold an additional body of rights for children, including an obligation incumbent upon legal persons, both public and private, to provide basic services to children of unknown parentage, unregistered children or children whose parentage is disputed, until such time as they can be issued with temporary or permanent certificates. The bill also includes provisions to address the problems faced by working children and introduces a body of rights to ensure the welfare of working mothers. In addition, it seeks to protect children from online risks and the perils posed by artificial intelligence, environmental hazards and climate change. The bill has a section dedicated to the treatment of child offenders and to restorative and child-friendly justice, and it envisages the creation of a register of persons who have committed crimes against children with a view to preventing the recurrence of such offences and to facilitating the identification of perpetrators. Information on a bill to develop the alternative care system is to be found in paragraph 39 of the present document, above.

92. In addition to this, several new laws have been issued that embody the entitlements envisaged in the Constitution. They are as follows: Act No. 182 of 2023 which restructures the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in line with the Constitution and makes it an independent body that enjoys financial and administrative independence (para. 5, above); Act No. 185 of 2023 which amends certain provisions of the Criminal Code and increases the penalty for sexual harassment as an aggravating circumstance, one such circumstance being if the offender has familial or educational authority over the victim; and Act No. 186 of 2023 which amends certain provisions of the Children's Code by increasing the penalties

envisaged for persons who fail to register a birth or who provide false information at the moment of registration. The amendments also envisage more severe penalties for anyone who neglects or endangers a child, and the Act grants mothers working in the public or private sectors and who are fostering a child under the age of 6 months the same rights as those envisaged for the birth mother in terms of reduced working hours for the purposes of breastfeeding and leave in order to undertake childcare.

93. In terms of institutional reform, a new law has been promulgated which restructures the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in line with the Constitution. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities was created in 2019 while, for its part, the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights began operating in 2020. The latter's tasks consist in monitoring the country's implementation of its international obligations under relevant international agreements and protocols, proposing the necessary legislative measures and procedures, and supervising their implementation. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights – which operates as a sustainable national framework that cooperates with other international and regional human rights mechanisms – also drafted and launched the national human rights strategy 2021–2026, which includes a section on children's rights.

#### **P. Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues**

94. The past three years have witnessed a steady growth in public spending on health, social protection and pre-university education. Health spending increased from LE 107 billion in the financial year 2020/21 to LE 109 billion in 2021/22 and then to LE 128 billion in 2022/23. Budget allocations for social protection rose from LE 263.9 billion in 2020/21 to LE 341.9 billion in 2021/22 and to LE 351 billion in 2022/23. Social protection programmes promote mechanisms that target the most vulnerable groups, especially families with children. Spending on pre-university education went up to LE 317 billion in 2022/23, an increase of LE 61 billion compared to 2021/22.

#### **Q. Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues**

95. In response to the request for information regarding the imposition and enforcement of the death penalty on persons under the age of 18, the Government wishes to state categorically that there can be no death penalty against any person who was under the age of 18 at the time an offence was committed, as explained in article 19 of the present document.

96. Between January 2021 and October 2023, the authorities granted Egyptian nationality to 3,939 children of Egyptian mothers and foreign fathers.

97. A request was made for information about cases of abuse and violence perpetrated against children, including all forms of corporal punishment and domestic violence, in the context of combating human trafficking. Between 1 January and 31 December 2023, the State Prosecution Office investigated 111 cases of human trafficking involving 281 victims, 146 of them children. As a result of the investigations, it was found that 29 girls were being sexually exploited, 57 boys and 35 girls were being exploited in forced labour and 13 boys and 12 girls were being exploited in other ways. In all those cases, the State Prosecution Office took the necessary steps to refer victims for counselling and psychological support during the course of the investigations. The victims also received health care, and orders were issued for them to be placed in care facilities.

98. On the subject of corporal punishment against children, please see paragraph 30 of the present document, above.

99. The State Prosecution Office initiates investigations into all reported allegations of female genital mutilation and child marriage, and persons against whom there is evidence in that regard are referred for criminal trial. Between 2017 and the end of 2022, convictions were handed down in 21 cases of female circumcision.

**R. Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues**

100. There are 20 civil society institutions that take in children who are deprived of a family environment. Currently 547 such children are in placement in those institutions, 164 of them by order of prosecutors, 312 who have been handed over by their parents or by themselves and 4 who were homeless. State-run institutions number 34 and have 1,376 children in placement, 606 of them by order of prosecutors, 253 who have been handed over by their parents or by themselves and 23 who were homeless. As of 2019, 11,000 children were in placement with foster families. By the end of June 2023, that figure had reached 20,000 children in 19,800 foster families.

**S. Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues**

101. The Ministry of Social Solidarity oversees 757 rehabilitation facilities, including 78 residential institutions, 72 day-care institutions, 225 rehabilitation bureaux, 75 physiotherapy centres, 25 integrated rehabilitation centres, 212 rehabilitative kindergartens and 60 logopaedic centres. Around 435,000 persons with disabilities have benefited from the services those institutions offer, including 139,169 children aged between 3 and 18 who availed themselves of the services of disability kindergartens and other care institutions in the period 2018–2023. In 2022, there were 5,702 children with various degrees of disability in social care institutions in the governorates, as compared to 2,393 in 2021. The number of children of different age groups in social care institutions stood at 5,797 in 2022, as compared to 2,372 in 2021. Annex 8 contains information on social care institutions for persons with disabilities for the years 2021 and 2022.

102. In the academic year 2020/21, 108,200 students were integrated in 19,000 schools nationwide. Over the last three years, the number of children with various degrees of disability enrolled in special schools has increased, from 43,719 in the academic year 2021, to 44,773 in the academic year 2022 and to 46,393 in the academic year 2023. Over the same period, the number of schools also increased – from 1,116 in 2021, to 1,139 in 2022, to 1,164 in 2023 – as did the number of classes – from 4,906 in 2021, to 4,914 in 2022, to 5,130 in 2023. Annex 9 contains information on students with various degrees of disability enrolled in special schools for the years 2021 to 2023.

**T. Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues**

103. A request was made for information on how a children’s rights-based approach is integrated into the planning, implementation and monitoring of measures for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In that connection, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development monitors how development plans affect children’s rights and takes an inclusive approach to population policies. The investment plan for the financial year 2024/23 directs public investments to achieve the objectives of the children’s rights component of the national human rights strategy. This involves advancing development projects and programmes that promote the right to education, encouraging initiatives and activities related to children’s rights and consolidating the principle of the best interests of the child among all stakeholders. The investment plan also aims to enhance children’s access to comprehensive health care by improving the quality of services and increasing the coverage of systematic care during pregnancy, so as to reduce the number of child deaths. Efforts are also being made to reduce the incidence of practices that amount to the worst forms of child labour, by reinforcing the child helpline, enforcing laws that regulate child labour and raising awareness about the rights of working children.

104. In addition to this, the investment plan seeks to tackle the phenomenon of “homeless children” by expanding penal institutions for the care and rehabilitation of juveniles and building eight comprehensive care centres for homeless boys and girls. Between the years 2014/15 and 2021/22, the State allocated in excess of LE 2 trillion to social protection programmes, an increase of 95 per cent with respect to the eight preceding years (2006/07–2013/14). In fact, allocations went up from LE 229 billion in 2013/14 to LE 312 billion in 2021/22, a growth rate of 36 per cent. Moreover, allocations for “child

allowances” currently stand at LE 526 million, as compared to LE 287 million in 2007/08, a growth rate of 83 per cent. The national “Decent Life” initiative for the development of rural Egypt also contributes to the promotion of children’s rights, directing investments of around LE 655 million to establish and develop 3,277 early childhood kindergartens in 2022/23. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development has adopted its own initiatives, programmes and projects to regulate public spending while protecting and guaranteeing the rights of vulnerable groups. One of those initiatives was the launch of a conceptual guide for sustainable development that responds to the needs of different social groups.

105. The year 2023 witnessed the publication of a strategic review of the project “Towards a Child-friendly Justice System in Egypt: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals”, which was drafted thanks to cooperation between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the State Prosecution Office. The aim of the project is to enhance the capacity, institutional coordination and effectiveness of the justice system to better protect children in contact with the law, in line with the national strategy for children, the Egypt Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The review report recommended the adoption of a comprehensive approach in order to enhance multisectoral cooperation and coordination in the area of child justice between all sectors of government and society, while taking account of implementation, oversight and accountability mechanisms to achieve child-friendly justice. The issue of child-friendly justice and sustainable development is addressed in annex 10.

#### **U. Reply to paragraph 25 of the list of issues**

106. The Personal Data Protection Act No. 151 of 2020 aims to protect the personal data of natural persons while it is being electronically handled by holders, controllers or processors. The Act defines personal data as any information regarding a natural person who is identified or who could be identified, directly or indirectly, by linking that information with other information such as name, voice, image, identification number, online ID or other data that provides a psychological, health-related, economic, cultural or social identification of the person concerned. Sensitive personal data is defined as personal data that discloses any information about a person’s psychological, mental or physical health or biometrics. Under the Act, data concerning children is considered to be sensitive data by default. The Act also envisages rules and procedures for the availability of data and prohibits the collection and processing of data except in cases authorized by law and with the written consent of the person concerned or, in the case of children, of the guardian.